



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



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- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 - 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 - 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 - 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 - 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 - 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
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- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
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 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
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 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
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d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
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 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
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 - 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
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and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
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 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
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- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
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Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 - 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 - 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
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I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 - 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 - 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 - 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 - 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 - 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

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This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

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If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

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2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

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IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternality of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 - 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 - 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 - 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 - 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 - 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

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Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



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absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

- i. Associate happy moments with church – go out for ice cream after a baptism and discuss what just happened; same if they just performed a service at church (helped out at an event, aided a teacher during a class, read Scripture, prayed, helped served offering or communion, etc.). Tell them how happy God is, and how that makes you happy too, and how proud the other helpers in church were. This even works on a teenager; everybody wants to feel valued, if they do not act like they do.
- ii. Associate happiness with church – when at home, make a point to bring up church and talk about the good things going on and coming up, especially the things the kids are involved in. Listen to your child talk about church; if anything at all got their attention, or something they enjoyed, listen thoroughly, ask questions about it, and encourage them in their observation and practice!
- iii. Anticipate fun with church – talk about upcoming fun events at church, invite their friends, offer their friends a ride, have kids' friends spend the night at your house on Saturday night and take them to church the next morning! This all takes effort on your part but there could be no greater purpose to your effort!
- iv. Associate hope with church – talk about heaven, the people in heaven (family, Bible characters, respected Christian people now deceased, etc.), and how Christ is preparing a place in heaven for each of us (John 14:1ff). Be excited about heaven! Have Paul's perspective – "to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- v. Prioritize church – if church plays second fiddle to sleeping in, catching sports on TV, going to a game, getaway trips, etc. your kids will pick up on that in an instant and not prioritize church all

the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternality of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

- vi. Home devotions – when teaching children, tell them the stories of the Bible and the lessons to be learned from them. If they answer questions well about the stories (demonstrating they know and understand them), reward that effort with your time (a card game, for example), or even ice cream out. While you are eating your ice cream, quiz them again. The “sugar rush” of the ice cream will excite them through the answers! (And provide a healthy outlet for their energy) This will also make them doubly-proud for retaining their Bible knowledge. There are over 200 Bible stories; you won’t run out any time soon.
- vii. When you have a problem in the church with your child with a function they attend, go either 1) to directly to the person in charge of that ministry where the problem exists or 2) to the elders (only if #1 is absolutely impossible by your witness to God):
 1. Hebrews 13:17 – “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their [the elders’] work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”
 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 - 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 - 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 - 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 - 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 - 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 - 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.



A quick guide on...

How to Help Your Kids Love God, Church, and the Bible

With Frequently Asked Questions about Teenagers and Church, winning over unbelieving spouses, etc.



By Joshua Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

This booklet may be distributed freely in its original, unmodified form.

Your preacher has four kids all with very different personalities. There are three gene pools among them, and none of them interact with anyone or anything the same, including God and His church. There is no “one size fits all” approach to God and the church with your child or grandchild, but there are many general guidelines in Scripture to help us rise up a child to love the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

I also have many people ask questions that this booklet attempts to address. I do not speak with all knowledge, or perfect success, but I do try to address commonly misunderstood issues, or strategies for helping kids not only come to church, but enjoy it, and eventually, make it an integral part of their lives. As parents, we have no greater mission field than our own home, and we should make every effort to understand and do what it takes to win our kids over to Christ for life.

It is also important to understand that none of the below is a “guarantee”; this whole mortal life is not guaranteed outside of one truth: if we are faithful to Christ, we will inherit the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The below will not magically steal away your kid’s free will and replace it with your brain (as much as that sounds appealing some days as a parent!). But what it can do is help setup your life and your children’s lives for success in the world. Otherwise, you want to do all you can to facilitate your child’s faith so when it comes time for them to really make a decision for Christ, they have every impetus to do so, and none resisting that essential decision.

Parents (both dads and moms) should bring the **joy** of the Lord home to their families and in their churches. Much of the time, complaining and gossip emanate from mothers and fathers about church in the home, and this attitude embitters the children, and turns them away from His church. What a tragedy! Instead, all parents should

absolutely avoid bringing any negativity about church home to their children: they will experience plenty of attacks by Satan on their own without them having to helplessly deal with your issues as well!

If a negative situation involves your child at church, deal with the problem directly without gossip (this means without discussing it with others), or go to the elders if that is not possible. The multiple steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1ff apply to everyone, including you and your children!

Whatever you do, do not leave problems unresolved. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster as Satan loves to dig up “a record of wrong” (opposite to the attitude of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5) and re-expose it, opening that wound over and over again.

As well, never speak negatively about a person at church with your child. This is none of their business, and they do not have the perspective or coping mechanisms to do anything but vilify that person forever in their minds. **Many negative parents who gossip have turned away an entire generation of youth away from the church; do not join this number!**

Instead, we should focus on associating the joy of the Lord with our local church body with our kids as much as possible: my philosophy of youth ministry after nearly 13 years part-time experience in youth leadership, discipling, and evangelism, is the #1 job for a parent is to help their kids truly love God, their church, and the Bible. The intellectual concepts are absolutely important, such as teaching, doctrine, and the stories of the Bible. Obedience to God is essential, without a doubt. Nonetheless, many parents instill the intellectual concepts without ever instilling the joy of the Lord, and this is a sure-fire tragedy in turning off their kids and grandkids to the church when they grow.

Here are some ideas your preacher practices on how to instill the joy of the Lord in your child or grandchild:

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the same when they get older. Or they will just see church as unimportant and drop out entirely. Instead, talk about the important and eternity of church (see Revelation 21:1ff) versus the temporary nature of things on earth. Then practice it. Do not be a fair-weather Christian if bad weather does not prevent you otherwise from absolutely anything else, including your job, sports game, or vacation.

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 2. Do not delay – make time. Satan loves unresolved problems that fester.
 3. Unresolved problems are the bedrock of gossip.

4. Gossip involves uninvolved people and past incidents – readying to reap a harvest of destruction.
5. Kids pick up on this in an instant and “fall in line” with these habits.
 - a. Instead of learning to directly confront their problems, they let them fester and boil over and then blame others.
 - b. Instead of resolving problems, they learn to live in turmoil.
6. Satan LOVES unresolved issues that fester, and boil over, and turn into gossip – still his favorite tool after 2000 years!
7. I would be so bold to say that churches have rarely shut down over purely financial concerns – they usually destroy themselves by gossip. Confront the problems you face, head on! Do not give Satan the edge!

viii. Do the work of the Christian ministry with your child:

1. Whatever you do, your child **can** participate and learn with you.
2. One example that is very easy and a yet a very constructive ministry to have your child participate with you in is the Greeting ministry. Standing at the door and welcoming people is a job any child above the age of 5 will not only enjoy (because everybody shows happy appreciation to any kid “helping” in these circumstances, and kids eat it up) but benefit from, gaining social skills, and associating seeing friends and serving God with their own internal sense of joy.
3. For teenagers, you have the advantage of evaluating your child’s developing personality and matching a ministry with their God-given personality and talents. However, for all kids, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and ask yourself what your child excels at naturally:
 - a. Telling/presenting (prophesying)
 - i. Sign them up for a preacher boy class or shadow the preacher for a day to get a feel for it

- ii. Encourage them to write about what they are learning and share it with trusted others in printed form (it is important the recipients of the literature understand this is a learning experience and criticism should only be given for truly-important errors and even then with gentleness and respect – 1 Peter 3:15)
 - iii. Have them shadow or help a Bible class (“Sunday school”) teacher and encourage them to present part of the lesson (for teenagers, natural “tellers/presenters” may rightfully find this more fulfilling than attending their own class and this should be encouraged if they are willing to stick with it)
 - iv. Praying in public is a skill that can be developed first just with you, then in a small classroom, and eventually in the service itself.
 - v. Encourage this kind of child to witness to their friends. They are natural church-inviter. Be ready to accommodate their requests, including giving rides to their friends and having them spend the night on a Saturday night to attend church the next day!
- b. Helping/assisting others (serving)
- i. This is the gift for more “shy” or “background” kids or teenagers.
 - ii. Preparing communion is a skill and a service any child above 9 can competently learn and fulfill with assistance. Mature teenagers with experience should be successful with this task even without supervision.
 - iii. Helping the minister staple, bind, fold, or sort printed material is a regularly available service any mature child can help with.

- iv. Boys can learn serving communion, passing the offering plate, or other in-service functions by simply shadowing the people who do it now.
 - v. Girls can learn bulletin preparation, greeting, and assisting with the nursery, wee worship, and junior worship services.
 - vi. One example is to have your mature teenager help with the kitchen ministry (You need to have permission of the kitchen ministry in advance, and your child or grandchild needs to learn to do exactly as instructed without hesitation or backtalk – food preparation in any case is serious, timely work for both safety and quality reasons). Alternatively, helping with special events children’s snacks (like VBS) may be a better fit if regular kitchen duty is frowned upon for any child.
- c. Instructing/tutoring (teaching)
- i. This gift is less instructing or working with a crowd (that is more prophesying/telling/presenting above), and more helping individuals understand a particular topic, subject, or Scripture text the best they can.
 - ii. Assisting a teacher in a Bible class with a student who is not as receptive to group learning, by tutoring them with one to one attention in the classroom setting.
 - iii. Have your child write down and explain thoroughly a concept they with others to understand better. Then, review this with your child, and share with trusted others your child’s work. Instruct the “trusted others” that this is a learning process and only grievous errors should be corrected, and then only with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Have your teenager shadow a teacher over time and eventually sub for that teacher if they have demonstrated competence, reliability, and desire.
- v. Anyone with this gift is likely to be detailed-oriented and analytical. Encourage them to listen to the preacher's sermon, write down facts they want to know more about, and then inquire to the preacher or leadership more about them. Encourage this inherent learning desire in them!

d. Encouragement

- i. The easiest place in the world to find someone who would freely welcome any genuine encouragement is virtually anyone in a nursing home. People in a nursing home are virtually all non-judgmental (especially towards kids), and simply love company and are encouraged by their presence really regardless of what is spoken about.
- ii. This is easier with pre-adolescent kids, but teenagers who are natural encouragers can adopt to the nursing home environment usually after just a couple of visits.
- iii. Most churches have a nursing home ministry: this is as easy as finding who, and this preacher has never found a nursing home volunteer who would not welcome more help or companionship!
- iv. Nursing home visits can really be as short or as long as your child is comfortable. If you are not comfortable at the nursing home, you will find "most likely" after your first couple of visits and they know where to go and what to do, they can go with the regular volunteer at church with no trouble.

e. Giving (time and/or resources)

- i. This particular gift can be identified in a kid if your child is constantly trying to give their own stuff away to help others (regardless if their giving is really helpful or not) or they readily accept or exchange gifts or really enjoy the reciprocation of such giving.
- ii. Another way is if your child routinely would rather do stuff (anything) with you than watch TV or play a video game. As you can imagine, this is a relatively rare gift in a child, but if you have a “giver”, here are some things they can do:
 1. Have them make crafts that can be given away by the nursing home volunteer at your church
 2. Have them save a small portion of the money they receive or earn and give it specifically to the church-function they value most.
 3. Have them assist with VBS crafts, Bible class/Junior Worship/Wee Worship crafts.
 4. Make sure they can participate in any church “work day”.
- f. Organizing (administration) – as simple as filing, or as complex as originating a project needing done in the church and seeing it through, step by step
 1. You might have a natural-born “leader” as a child. This may not be a “prophet” or “teacher” above, but rather someone who enjoys starting, doing, and finishing projects (an example is a child who enjoys doing puzzles).
 2. Find a project at church that does not necessarily already have step-by-step instructions involved in it, or a new ministry need that has yet to be “scripted out”. Then, charge your child with coming up with a creative way to do it. Be ready to assist

and gently correct your child's ideas and progress, but do your best not to steal the lead role.

- a. Examples for teenagers might be a "drink ministry" for adults on Sunday morning or their fellow teens. Let them come up with "a master plan", choose others to help them fulfill it, help them run it by the appropriate leadership, and then actually do it. This will also help them to ask permission, initiate projects, and learn the difficulties of working with others in a safe environment that is not mission-critical.
- g. Mercy (spending time with those others do not regularly do)
 1. Mercy-showers are natural empathizers. They work with, for example, the "difficult children" with gladness. Or, they see a sad person, and naturally know how to listen and help them feel better.
 2. Examples of ministry options for kids with the gift of mercy include hospital visits (simply find out who is in the hospital – or nursing home temporarily for rehab, for example – and go with your child to visit) and shut-in visits (disabled people in your church that cannot regularly attend services who love visitors virtually all the time).
- ix. Some kids (or any person) can be a combination of the above. Some experimentation is normal to find out what really "clicks" for your child!
- x. Some kids like challenges – encourage them to read and complete an adult-level Bible study, have them read a Bible book and pick out the "key" verses that stick out to them, or try to find a plausible answer to a difficult Bible question. Then, reward their efforts as you would appropriately do for any other

accomplishment they have made (are not eternal accomplishments worthy of at least the same recognition as any temporary accomplishment?).

- xi. You may find some older, mature teenagers who are studious by nature would actually enjoy taking a Bible correspondence course, or perhaps even a college-level Bible course. It can be extremely-rewarding for an intellectual teenager to engage their older peers in theology, deeper Bible study, etc. Especially if they actually earn a certificate, diploma, or even a degree, this can even lead to a career in ministry!
- xii. As for younger kids, some kids learn best visually, some with audio, and some kinetically. For visual kids, movies, skits (including acting out Bible stories themselves), crafts, etc. can teach them Bible truths and stories quickly and with enthusiasm. Dramatized Bible Stories on CD or tape while riding in the car can especially help audio learners (like your preacher) of any age. Crafts, projects, writing, etc. can help kinetically-driven kids develop a love for the stories and teachings of the Bible.

Finally, love the Lord – and the things of the Lord – yourself.

Absolutely nothing influences a child more for the Lord than if you visibly express your love for God, His church, His services, and your service for Him.

Your child may or may not match your “gift”; that is OK and normal. Simply place your children where they excel best and “assist” them in what they are doing for God in whatever way is helpful. You might just be the chauffeur for a child in ministry; your child might actually be “better” than you at a certain ministry. Thank God, really! We need all of God’s children, and we certainly need more workers in the

field of harvest (Matthew 9:37, Luke 10:2). Let us encourage all, young and all!

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I) How do I get my teenage kids to go to church without hating it?

This question assumes you are making your kids go to church, so let me say “good for you” for acting like a parent and not a pushover. However, it is important that kids of any age (and adults of any age, for that matter) enjoy church. Anybody will eventually quit something for which they have nothing but negative feelings towards.

First, you must realize that almost no kid comes to church just out of a sense of duty (that’s what school is – a societal “must”). The church your child or grandchild attends must offer age-appropriate activities and same-age peers for your child to fit in. This preacher has seen many parents or grandparents drag their 10, 12, 14 or whatever year-old to church where there is absolutely nothing for them. You can drag all you want, but this is called embitterment and not a good idea at all (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

So, if your church does not offer youth-appropriate activities and some peers their age, you need to consider finding a church that does. Your preacher chased a girl to another Christian church when he was 17; my parents chased me there. I dropped the girl, but never the church – I became a Christian there, and started my career in ministry there. God takes bad motives and turns them into good things. Don’t be afraid of that.

If your church does offer youth-appropriate activities and same-age peer groups for your child or grandchild, then here are some practical suggestions for making this “I have to go” pill easier to swallow:

- 1) Offer to invite and give a ride to any of their friends to come with them
- 2) Offer to be a youth sponsor (also see #3)
- 3) Offer to be “the cool parent” who brings snacks *the kids actually want*
- 4) Tell them that they are going (never, ever stop exercising your authority as a parent – that is a breach you will have to find 10x as hard to recover from or you may never will) but afterwards, tell them that we’re also going to get ice cream/pizza, etc. with the friends they invited. Demand a good attitude and a listening ear, not just attendance, by the way.

You will find, that once you have “forced” the habit of going to church for 3-4 weeks in the above environment, it likely will become routine and accepted. However, how you have “served up” church for your child matters greatly. Don’t completely let go of the incentives just because they stop fighting so hard about going. Maintain the joy, be creative!

II) My kid(s) wants to go to church A but my family always has attended church B.

This happens a lot when your child or grandchild attends a school near a church but your family attends another church. This means that a lot of your child’s friends go to the nearby church, while they do not.

This question has a lot to do with question “I” above (so my encouragement is to read that) but there are some unique issues here:

1) Bad motives or good (you will learn it doesn’t matter much) – why does your child want to attend another church? Is it because of friends, the program, a girlfriend/boyfriend, etc.? You will rarely get a straight answer from a teenager (they will tell you “it’s the preaching” when really it’s because their crush is at the other church, or their friends, etc.). So this is something you will have to do your best to figure out on your own.

2) Then, if it possible, address that concern: if their friends go to the other church, then invite and offer rides to those friends. As well, take your kid and their friends to McDonald’s afterwards, pay for their ice cream, and let them visit while you sit at a distance (though still within eyeshot) and read for 20 minutes. If money is tight, ice creams cones at virtually any restaurant are a dollar or less (\$0.69 each at McDonald’s at the time of this writing). Then, take everybody home. If it’s a boyfriend/girlfriend, then same thing – offer to invite them and give a ride – and then let them spend some together in a public place while you are nearby, but still giving them “some space” for 20 minutes or so. When they see you giving them an opportunity to “hang out” in the context of church (or because of church), they will cooperate in going to church without a fuss. Over time, it will become their habit.

3) If there is another child or leader that really “irks” your kid, then you have to confront that leader or parent (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1ff). Most of the time, people simply will not do this, and when they do not, then healing cannot possibly take place. They have accepted defeat. If really want your kid not to “hate” (using teenage language there) you

taking them to church, then you have to lead and address the problems directly. Only then can you hope to get past this problem. You also cannot go in assuming your child is innocent; if anything, go in assuming a potential 50/50 solution, asking a little of each side.

4) Finally, if the other church is a solid, New Testament church that teaches right, has good leaders, and you can “make do”, then maybe for awhile you need to join your kid at the other church. I suggest making a specific, solid deal with your teenager if you take this route – otherwise – their grades, attitude, company, and character will reflect the right purposes in attending the other church. And then you must be willing to pull the plug if that is not happening. You are the parent; do not forget that! To some, this is anathema – but it does not need to be a permanent thing. Sometimes, the kid goes to the other church, and as long as you have not “demonized” it, they may end up realizing it is not all that cracked up to be. Regardless of what happens though, the point is to get them plugged into a church where they can grow in Christ. If that is happening, it was worth the temporary change.

III) What do I do if a friend my child invites happens to be dating someone from the same sex (or transgender, or anything else) and they want to bring their date to church? Or a LGBT youth in general attends church or youth group?

First, it’s great that they are at church! Nonetheless, in an effort to reach out to them with Christ-like love and Christian teaching, it is important to approach this situation with careful guidance:

This is also why no “PDA” (public displays of affection) should be happening between any dating couple in any youth group or church setting. If no one can hold hands, kiss, etc. in youth group, then no

discrimination is occurring. It's just not appropriate for that venue, and it prevents awkward situations from all kinds of possibilities from occurring.

How should this be handled? PRIVATELY. Teenagers can become very embarrassed in a heartbeat, so if you need to tell a couple that during church not to hold hands, and then find a time where you can – with a minimum of fuss – ask them quietly to refrain while they are at church. Most teens, in a private situation, will say, “OK, sure, cool” since you did not address it in front of their peer group and they don't have any need to save face. However, any kind of public shaming – even done in jest – can easily and permanently remove older youths from your program (they just won't come back).

But back to the subject at hand: we live in a modern world where LGBT students are starting to become the norm. They will attend our children's schools, dances, games, etc. at this time in our culture. It is not something we can ignore, and we should not. However, there are both Biblical and sensitive ways to deal with this:

1) When sin is discussed, always – always – always, say, “The Bible says”, then quote the verse regarding homosexuality, transgender people, etc.. This approach places any argument the student has with the Bible, not you. Refrain from pontificating on this subject in a public lesson or teaching time – teenagers, especially defense ones – will try to trip you up on your words. Leave any discussion to private ones, and continue to refer to the Bible – not your own authority – as to these issues.

2) Do not pretend to be a psychologist, psychiatrist, professional counselor, scientist, or medical doctor (unless you really are one of those things). You can point out to any teenager (kindly and respectfully) the

same truth about them (no one in the room is an “expert!”). The vast majority of people say well-meaning, but ignorant things about all kinds of people, and we should not pretend to “know it all” on any subject. We can quote the Bible and rely on it. Let that be enough if you are not a credentialed, qualified expert otherwise.

3) Do not try to “convert” anyone into becoming a heterosexual – try to convert them to Biblical Christianity. Jesus invites us to come as we are, but He loves us too much to keep us that way. We ALL have things that will change after we accept Christ and are baptized into Him; but each of those journeys are different, and sins of a sexual nature are no different. If you expect someone to change who they are before they are a Christian, you are asking them to do the job without the tools to succeed. We are supposed to come to Christ with our sin; He cleanses it – first in the waters of baptism, and then through continual confession, repentance, and learning to be more like Him.

IV) My husband does not go to church and therefore my kids will not go because dad says they do not have to. I am afraid they will not know the Lord!

Your concern is genuine and your fear has merit. Nonetheless, the Bible addresses this very problem in an oft-neglected passage in 1 Peter 5:1 ff:

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, **they may be won over** without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner

self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Otherwise, ladies, if you really want your husbands "to see the light", you are going to have to show them the way. Notice that Peter says in verse 1, "without words". You have probably already noticed that men do not inherently listen to women well; it is unfortunately instinctual and as much as the world will try to convince you otherwise, you can't "force" them or anyone else to listen. However, anyone will notice action!

It is your "behavior" (vs. 2), your "purity and reverence" (vs. 3), your "inner self" (vs. 4), your "gentle and quiet spirit" (vs. 4), and finally through "submission" (vs. 1, 5+6). Otherwise, are you the non-dramatic, cooperative, agreeable, team-player kind of wife who her husband cannot deny is a result of a Godly change? This is a very anti-feminist approach, but it is a truth you will need to accept and live out if you wish to win over your non-Christian husband and therefore your kids.

Scripture and science both show that winning your husband is first priority, actually: if a father does not attend church, only 1 in 50 (yes, only 1 in 50) kids will attend church in adulthood. So, let us not be unequally yoked to begin with (2 Corinthians 6:14), but if you already are, the formula for success is written in Scripture.