

The Worship Circles

The challenge of moving children toward the Lord

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Leading children in worship is more than just singing songs. Yes, singing songs is usually part of “worship,” but there is so much more involved in moving children toward the Lord! For children to be “moved” toward the Lord, there needs to be an inclusive, interactive, experiential environment in which the children and those leading the worship “connect.”

If there is a separation between “the audience” and “the stage,” it is merely a show. If those who play the instruments or lead the songs work hard and pray hard to make connections with the children through the words of the songs, the conversations about the songs, and the use of the children’s life experiences, then worship is more possible!

A “worship service” should include entertainment, contemplation, and involvement. A “show” is where the children passively listen to those “on stage” signing, with no personal involvement or interaction. “Worship” is where the children’s thoughts and emotions are stirred to consider God and how He is involved in their own personal lives. The three “circles” of worship are each very valuable, but by themselves, they may not include worship at all.

Songs with hand motions are good “tools” to use in involving children in worship; but unless the children’s minds and thoughts are involved in the song, they are just “going through the motions.”

Fun songs, or entertaining visuals or activities are also good “tools” to use during worship; but an entertaining activity without personal connections to the children’s lives are not memorable or effective in moving children closer to the Lord.

Perhaps the most important “circle” of worship is contemplation. To provide a time for contemplation during the worship service requires preparation and prayer. To inspire children to contemplate, you need to know the children’s worlds. You must use the children’s terminology, and their personal experiences at home and school to draw them into worshipful contemplation. Using the time between songs is vital to contemplation. To “set up” a song, or to talk about a song during or after it is sung is a good way to inspire contemplation. Reducing the number of songs in the worship service and spending more time between songs will foster contemplation.

