CALVARY CHAPEL
LEVITTOWN

Children at Calvary Chapel Levittown

We welcome families and children at Calvary Chapel Levittown.

According to the Scriptures, parents have the primary responsibility to raise children to know and serve the Lord. (See Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6; Genesis 18:19; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15.)

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY: UP TO AGE 7

As a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church community, we want to assist you in this labor of love. To that end, we have designed our Children's Ministry to provide a safe, caring atmosphere for the youngest children, combined with age-appropriate Biblical instruction for children ages 3-7. New-born babies stay with their moms—CCL does not have a nursery for small infants. Older children join their parents in the sanctuary at all services.

For more information about our Children's Ministry, see our website.

CHILDREN IN THE MAIN WORSHIP SERVICES

Children of all ages are welcome to join their parents at all the services at Calvary Chapel Levittown. Our services are centered around a time of singing, and serious Bible teaching. This means that children will need to be able to sit through a 35-minute Bible study as part of an hour-long service (on Sunday Mornings) or a 50-minute Bible study as part of a 1 ½ hour long service (on Tuesday nights).

POINTERS FOR BRINGING YOUR CHILDREN INTO THE SANCTUARY

General Thoughts

There are good reasons to allow children their own space for age-targeted Biblical instruction. There are also good reasons for worshipping and hearing God's word together, as a whole family.

To enjoy the benefits of being together in the main worship services, please consider the following thoughts:

- Just as it is parents' responsibility to raise children to know God and His ways, it is also parents' responsibility to help their children learn how to participate in worship, pray, and hear God's word without distraction.
- When children see their parents singing praise sincerely, praying while the church prays, and giving focused attention to God's word, it will go a long way to helping them know what is expected of them, and showing them how to do it.
- Parents who desire to have their children at church with them will need to be able to help their children be generally quiet in the service, or be able to quickly remove them if their child needs to talk or cry. There is no shame in removing your child—everyone understands it is part of including children, and that children often have needs adults do not.
- Regular church attendance can go a long way to helping children participate in corporate worship. Commit to being in attendance every week, and you children will begin to think of church as a familiar place, instead of a strange place, and you can more regularly reinforce the expectations for their behavior. Children who seem like "they can't do it" may simply need practice
- If you want to include your children in the service, but aren't sure if they can do it, please talk to a pastor or leader at CCL, and we can discuss strategies and recommend helpful resources.
- Parents may choose to let their children (toddlers – 7 years old) attend the Children's Ministry on some weeks, and join the family in the main service on others. No "commitment" to either one is necessary.

Strategies for families

Before you bring them into a service.

- If your children have never attended a church, or they have, but they've never been in an adult worship service before, it will be helpful to talk to them beforehand about what will happen there.

  You could say: "We're going to church, and we're going to sit together as a family. We'll be in a big room, and a lot of people will be there. We'll all sit together, and we'll sing one song together, and then someone will stand up and tell us news about the church. Then the pastor will get up and read the Bible to us, and talk to us about what it means, so that we can know about God and about how to follow Jesus. We'll hear some people pray too, and we can pray in our heads and agree with them when they pray, and then we'll sing some songs to God. We'll sing all together, and that is like praying together with music. It is important to sing when everyone is singing, and to be quiet when someone is praying, or the pastor is talking—so that we can all hear and learn from God. Jesus said when we gather together, he would be there, even though we can't see him, God is with us in His Holy Spirit, and so when we sing, he hears us, and when we read his word, he is talking to us. So we do all of these things to worship God and learn from him."
- Talk to your children about your expectations for their behavior beforehand. Explain what kinds of behavior are appropriate for church, and why it is important to participate by singing, praying, and listening.
- Have your children put together a "church pack" before they come, maybe the night before. They can have their Bible, a notebook (or a Church Activity Page from our welcome table), something to write with, and maybe a small clipboard for writing on.
- Parents might also want to prepare their own "church pack" with things like water bottles, tissues, or even snacks, and anything else your children might need.
- For younger children, you might consider role-playing with them. You can play "go to church" and act out everything you'll do in church. This will prepare them and help them know what to expect, and to remember what is expected of them when they come into the service.
- Instituting family worship at home will also be helpful. If you've never done it before parents can lead in praying together, singing together, and reading God's word together.

- Tell your children the plan for what you will do if they have to get up to use the restroom, or for another need. If you and your spouse are both attending, discuss ahead of time who will take which child to the restroom, who will remove a noisy child, etc. Having a plan can make everything run more smoothly.
- If you know the passage of scripture that will be covered the following day you might read some of it and talk about it on Saturday. We recommend using a New King James Translation if you want to prioritize ease of following along (it's what will be read from the pulpit), or use a New International Readers Version for comprehension for young readers. If your child uses the NRSV, just explain to them why the words the pastor reads may be a little different than the words in their Bible, and practice reading from the NKJV while they follow along in their NRSV, so they can get used to that kind of listening and reading.
- Pray for your children—be asking the Lord to help them participate in corporate worship in a way that blesses both them and the church. Ask the Lord to open their hearts, and speak to them while they're there. Ask the Lord to make church a place they remember encountering God.
- Pray with your children—pray together with them and ask the Lord for help in church. Also, on Saturday nights or Sunday mornings before church, pray for the services—pray for the pastor and those leading worship team, pray for everyone to have ears to hear the Lord, pray for safety and protection from distractions or disruptions, and pray for God to bring out non-believers who need to hear the gospel so they can be saved.
- For Married Couples—discuss your expectations, rules, and strategies with each other before hand. What will children be allowed to do? Who will take them to the bathroom?

In The Service

- Choose your seat strategically. You might choose to sit near the front, or prioritize sight-lines, so that smaller children can see the pastor or the lyrics for worship songs. You might choose to sit near the rear of the sanctuary if you plan on exiting for a bathroom run or for an unruly child.
- When the Scriptures are read, you might use your finger to follow the words on the page for your child to see.
- If your young child brings a picture Bible, and the study in that service is one of those stories, you may help them find the passage so they can follow along.
- Using their church pack, young children can draw pictures of things they hear in the study (encourage them to draw what the pastor is talking about).

- Older children can be encouraged to take notes by writing down things that seem helpful or inspiring when they hear them. You can teach them how to set up a notebook page and what to write. For instance:
    - Scripture at the top.
    - Other verses that are read.
    - A verse that sticks out to you.
    - What did the Pastor say that was…
        - Surprising?
        - Interesting?
        - New?
        - Inspiring?
        - Concerning or scary? (you may want to discuss these things with them afterwards)
        - Funny?
    - Did the pastor say we should *do* anything about what we read? What did he say?
    - What do you think God wants you to get out of today's teaching?

  (or… download a printable "Church Activity Page" on our website.)
- Be attentive to your children during the service. If they are moving or making noise or speaking in a way that will make it difficult for others to participate or concentrate, please remove them to the rear of the sanctuary, or front hallway.

After the Service

- Bring your child upfront, at least once, to meet the pastor who is teaching.
- Talk about the service on the way home or some time during that Sunday. What did they learn? What do they think God was doing as the praise was being sung and the word was being taught? What was God showing them? What should we be praying for our church?

Age-Specific Thoughts

Infants

- Infants who sleep or sit quietly through the service are welcome! If you need to stand to hold or rock your infant, please feel free to stand in the rear of the sanctuary during the service.
- If you keep your infant in a carrier, you'll just need to sit or stand in a place with adequate space for the carrier.
- Nursing Moms are welcome to use our designated nursing moms' area, where there is also a changing table available.

Toddlers and small children

- Keep in mind both goals for including your toddlers or small children in the church service: The first goal for including your children in the service is that they be able to worship and learn from the experience—from singing and hearing the Word of God taught, and from watching what Christians do at church, so they can learn how to do it as well. The second goal is to minimize distraction for others around you. Typically, achieving the first goal will help you achieve the second. But if the first one fails, please make minimizing distractions your primary goal.
- If you have a "bad week" or two in terms of behavior, don't let that keep you away from church.
- Make church attendance regular. If it's difficult at first, keep at it, because regular exposure, increasing familiarity, and regular practice are the ways small children learn to do things we might have otherwise thought they were unable to do. Consistency is key. Regular repetition will help them remember what is expected of them in church.
- When you choose your seat in the service, take into account the fact that toddlers and small children will often need to move around more than infants.
- When choosing your seat, decide beforehand what you will prioritize: ease of leaving, for quick exits; sight lines so children can see the pastor (over taller church members in front of them) or the song lyrics; people behind you who could be distracted by your child turning around.
- Provide activities for quiet times: drawing pads, dry erase boards, pipe cleaners, clothespins on index cards, or other quiet, small activities they can do in their seat.

- *Please do not give your child a device such as a tablet or phone*—it is not good for them, and it is especially distracting for others in the service. Other activities often promote better listening as they move their hands, whereas electronic devices tend to eat up all a child's attention.
- Have your children use the restroom right before the service begins, and if they need to go in the middle of the service, try to go during times when others are standing.
- Snacks can be helpful activities. Pack something which will be easy and clean to eat in church. (The fewer the crumbs, the better!) It may be especially helpful to feed younger children one piece at a time while they sit on your lap. It is often most effective to save snack till the end—as a last resort.
- If they begin to talk, remind them to sit quietly with a finger over your mouth, and be ready to remove them if they become loud or talk without stopping.

Young school-aged children

- School-aged children have the experience of sitting through instruction and learning times, and may be able to simply apply the skills they've learned there to church.
- Have them bring their own Bible, and help them find the passages that are being read.
- As noted above, have your children put together a "church pack" before they come, maybe the night before. They can have their Bible, a notebook (or notes page), something to write with, and maybe a small clipboard for writing on.
- Using their church pack, young children can draw pictures of things they hear in the study (encourage them to draw what the pastor is talking about).
- Older children can be encouraged to take notes by writing down things that seem helpful or inspiring when they hear them. You can teach them how to set up a notebook page and what to write. For instance:
    - Scripture at the top.
    - Other verses that are read.
    - A verse that sticks out to you.
    - What did the Pastor say that was…
        - Surprising?
        - Interesting?
        - New?
        - Inspiring?

        - Concerning or scary? (you may want to discuss these things with them afterwards)
        - Funny?
    - Did the pastor say we should *do* anything about what we read? What did he say?
    - What do you think God wants you to get out of today's teaching?

(or… download a printable "Study Notes" page your child can use here.)

Older Children

- If your older children are coming to church for the first time, and have no sense of what to expect, spend a few minutes before you attend going over with them what to expect during the service.
- Have them bring:
    - a Bible (a New King James Version might be most helpful since it will be what will be read during the service)
    - A notebook
    - A pen or pencil

Teach them how to set up a notebook page and what to write. For instance:

- Scripture at the top.
- Other verses that are read.
- A verse that sticks out to you.
- What did the Pastor say that was…
    - Surprising?
    - Interesting?
    - New?
    - Inspiring?
    - Concerning or scary? (you may want to discuss these things with them afterwards)
    - Funny?
    - What one main takeaway do you have from the service?

We're glad you're considering attending Calvary Chapel Levittown with your family. Please email us if you have any further questions – info@cclevittown.org.