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# **WHAT TO DO WHEN ... KIDS HATE (GOING TO) CHURCH**

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## **Session Description**

Let's be honest. Little ones have little use for adult worship. They don't understand the words to the songs, let alone the ones coming out of the preacher's mouth. The prayers and the announcements are meaningless to their lives ... they don't even know Robert who's in the hospital and they aren't invited to the Women's Fellowship Meeting. And the Kid's Sermon? Even kids know when they're being used as a cute intro to the upcoming adult sermon. So, what do you do when someone suddenly realizes that visitors with kids virtually never return and the average young adult parent is at their rope's end fighting with their children to come to church? This week, Drs. Kris and Bill team up to share some solutions to *What to do when ... Kids Hate Church*.

## **Session Outline**

### **Before Launching into Solutions, Understand the Real Issue**

- Adult worship is not indigenous or relevant for kids – *none* of it is
- Adult worship services of the future will not look like how worship looks like today
- The church's job is to make disciples of children, not teach them to sit still and be quiet
- If you have a children's worship packet, ***you already know you have a problem***
- Sixty percent of young adults raised in the church leave the church and do not return

### **What Doesn't Work**

- Keeping the children for "part" of the service – unless it has been designed specifically for them *and NOT for adults*
- Letting kids be acolytes, ushers, etc. – the service is still 100 percent irrelevant
  - Yes, it's an honor;
  - Yes, they may enjoy doing something in big church;
  - *But only a couple kids get to participate ... and then only for a few minutes*
- Giving ten-year-olds coloring pages and crayons (at home they're playing X-Box, Minecraft, watching Netflix, etc.)

### **What To Do When Kids Hate Church: *Solutions in Order of Effectiveness***

#### **1. Offer simultaneous children's worship – see Church-Talk episodes for more**

- This must be more than "childcare" – this is disciple making worship
- Think VBS on steroids
- Start and end at the same time as adult worship

#### **2. Provide tablets preloaded with disciple-making programming**

- Develop age-appropriate content on your website and provide links
- Use video – from Veggie Tales to the Visual Bible

- Scope out Bible games and activities
- Use digital feedback loops for older children/youth (Twitter hashtags, etc.)
- Don't forget the headphones

### 3. Redesign worship services for a true intergenerational worship experience

- This is more difficult than it seems
- Music must be *100 percent relevant* to a child
  - Vocabulary must be limited ... and it's even better if the tune is memorable/catchy as well
  - Adopt a limited playlist (this is a good practice anyway)
  - Encourage participation – rhythm instruments, etc.
- Prayers must be *100 percent relevant* and participatory
- Stop doing anything that doesn't relate to 100 percent of the congregation ... in other words, stop doing announcements, etc.
- Worship should be designed in “sound bites” to keep it moving
- Sermon will need to be interactive, participative, and relative
  - Vocabulary, concepts, conclusions must be child-relevant
  - Think “big muscle group” activities to engage children
  - Good News: If a child “gets it,” so will the adults
- Alternative age-specific discipleship opportunities will be necessary

### 4. Provide age-appropriate and relevant worship packets

*This is the least effective practice – the goal here is not about discipleship but about keeping the children from “hating” going to church; in other words, keeping them busy with something that doesn't bore them to tears ... and fits.*

- Provide multiple age-appropriate worship packet options
- Provide enough variety and materials for short attention spans (less than 10 minutes per activity)
  - 6 different coloring sheets is *not* variety!
- Provide interactive options ... Nintendo DS, GameBoys, and/or other kinds of electronic interactive games
- If there is space, providing a space in the worship center for kid gatherings may be a good option
- There will be noise. If this is the option you've chosen, get over it – it's better than having no children or young adults!

### Discussion Questions

1. If you have children in worship, what is the rationale for keeping them with the adults? How is this practice developing disciples ... today?
2. What options for children's worship are viable in your setting?
3. What would keep you from engaging in the most effective option? How could you overcome those obstacles?
4. What will you do next week that is different from what you did this week?