

## Philosophy of Worship

### 1. Why do we worship God?

- a) God is worthy of our worship.
  - » Psalm 18:3, Psalm 33:1, Psalm 96:7-9, Psalm 145:3, Philippians 2:9-11
- b) We are created to worship.
  - » 1 Peter 2:9, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Revelation 7:9-12

### 2. How do we worship God?

- a) In spirit and truth, with both heart and head
  - » John 4:23-24, Psalm 95:1-7
- b) Worship: The Feast of Christian Hedonism (*Desiring God*, 2003 ed., ch. 3, pp 81-82, John Piper)
  - » Worship must have heart and head. Worship must engage emotions and thought.
  - » Worship must be vital and real in the heart, and worship must rest on a true perception of God.
  - » Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of biblical worship.

### 3. How is worshiping with children different than with adults?

- a) Children differ in their ability to understand God, themselves and their relationship to Him.
- b) Children differ in their ability to understand language, ideas and how we talk about God.
- c) Leaders must lead in ways that are developmentally age appropriate.
- d) Leaders must take into account children who are not yet believers.
- e) Leaders bear responsibility of nurturing faith and modeling worship themselves.

## Practical Aspects of Planning and Leading

### 1. How do I plan a time of worship with children?

- a) Pray for the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit.
  - » ***Psalm 127:1—Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.***
- b) Be well acquainted with the lesson, scripture and truths about God that will be taught that day.
- c) Determine the focus of your worship time with the children.
- d) Know what the songs are expressing and consider the following:
  - » Do they fit well with the day's lesson, the curriculum in general, your focus of worship?
  - » Are they filled with big and glorious truths, while still understandable to the children?
  - » Do they build faith?
  - » Is there an appropriate melding of the words and the music?
  - » Will they benefit the children if they sing them over and over during the week? During the next year? The next 10 years?

## 2. What kinds of songs should be considered?

- a) Favorite Sunday school songs of SUBSTANCE
  - » *My God is So Big*
- b) New, fresh, worship songs written specifically for children
  - » Sovereign Grace Music
- c) Scripture songs
  - » Hide 'Em In Your Heart, Bible Memory Melodies, Frank and Betsy Hernandez
- d) Traditional hymns
  - » *Hymns for a Kid's Heart*, Bobbie Wolgemuth and Joni Eareckson Tada
  - » Tell them about the composer and circumstances surrounding the writing of the hymn.
  - » Explain difficult words or concepts—a little bit each week.
  - » Try doing a hymn a month, or 4-6 learned well over the course of a Sunday school year.
  - » Hand motions help children focus on words and help settle the wiggles in young bodies.
- e) Songs from your all-church gatherings
- f) Songs from other cultures or in other languages
- g) Words are important! Take time to help the children understand what they are singing about.

## 3. What else should be incorporated into the worship time?

- a) Scripture
  - » Read enthusiastically as a call to worship.
  - » Read before singing a scripture song or to focus on main point of a song.
  - » Worship by proclaiming the Word with memory verses.
- b) Prayer
  - » Individual teachers and children pray short phrases of praise or thanks related to the character or work of God.
  - » Give an example of how they could start their prayer, e.g. "Lord, your faithfulness is great because..." or "We praise you, God, because..."
  - » The first few times, ask a few adults or kids to lead out in prayer. Others will soon follow.

## 4. How do I organize songs, Scripture and prayer into a meaningful worship time?

- a) Carefully read the lesson and scriptures discovering key themes and truths about God.
- b) Write down songs that come to mind.
- c) Review anything new from the previous week.
- d) Review or introduce a hymn.
- e) Consider teaching a new song.
- f) Consider using a format for planning worship. For example:

### **Call to Worship**

- » Calls us to seek after, worship and draw near to God
- » Vertical focus on God

### **Praise and Adoration**

- » Directed to God or about His character
- » Expressions of love, trust, praise and thanksgiving
- » Focuses on attributes of God from the lesson

### **Teaching**

- » Teach a new song, explain words, ask questions and get responses, read a hymn story, teach hand motions

### **Response**

- » Songs of commitment, blessing, witness and prayer

- g) Think about the mood or pacing of your worship time: exuberant to reflective, or the reverse.
- h) Direct songs speak directly to God and use the word You. Indirect songs speak about God and use the word He.
- i) Jot down notes to yourself soon after the worship time is over to help you plan for next time.

***Be intentional in your planning. Determine to plan and lead worship in a way that helps the children grow in their knowledge, love, and trust of God.***

## **Developmental and Musical Considerations**

### **1. Rote Learning**

- a) Through 1st grade

### **2. Reading**

- a) Starting in 2nd grade
- b) When words will be an aid to teaching and not a hindrance
- c) Be aware of the wordiness of songs. Are words visually overwhelming to young readers?
- d) Make sure that transparencies are readable and legal.
- e) Christian Copyright Licensing International, CCLI, website [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com)

### **3. Vocal Range**

- a) Vocal range should not pose a hindrance to participation in worship by being either too high or too low.
- b) Comfortable vocal range for children: low A (below middle C) up to high D (an octave and a half above)

### **4. Repetitious Songs**

- a) Echo, call and response, or repeating phrase
- b) Quickly learned
- c) Use with children in diverse age groups. Young ones can sing on repeated phrases.

### **5. Improvising**

- a) Use with simple songs for younger children.
- b) Children contribute ideas.

## 6. **Signing and Hand Motions**

- a) Focuses attention to words and their meaning.
- b) The more senses involved in the learning process, the more is retained.
- c) Don't make them too complicated.
- d) Respect for American Sign Language
- e) Children enjoy leading.

## 7. **Full Body Movement**

- a) Preschoolers through about 2nd grade—each worship time
- b) 3rd and 4th graders—now and then
- c) Give purpose to their movement with comments like:
  - » Let's jump with the strong legs God gave you.
  - » Sweep the driveway or wash the car for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)
  - » Stamp your feet like a mighty, roaring volcano that God made.

## 8. **Accompaniment Instruments**

- a) Be very comfortable with your instrument.
- b) Know your music well; simplify if needed.
- c) Maintain eye contact and be aware of responses of the children.
- d) Accompaniment should be helpful and supportive without being the main thing.

## 9. **Rhythm Instruments**

- a) Use as an opportunity to teach about praising God with instruments. (Psalm 150)
- b) Adds a sense of celebration and joy when used with upbeat songs.
- c) Encourage a steady beat and careful handling of instruments.
- d) Preschool through 2nd grade—if possible have enough instruments for all children
- e) 3rd Grade and up—half dozen instruments and use them most weeks
- f) Have a signal for “Stop playing.”
- g) Purchase reasonable prices rhythm instruments at [www.rhythmband.com](http://www.rhythmband.com)

## 10. **Student Instrumentalists**

- a) Piano, violin, guitar, etc.
- b) Student should already know worship songs on their instrument.
- c) Practice with them ahead of time.
- d) Encourages young musicians to play in a worship setting and for the glory of God.

## 11. **What about multiple age groups meeting together in worship?**

- a) Find songs that have repeating phrases, echoes or can be sung in a round.
- b) Give older children leadership roles with instruments, singing, reading, sound and visual equipment.
- c) Include movement opportunities for younger children.
- d) Focus on one curriculum to organize your worship themes from week to week.

## 12. How can kids take on leadership roles during the worship time?

- a) Reading or reciting scripture
- b) Leading hand motions and signing
- c) Playing instruments: rhythm instruments, drums, violins, etc.
- d) Operating sound and visual equipment
- e) Singing up front with the worship leader—individually or as a worship team

## 13. A few final remarks about planning and leading

- a) Weave the worship time together with brief and reverent comments that direct the children's attention to God.
- b) Be careful not to talk too much.
- c) Be open to making changes in your plans as the Holy Spirit leads.
- d) Pray for God to do His work and to meet you as you worship together.

## Resources

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### New Music for Children

- **Sovereign Grace Music**, resource available online at [www.sovereigngracemusic.org](http://www.sovereigngracemusic.org). Hear sample songs, download piano, lead, chord, and transparency sheets.
  - » **Awesome God**—Worship songs for children age 7 and up focusing on God's attributes.
  - » **To be like Jesus**—Songs that teach kids the fruit of the Spirit.
  - » **Walking With the Wise**—Songs from the book of Proverbs about what it means to be wise.

### Scripture Songs

- **Hide 'Em In Your Heart, Bible Memory Melodies**, with Steve Green, Frank and Betsy Hernandez, Sparrow Records
  - » **Volumes 1 & 2**
  - » **Praise and Worship for Kids**

### Hymns and Hymn Stories

- *Amazing Grace, 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions*, Kenneth W. Osbeck, Kregel Publications. Author of several different books containing hymn stories.
- *Great Christian Hymn Writers*, Jane Stuart Smith & Betty Carlson, Crossway Books. The authors have detailed the intriguing and often tragic circumstances from which many of our best-loved hymns came.
- *Hymns for a Kid's Heart*, Bobbie Wolgemuth and Joni Eareckson Tada, Crossway Books, Book and CD. Authors collaborate to help you teach twelve classic hymns to the children with richly orchestrated music, true stories, prayers, and scripture.
  - » **Volumes 1 & 2**
  - » **Passion Hymns for a Kid's Heart**
  - » **Christmas Carols for a Kid's Heart**

### Signing

- *The Joy of Signing*, Lottie L. Riekehof, Gospel Publishing House
- *Religious Signing: A Comprehensive Guide for All Faiths*, Elaine Costello, Bantam Books