

# Children Destroy Worshipful Atmospheres

Scott Brown

"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them, but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them". -Mark 10:13-16

A couple of years ago I asked a pastor what he felt was the purpose of the Sunday School. He responded immediately, "to keep the children out of our hair so we can worship." For those of us who were raised on multiple choice exams, we know that the first impression is usually the right answer. So, I expect that his answer was sincere, though I don't think he would like to see it in print. In the same spirit, a dear friend of mine said to me the other day: "no one wants a four year old distracting him in church."

These are common feelings among modern church people. But, they are not new phenomena. We see the same feelings expressed in Judea in Jesus day - children will wreck worship if you keep them with you.

I have a friend who was visiting a large and prominent church in the Northwest. He brought his family down to the front, where they always go, to get settled down for worship. After they sat down someone came down the long aisle and whispered to the father: "we have childcare, could you please take your children to the back and down the hall...." My friend said, "no, we normally keep our children with us." The usher left. A moment later another usher came down and whispered "We really would not like the diversion the little ones might make during the service, would you please take your children out?" The father repeated what he said before. Then, as everyone was now standing for the opening hymn, another usher came down the aisle and handed him a paper and said: "it is our church policy that children are not in this service," and he handed him the written policy.

Here is the policy, verbatim:

"Name Withheld Baptist Church"

Policy regarding children in church

We are happy you and your children have chosen to worship with us.

Small children have short attention spans, so in order to maintain a worshipful atmosphere for all, please do not be offended if an usher asks you to step outside for a few moments should your child begin to disturb others around you.

For your convenience, we also provide excellent child care for all ages. If you would like to use this service, an usher will gladly assist you.

Thank-you

My friend was offended, and he did not take his children out of the service. During Jesus' ministry we also see him offended by the disciples attempt to remove the children from his presence.

People in our culture are used to very professional forms of communication. We like what we are used to being served: perfectly packaged, cosmetic experiences – not like real life at all. We long for these kind of experiences and when they are threatened, we feel out of sorts. People feel out of sorts with children and their worship disrupting lifestyles.

Children have always been a challenge to adult concentration and the answer is usually, "Get them out of here so I can concentrate."

In the American church, we have become a people who worship a worshipful atmosphere. We care more about our concentration, than we care about passing the precious promises of God to the next generation. We narcissistically care more for our comforts than we do about the difficult task of training a mighty army of saints who would be willing to go to their death for their Savior.

I believe that Jesus would be offended by the modern church and its treatment of children. Ours is one of the most blatantly anti child societies on earth. Most internationals from "undeveloped" countries, are shocked when they come here and see adult only apartment complexes, scattered families and other expressions of individualism run amok.

The church has been deeply affected by our anti child culture. We do not want to be stuck with snotty nosed children. We want to remove the hassle of children. We want to remove them from our presence. We want to live a life apart from our children. We want to have few enough so that our lives are not adversely affected. If we become pregnant, we may terminate the pregnancy because of its potential to divert us from our objectives. Ours is truly a child rejecting culture.

The ultimate goal of many of our senior citizens is to retire to Florida in child free communities.

Expressions of our anti child culture are everywhere to the point that we are numb to their recognition. Tragically, America is suffocating from the effects of day care raised children, latchkey children and fathers leaving their families in greater numbers than any time in history. We are experiencing the death of fatherhood as 40% of the children in America will go to sleep tonight without a father in the home. Parents will admit unashamedly that they would not have any more children because of the time required. Teenage pregnancy, divorce and abortion are some of the results of this "social experiment" with the family.

And so the church has taken on the spirit of the disciples and surrounding culture regarding children. Children do destroy worship, because they have not been led by their fathers and mothers in the meaning of worship. They simply care more about their own concentration than they do their children's consecration.

Fortunately, Jesus is different. He says "let the children come to me."