

From the Lips of Children:
A Study on Involving Children in Worship

by

Jacob M. Schwartz

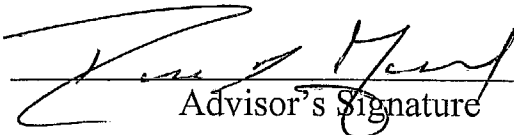
A Senior Project Submitted to

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Master of Divinity degree

Professor Richard Gurgel, Advisor

Approved at Mequon, Wisconsin, on April 4, 2012



Advisor's Signature

FROM THE LIPS OF CHILDREN:
A STUDY ON INVOLVING CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

BY
JACOB M. SCHWARTZ

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. RICHARD GURGEL, ADVISOR
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
MEQUON, WISCONSIN
MARCH 2012

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to identify how to best involve children in worship in the individual congregations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The research includes three parts. It accomplishes this through the study of Scripture which proves children's need for involvement and demonstrates basic principles for involvement. It will also include a study of scientific literature on cognitive development which demonstrates how children communicate and learn. Finally, it will include a survey of current WELS pastors which highlights challenges and blessings of different ways of involving them. The research in these three areas revealed that children have the best opportunity to be involved in worship through the use of a children's message built into the worship service since there they can worship with the entire congregation, there scientifically supported methods can still be employed, and there families can learn how to worship together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF CHILDREN	2
1.1 NO LEAP OF FAITH REQUIRED	2
1.2 THESE LITTLE ONES WHO BELIEVE IN ME	6
1.3 EACH ONE A PART OF THE BODY	9
1.4 DO YOU HEAR WHAT THESE CHILDREN ARE SAYING?	11
2. THE EVER-LEARNING CHILD	14
2.1 DEVELOPMENT BY STAGES	15
2.2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21 ST CENTURY	19
3. CHILDREN IN THE CHURCHES	23
3.1 THE STATS	23
3.2 THE DIFFICULTIES	25
3.3 BLESSINGS OF A CHILDREN'S MESSAGE	29
CONCLUDING REMARKS	32
APPENDIX A	36
APPENDIX B	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39

INTRODUCTION

There are many things in this world that are confusing, perplexing, and challenging. Perhaps at the top of this list could be children. Children are confusing in the way they talk, in the way they act, and in the way they interact. They are perplexing when adults assume they know everything about a child and then that child says or does something completely unexpected. They are a challenge because they each have their own unique personality and because they are always learning and changing.

These traits are also evident of children in a worship setting. From a distance, saying a few words of instruction to a group of children sometimes seems like such an easy thing. It is not! It takes practice. It requires patience. It necessitates understanding. Children are confusing because it is hard to gauge whether they understand theological concepts or not. They are perplexing because it can often be a guessing game as to what they are going to say or do next. They are challenging because God doesn't give specific instructions as to how to include them in worship. What is the best way to involve children in worship?

In order to answer this question, a number of factors need to be considered. First, are children really worth the time and effort it takes to involve them in worship? Should worship be reserved for adults' spiritual nourishment? This will be an important point when one considers involving children in worship and will require some study. Do children have a need to worship and were they a part of worship in Scripture? For these first questions, Scripture will be consulted.

Second, though Scripture will be the guide and rule, there will still be choices that worshippers need to make. What does human research say about how children learn? Changes are constant in children. How does a congregation deal with a child's developing mind? How does cognitive development affect the way that children can worship?

Finally, it will be beneficial to note what current pastors have to say on this matter. How are they involving children in worship? What's working? What are the challenges? What are the blessings to the different modes of involvement? As these questions are answered, they will point in turn back to a solution for the bigger question: What is the best way to involve children in worship?

1. SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF CHILDREN

“Grow up, will you!?” It is a common complaint from a distraught or embarrassed parent. Children are often thought of as wild, rowdy, unpredictable. Children can seem like a different creature from adults, a creature that is often hard to tame and hard to contain. Children are treated differently from adults because adults are supposed to know better. Children are still young and immature. Children are still growing and learning. The general physical differences between adults and children are not hard to see. Adults are bigger while children are smaller. Adults are self-controlled while children need to be controlled. Adults are supposed to be able to answer all the questions while children ask the questions. Adults should be sophisticated, but children are unrefined. The list could go on. The differences are obvious.

While it is true that in general children and adults appear to be quite different physically, do these differences translate over to the spiritual side of things? Are children in a position spiritually where they should be worshipping alongside adults? Understanding how children and adults compare on this issue will be critical to understanding children’s need for worship. Human reason says that there is a difference between the two. Reason would argue that there is an age of accountability, a time when a child, or rather a human being, can officially be held accountable for what he or she says and does. Reason would argue that every action of that child which occurs before that age of accountability cannot be held against them since due to that child’s immaturity it cannot be held responsible for its actions. Notice the change of the use of pronoun: it. This argument really is about when a child officially becomes a member of the human race, when it can be called a real live human being, because being human means that one is now a card carrying member of the sinful nature club. God can now officially hold this person accountable for their sins. When might this change occur? Does it occur? In finding an answer, Scripture must be the guide and rule.

1.1 NO LEAP OF FAITH REQUIRED

The Bible is often viewed as having been written by adults for adults. There are so many adult situations found in the Bible, many that even seem to be unsuitable for young children. Perhaps there is some truth to that. But every now and then, God directs his readers’ attention back to the little ones. Deuteronomy 1:39 states, “The little ones that you said would be taken

captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it.”¹ The words that are of particular interest in this selection are these: “Your children who do not yet know good from bad.” Many take this verse and place it in the argument for an age of accountability. It seems so obvious: children do not know good from bad, therefore they cannot be held accountable for their sin. It is a logical jump to make and seems perfectly reasonable.

There are similar verses elsewhere in Scripture. Isaiah 7:15-16, for example, says, “He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.” Again a logical jump needs to be made to use this passage as proof for an age of accountability. The act of now being able to reject what is wrong, choosing good over evil, implies a time in a child’s life when it could not do this.

One final verse might be used to support this teaching. Jonah 4:11 requires an even greater leap than the others, because it does not specifically mention children or youth, but simply says, “Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” Although the literal words of this passage speak nothing concerning spiritual matters, the concern that the Lord exhibits toward the people of the city of Nineveh implies both a physical and a very real spiritual concern. While his care for his world is such that he must look out for the physical well being of all people, for without him, mankind could not exist, the emphasis in Scripture is how God is concerned with the spiritual well being of all people. This story of Jonah and Nineveh is no exception. When God speaks of the number of people in the city not being able to tell their right hand from their left, it is easy to deduce here that he is speaking of one of two things: Either he is speaking of the city as a whole spiritually, or he is speaking of the number of children in the city who do not yet know how to tell their right hand from their left. The conclusion to the first option is that if they cannot tell their right hand from their left, how much less they must know about the true God and about his will for their lives. The second option is self-explanatory, that there are many very young children in the city. Yet

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the New International Version of the Bible (NIV).

here again human reason looks to this second option and makes a leap that if a child cannot tell his right hand from his left, how can he be held accountable in spiritual matters. However, if one is going to take this leap in understanding the passage, he must also answer this question: If these children are not accountable for their sin, why was God threatening them with destruction, destruction that was no different than the plight that God had warned upon the rest of the city?

The answer is simple. Unlike the passages that have just been set forth as arguments for an age of accountability, which require a logical leap in order to land at such a conclusion, the answer requires no leap. In fact it does not even require a hop, a skip, or a jump. It only requires a look, as the answer is simply and plainly set forth elsewhere in Scripture. Where the previous passages make no claim upon an age of accountability, even when it seems that one might be implied, no man ought to assume such authority to make one until he has carefully examined what the rest of Scripture has to say on this matter.

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Ro 5:12). Sin came into this world through the sinful actions of what were once perfect and sinless human beings, Adam and Eve, or as this passage attributes to one man, Adam. With sin comes death. God’s punishment for sin is death, and the passage clearly states that death comes to all men, because all sinned. Again, if an age of accountability is to be seen in this passage, another leap must be made. “Men” can no longer refer to “all (people),” or “all” must refer only to mature human beings (women included), but “men” could then not refer to immature children under the age of accountability. Is this leap logical? Yes. Is the result of this leap clearly implied or stated in Scripture? No.

One would then have to apply the same leap to other passages, even to ones where no age is distinguished within the text. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Ro 3:23). “The wages of sin is death” (Ro 6:23). Death to whom? This passage does not specify, though a connection can be made to the afore-mentioned Romans 5:12, where death comes to all who sin. “The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Ps 14:2,3). The psalmist repeats this condemnation in Psalms chapter 53, and Paul reinforces these same words in Romans chapter 3. Paul follows this quoted section of Old Testament Scripture by adding, “Now we know that whatever the law

says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God” (Ro 3:19). It is very hard to exclude children from the “whole world.” At the same time it is equally difficult to conclude that children are excluded because of an age of accountability that is nowhere specifically stated in Scripture.

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps 51:3-5). These verses should wipe away any remaining doubt as to where children, even infants, stand on their own before God. The writer admits to knowing his sin. Here at the time of writing he is an adult, accountable for his actions, and thus God is just in his judgment upon him. But then he looks to his birth, even to his conception, and admits his sin there as well. What about the age of accountability? None is referred to. The inspired writer admits that he was sinful from the moment that God created him within the womb of his mother.² The righteous Lord declares, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Eze 18:4).³ Sin means death. Men are conceived as sinful creatures. All men, women, and children, the whole world, have sinned. All fall short. All deserve death. There is no getting around the stated fact as set forth in Scripture. There is no age of accountability. Children, infants even, are human in every definition of the word. They are by nature sinful. They commit sins daily and are held accountable before God for those sins. They are in need of forgiveness for those sins. They are in desperate need of a Savior to take those sins away. People like to think of children and adults as two different creatures. Physically, this may appear to be true. Spiritually, God makes it most clear in Scripture that every man, woman, and child is held personally accountable for their sins.

Other passages support this doctrine. “Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies” (Ps 58:3). There is not a time in a child’s life before which he is not guilty of committing sin. Psalms 19:12, “Who can discern his errors? Forgive my

² It is important to note here that although Scripture says that every man, woman, and child is sinful already at the time of conception, it also most definitely says that God was not the creator of mankind’s sin. God is the creator of man, as the Psalms say that God knits men together within the womb of their mothers. Man’s sin comes from being a son of man, born in the image of man and no longer born in the image of God, which was lost because of the sin of the first man, referred to already in Romans 5:12. It is an inherited sin that is no fault of God.

³ These words also occur in Ezekiel 18:20.

hidden faults” (Ps 19:12). Even adults, who would be considered by all to be accountable for their actions, are not always aware of the sins that they commit. Here the psalmist points to the fact that no man can discern or know all of the sins that he commits even as he is committing them. It is also clear that though sin may not be known to the sinner, it is known to God, and sin brings guilt upon the sinner. In the same way a child or infant may not always be aware of sin that they commit, yet they are still guilty of committing it. This same thought is brought forth in Leviticus, where it is applied also to children, “If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands, he is guilty” (Lev 4:27). Children too are members of the community and are held accountable for their sin. This point is not easy for human ears to accept, because children often seem so innocent, but without this truth of Scripture understood in its entirety, the topic of children in worship becomes one of little importance. Yet correctly understood, the topic of children in worship becomes one of immense importance.

1.2 THESE LITTLE ONES WHO BELIEVE IN ME

If children are not held accountable for sin, there is no need for them to praise God in worship for the forgiveness that Jesus won for them. But can children really have saving faith to praise God for? Example one: John the Baptist. Granted, the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist were quite extraordinary and for that reason it can be argued that his case does not apply. Yet human reason cannot negate the truth that Scripture sets forth. Here Scripture makes a point of giving a very vivid example of the faith of an infant even before he was born.⁴

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy (Lk 1:39-44).

It’s easy to dismiss such a small thing as nothing out of the ordinary. Mothers feel their babies kick and move all the time. In fact, a mother might be legitimately worried if she was never to feel her unborn baby do such a thing. It lets the mother know that the baby is growing and

⁴ See also Luke 1:15.

healthy and active. Even further, if there is something to be learned from science, it's that unborn babies can react to their surroundings, to sounds and to lights and even to voices. Yet here in Scripture it would be wise to see that the Holy Spirit takes it even a step further. Yes, the baby kicked/moved/leaped at the sound of Mary's voice. Again this does not seem out of the ordinary. But Elizabeth's words, recorded as inspired Scripture, tell an even more astounding and remarkable truth. "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy" (Lk 1:44). Unborn John reacted to the voice of the mother of his Lord with a leap of joy, joy in the Savior who was to be born, joy in the man he was to prepare the way for. Faith? It's hard to argue against it.

Children may be different physically, but that's what makes them special. Parents tend to love their children unconditionally because, after all, they are their own flesh and blood. Parents see things in their own children that others can easily overlook. In thinking about the faith of children, it can be very easy for an adult, even a parent, to overlook the faith of a child, assuming that because they think differently from an adult they are not mature enough to have such a saving faith. With notions like this spooking around this world, it is important to understand how the heavenly Father views his children, specifically those who are still children.

Jesus, who grew up as a child, who underwent everything a child goes through, who understands what it means to be a child and to think like a child, points the way as to how Christians are to regard the valid spiritual needs of their own children. Throughout his ministry, Jesus makes use of the faith of children as an example for adults in his teaching.

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Mt 18:2-6).

Jesus' encouragement is striking. Adults are supposed to be the ones in control. They are the ones who are supposed to have all the answers. They are the ones who are supposed to have the maturity and the knowledge. Yet Jesus' encouragement is to become like little children. Physically? No. Spiritually? Absolutely! After reading such a passage as this, it's hard to imagine anyone arguing against the idea of children having saving faith. Not only does Jesus

encourage adults to become like children in regard to their faith, but he continues with an explanation. Otherwise, “you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!” What a blow to the adult ego which contends that it knows all and that children seemingly know very little. What is it about a child who has faith that makes him different? The answer is simple, literally. A believing child has simple faith, simple trust in his Lord Jesus as his or her Savior from sin. Jesus is encouraging all to adopt such a simple trust, because such a trust is saving faith.

Paul writes, “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Ti 3:15). From the time of his birth, Timothy had been brought up to know the Scriptures which point to the Messiah for free and full salvation from sin. John also makes the reality of the sin and of the faith of children known in his first letter,

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father (1 Jn 2:12,13).

Children are here specified as distinct from fathers and young men. Everyone sins and is held accountable for that sin. Only Jesus could take away those sins and the condemnation that they bring. He has done just that, and children and adults alike are saved through faith in him. What greater reason is there than this to worship God?

Before exploring the specific instances of children in worship within Scripture, it would be beneficial to take a quick peek at how Jesus himself treated little children outside of the worship setting. One such instance that deserves attention is one that repeats itself in three of the four gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all write similar accounts about people bringing children to Jesus to have him bless them. One of the most important features of each of these accounts is one that at first glance is not all that obvious: simply that these accounts are included at all! A quick survey of the surrounding passages reveals that each of these accounts is an account unto itself. Not one of them is linked with an adjacent account. There is no overlap where one account naturally runs into the next. Instead the preceding account ends and suddenly the Holy Spirit has moved onto an entirely different topic. The fact that this account is written in three out of the four gospels immediately calls attention to it as something worth noting. The fact that these accounts stand alone from their surrounding counterparts intensifies this need for attention. Why

this emphasis? It is to highlight the important lesson that Jesus here teaches his disciples and in turn all Christians:

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them (Mk 10:13-16).

The other 2 passages from Matthew and Luke follow basically the same flow: children are brought to Jesus, the disciples rebuke them and turn them away, and Jesus asks that they be brought to him at which time he blesses them. What a simple and yet powerful account! One can only imagine what Jesus was doing at the time when these little ones were brought to him. Scripture does not say. He may have been teaching adults. He may have been praying. He may have been enjoying a well-deserved moment of rest. From the disciples’ point of view, whatever it was, one thing it was not was designated kiddy time. The disciples’ reaction shows that these were not expected visitors. It shows that Jesus had something seemingly more important, more adult-oriented, going on. Yet what does Jesus do? He stops everything else, drops it all, frees his arms in order to fill them with these little ones, and makes time for these precious children.

Here one difference must be noted. Luke makes use of the Greek word *brephos*, a word used to designate not just small children but babies. People were bringing babies! And these tiny little children were worthy of Jesus’ time? They were worthy of the same attention that Jesus was giving to the adults? They were allowed to touch him, to receive his blessing, to witness the Messiah up close and personal? How shocked Jesus’ disciples and all those listening must have been to hear those words, “The kingdom of God belongs to such as these!” What an astounding thing it is to hear the words of praise for faith directed at such little children!

1.3 EACH ONE A PART OF THE BODY

These passages have done much to highlight the fact that children are very much a part of the sinful human race, a race whose sin condemns each person, man, woman, and child, individually to hell. The passages have also shown, in view of such a dire situation, that there is hope. Children, despite their sinful state, have a God and a Savior who loves them dearly. They

have a God who wants all men (man, woman, and child) to be saved.⁵ Children can have faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. They have a need for God's Word in their lives. They have a need to praise God for what he has done for them.

If there is one thing that a Christian family does regularly in regard to their spiritual needs, it is going to church. And what is done at church? Worship. Worship is one time each week when the members of a Christian congregation get to come together as one body to enjoy the company of fellow Christians as they worship their Lord and Savior together. Worship is an important and integral part of church life. It is where sinner/saints hear and read the Scriptures, the law and the gospel, where they sing praises together, pray, praise, and give thanks. This is sometimes referred to as corporate⁶ worship. The concept of corporate worship is an idea drawn from Scripture and is therefore not an event that can be dismissed as insignificant.

It was just after Pentecost that Scripture introduces the first Christian congregation. Luke writes, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Ac 2:46,47). Christians met together. It was a fundamental part of their daily life. There is great blessing in worshipping God with fellow believers, growing together in faith and trust and love, learning from one another and being encouraged by one another. Paul often speaks of this encouragement in his letters. The writer of the book of Hebrews also notes the importance of worshipping together when he says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Heb 10:24,25)

The English word "corporate" finds its roots in the Latin word *corpus*, which means "body." As Christians come together for worship, it is really the different members of the body of the church that are coming together. They are unified as one in Christ. Nowhere is this idea of a body of believers given more attention than in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The thought behind

⁵ See 1 Timothy 2:4

⁶ Merriam-Webster's 2nd definition of the English word *corporate*: of, relating to, or formed into a unified body of individuals (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* [book on-line] (Merriam-Webster, 2012, accessed 29 February 2012), available from [http:// www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/corporate](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/corporate)).

this section can be summed up in verse 27, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Co 12:27).⁷ The church is made up of many parts, many people, each with its own function or purpose. Children are included in this body of believers. Each one is a unique and indispensable part of the body of believers.

1.4 DO YOU HEAR WHAT THESE CHILDREN ARE SAYING?

The first example found in Scripture of children participating in worship comes from the life of the patriarch Abraham. When his son Isaac was still a youth, Abraham and Isaac journeyed to Mt. Moriah, at the command of the Lord, in order to make a sacrifice there. Isaac displays knowledge of worship practices as they were carried out at that time with a simple question, “‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’” (Ge 22:7). Isaac’s question seems to indicate that he had participated in worship with his father on other occasions since he knew what a sacrifice should entail. He noticed the change in practice on this occasion and was interested to know why this time it was different, why there was no animal for the burnt offering. This example also points to the importance of the child’s father in the spiritual upbringing of his child. This instance took place before God had established the set rules and regulations in worship for the Israelites to follow. In a more structured setting Isaac would have been able to view not only his father but also other worshippers as they did the same things that his father was doing. Without that formal structure, the only way for Isaac to learn how to worship was from his own father, and it seems that Abraham had made a point of instructing his child in the way he should go.

Structured worship was soon to follow. In Deuteronomy chapter 12 the Lord gives the Israelites special instructions regarding their place of worship and how they were to conduct worship there. Formal worship was to take place only at a specific place which would be chosen by the Lord. The Lord says that he would be choosing this location once the people of Israel had entered the Promise Land. In his instructions the Lord makes special note of who he expected to be present at worship. “There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you” (Dt 12:7). Not only is the head of household to be present with expected sacrifices,

⁷ For a complete overview of “the body of believers,” see 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

but his entire family, which would have consisted of children as well, were to be present. They were not simply to stay back at home or to sit and be quiet either, but the Lord expected rejoicing and praise from their lips as well. It's interesting to note here that the Lord intended worship to be a family event. Families came together, they stayed together, and they worshipped together. The young would learn from the example of those older. The children would exude life and energy into the worship. Everyone present would be blessed to have members of all age groups there worshipping together.

Later in the same book Moses speaks of expectations the Lord had for children as the whole assembly of Israel gathered to hear the Word of the Lord. "Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God" (Dt 31:12,13). Of course, such examples must be taken in context. Old Testament worship was fully established and mandated by God. God didn't give the Israelites freedom to worship him in any way that they chose. He gives believers such freedom in the time after Christ came to this earth, since Christ finished his work and fulfilled the law perfectly.⁸ This 'old code' was cancelled when Christ died and rose⁹, and God no longer regulates the way believers worship. Nevertheless, God does set a precedent with this first code, showing that children are very much a part of his people, part of the community, who worshipped side by side with and were very much a part of those in the assembly worshipping the Lord.

King David once wrote, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise" (Ps 8:2). David never saw the temple built. It was to be built later by his son Solomon. He never saw those temple courts filled with people praising God and worshipping together. This is not to say he never experienced worship. He undoubtedly spent time at the house of God, which at that time was the tabernacle. It is quite possible that what he wrote in this psalm was in view of what he saw happening there in worship. That would make sense considering what God said concerning worship in the book of Deuteronomy. It is equally plausible that David heard such

⁸ See Matthew 5:17; also Ephesians 2:14,15.

⁹ See Colossians chapter 2; also Hebrews chapter 9.

praise from the lips of children elsewhere. Either way, David was aware that worship was not just for adults or only for the spiritually mature, but for children and infants as well. Even if he was not aware of it as a first-hand witness, then at least he was aware of it through the inspired words he wrote. His words are true because they were words of prophecy. David never saw children shouting in the temple area in his day because no such temple existed. Yet a temple was built. People did gather there. Children were present at the Lord's house. Children and even infants sang the praises of God there. This temple is also where David's words from Psalms chapter 8 were fulfilled as Jesus recalls them in Matthew 21:14-16,

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things [Jesus] did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

Jesus was not surprised that children were singing his praises. He was not surprised that children could identify him as the Son of David, the promised Messiah. The children had witnessed Jesus' power as people came to him to be healed there in the temple area. They had seen the same things that these chief priests and teachers of the law had seen. But unlike these men, who were jealous of Jesus' popularity and power, these children saw and believed. From their words it is easy to see that this was not their first time at the temple. They did not come simply to see Jesus work his miracles. They knew the Old Testament Scriptures, they knew the promises of the Messiah, and they believed that Jesus was that "Son of David." A childlike faith consumed them. It was a simple faith in their God, their Savior, their Redeemer, and their Friend.

Adults have much to learn from children and can benefit greatly by their presence in worship. The same is true in the opposite direction. Children need examples and role models to show them how to worship. Children depend on them. As children were a part of worship as a whole in the past, so should they be today. They are a part of the body of believers. They have real spiritual needs, needs that can be satisfied at and through worship where they can join their fellow saints in giving thanks and praise and honor and glory to God Most High

2. THE EVER-LEARNING CHILD

God gives pastors, parents and teachers a simple proverb that they would do well to live by, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Pr 22:6). The “what” and the “why” of this proverb are simple, to teach children the way to go, to teach them what is right and what is wrong when they are young, so that they know and will continue to know right from wrong when they are old. The “when” and the “how” of this proverb are not so easily distinguished. When can a child begin to understand what? How do they learn? Do they learn by example? By demonstration? By instinct? These are questions that every pastor, parent and teacher ought to consider, and God graciously gives his people the gifts to answer these questions.

One of the greatest gifts that God gave mankind was the ability to think and reason. It is one gift that clearly separates mankind from the animals. Man doesn’t operate on instinct alone. Over the years, theories have arisen on how best to train a child. Some of these theories were written down. Others were not and had no need to be. Children learn how to be parents from how their own parents raise them. In this way Proverbs 22 is shown to be true. Another way to state it is this: History has shown that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. Over the past century and a half, more concentrated and concrete study has been done in the field of cognitive development than ever before, and theories have been formulated and written down that try to show just how it is that children learn. While it is not an exact science, and while humans may never fully understand all the intricate aspects of the brain and how humans themselves develop cognitively, research does give some tested and valuable information concerning normal cognitive development.

For many centuries in this world’s history, the minds of infants and young children were believed to be a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*,¹⁰ upon which anything could be “written.” This theory assumes that children simply observe and imitate and effectually play no part intellectually in their cognitive development. One of the most respected modern authorities on normal cognitive development is Jean Piaget, who disagreed with the *tabula rasa* theory. Piaget conducted his

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster’s 1st definition of the English *tabula rasa*: the mind in its hypothetical primary blank or empty state before receiving outside impressions (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* [book on-line] (Merriam-Webster, 2012, accessed 29 February 2012), available from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tabula%20rasa>).

decades of research around the middle of the 20th century. He did so by simply observing children in their natural settings. Based on his research, he believed that the child plays a very active role in the growth of intelligence. His writing suggests that “reasoning is the essence of intelligence, and it is those reasoning processes which Piaget studied in order to discover how we know.”¹¹ Because Piaget’s research has withstood the test of time and because many of his theories are still highly regarded today, his research provides the basis for a few pertinent points that will be considered in relation to involving children in worship.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT BY STAGES

The first thought that needs consideration is the concept of what can be called stages of development. As a child grows and learns, it’s easy to note milestones. One notes the first steps and the first words, the first clap of the hands, the first time using the potty. As children grow older, however, it gets a little more difficult to clearly define milestones and to set stages, especially cognitive ones. Yet even cognitive milestones, though a little harder to detect, are still evident to the observant eye and ear.

Piaget’s first “stage” is the “Sensory Motor Stage,” or the time from infancy up to about the age of two. While it is true that these children are an equally important part of God’s kingdom, the ability that pastors and teachers have to minister to them is limited. However, Proverbs 22:6 still applies. Even at this young age, and perhaps especially at this young age, children are learning continuously. They are eager to learn, and their rate of cognitive growth is exponential. Cognitive growth may be easy to see and recognize, but does this include spiritual growth? As a fifteen month old, this writer’s daughter will not eat her meal until the table prayer is spoken. She won’t even let the prayer happen until everyone who is present folds their hands like her and joins in. She points emphatically at the perpetrator and says, “Eh!” until they fold their hands and join in. She enjoys listening to Bible stories before bed. She attempts to sing along at church and very much enjoys the music. Do these things necessarily mean that there is spiritual growth? No, not necessarily. But it’s very hard to say that there isn’t. In this writer’s point of view, this example, and many like it from observations of other young children, goes to

¹¹ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks*. (Dorothy G. Singer and Tracey A. Revenson, 1978), 13.

show the importance of parents in the instruction of their children. Children do not simply imitate, but they do observe and comprehend and decide for themselves where and when they want to participate and to what extent. Even at this young age, a child can be trained in the way he should go, and that training becomes a part of who they are.

It is in Piaget's next stage that the pastor and/or teacher might begin to have more involvement in the child's life and learning. This is termed the "Preoperational Stage," from the age of two through seven. Piaget explains, "This period is called 'preoperational' because the child still has not developed the mental structures needed for logical or abstract thought. The child is still dependent upon what he sees, and his reasoning is without systematic or logical processes."¹² Like the stage before it, it is a stage of constant learning. With this "preoperational" definition in mind (and also keeping in mind that these stages are general time frames and will not apply to every child), there are a number of general trends that researchers have noted about children within this age level.

First, a child learns by doing. What are the implications? Doing involves action. A child can certainly learn by sitting and listening, but when only listening is involved in learning very little information is retained. Some even argue that nothing is retained by a young child in such a learning situation. Obviously, as the child grows older and gets closer to the age of six or seven, they are beginning to be able to learn more in this way, but that ability is still limited. This being said, science says that even in adults, the more senses that are involved in learning the greater the chances of information being retained. How much more in a child who is able to understand very few words let alone sentences and interpretation of meaning behind such words and sentences! A very young child could not identify an apple if they were simply told that an apple is round, red, and delicious. But if they see an apple, taste it, feel it, smell it, and hear the word "apple" associated with it, then the next time they are asked if they want an "apple" they will know exactly what it is (and be quite excited about it as well!).

Secondly, most if not all very young children are egocentric. They are always fully involved in what they want and what pleases them. This has a number of implications. Children tend to believe that everyone views the world in exactly the same way that they do. This poses a

¹² Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 33.

problem for a teacher because at times language can become a barrier if the teacher is not careful about the question being asked or the answer that is being received. Piaget's research indicates that children "may use words familiar to the adult ear, but more often than not, they have a completely different meaning in mind. The young child doesn't talk only to people, but to her toys, to the trees, to herself. She speaks in non sequiturs, and rarely keeps to a topic for more than two sentences at a time."¹³ One moment a child may be talking to someone else, the next moment the child is talking to himself without worrying about who is present or who is listening. This also is a very interesting concept. When a child is in a learning environment, such as at a children's sermon, and asks a question, they may very well be simply thinking out loud. This would explain why a child would raise his hand and say, "I have a dollar," or "Your hair is dark." These are not really questions, but observations that for whatever reason the child felt that he needed to express verbally. A child might begin to tell a story that trails off without an ending as he tries to relate to the topic at hand. Piaget's research suggests this concept of vocal thought, "Children's egocentric monologues may very well be the basis of adult thought and reasoning."¹⁴ It is very possible that children are not able to fully reason and even think internally. Their thoughts must be heard in order to be processed. This would certainly be a logical reason for children's extended monologues, where they are talking to no one in particular, where they jump from one thought to the next, or where they say things that don't seem to be at all pertinent to the topic at hand.

As egocentric, they also tend to ask questions constantly. They want to know what and why. What are you eating? What is lasagna? Why is it your lunch? Why do you like to eat it? Why does it taste good? Why is there a lot of cheese? Why does the recipe call for it? There is a progression of thought in this line of questioning. Look at the questions again with adult answers inserted: What are you eating? *Lasagna*. What is lasagna? *It's my lunch*. Why is it your lunch? *Because I like to eat it*. Why do you like to eat it? *Because it tastes good*. Why does it taste good? *Because there is a lot of cheese in it*. Why is there a lot of cheese in it? *Because the recipe called for it*. Why does the recipe call for it?...This type of example could go on and on. A child is constantly learning by observing and processing the information around them. When they

¹³ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 57.

¹⁴ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 59,60.

don't understand something, they either make up an answer that does make sense to them or they ask a question (or more often than not a series of questions). Either way they are using the tool of reason to come up with the answer. This concept is important for the teacher to know. Questions are an important part of truthful learning as opposed to simply letting the child make up their own answers. Directing a child's thoughts and questions to lead them along to the truth then becomes an integral part of the communication of and transfer of knowledge.

Third, "all children must be able to understand the world in concrete terms before they can begin to think in the abstract."¹⁵ Hewitt, who has much experience crafting and delivering children's sermons, agrees, "In crafting age-appropriate children's sermons, you cannot assume that children know the definitions of the theological terms you are using. You must take a brief moment to define your abstract words to be sure children understand what you are trying to teach them."¹⁶ This is important as it pertains to how children process words like "faith." It is important when relaying concepts such as "Jesus coming into my heart" or "God our Father." How do you explain "faith" to a child whose best friend is named Faith? How does Jesus come into your heart? The obvious answer for a child is: Through my mouth and down my throat and into my heart. A child might ask, "God is my dad? My dad is your dad too?" As stated earlier, this type of questioning may very well be a child thinking, reasoning things out. In order for truthful reasoning to take place, a child must have a concrete idea to hang the mental picture of "faith" or "Jesus coming into my heart" or "God our Father" on.

Finally, building off concrete thinking, is the idea that children "tend to focus on a single attribute or perception of a situation and disregard all others."¹⁷ In other words, when teaching children, less is more. Simple and focused and concrete will be a more effective teaching tool than wordy, over-explanation, and complex. Hewitt's general rule of thumb is that children have a one minute attention span for each year of life.¹⁸ The speaker needs to be sure to emphasize the part of the story that is the focus of the lesson. Repetition is not a bad thing either. Ask a

¹⁵ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 19.

¹⁶ Beth Edington Hewitt, *Captivating Children's Sermons: Crafting Powerful, Practical Messages*. (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), 31.

¹⁷ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 74.

¹⁸ Beth Edington Hewitt, 32.

question, get a right answer, and then ask the same question to another child. Don't save all the questions until the end. Use questions throughout the message to keep focus and make sure concepts and words are understood before moving on.

Piaget's third stage, the "Stage of Concrete Operations," includes children from ages seven to eleven. The truth that children learn by doing remains the same into this age group. At the same time, other forms of learning are beginning to be employed. Changes in this stage of development from the former include: children become less egocentric, they begin to be able to think in the abstract, and their span of focus begins to increase. As children begin schooling and are now interacting with other children and teachers, they begin to move from Piaget's "Preoperational Stage" into the "Stage of Concrete Operations." Because more and more concrete concepts are being learned every day, they're ability to think in the abstract increases continually throughout this second stage. As a child nears the end of this stage, he or she is now more fully able to integrate into "adult" worship and is no longer in the age group where a special program may be needed to help involve children in worship.

2.2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The idea of schooling effecting changes in thinking begs the question: Are Piaget's findings current and relevant today, or are 21st century children hitting these developmental milestones sooner? The fact that today children are being placed in educational environments at a continually younger age than they were fifty years ago would suggest that many children are developing faster cognitively. When children are continually placed in social situations, they must adapt. Their world must begin to shift away from a completely egocentric way of life, a life where all the adults were once only concerned about that child's needs, to a social way of life, where a child must now learn how to communicate effectively in order to be heard. Piaget's research supports this, "This shift from egocentric to socialized speech indicates that children are able to understand more abstract thoughts and concepts,"¹⁹ and, "Piaget hypothesized that before [school] age the child has little need to communicate clearly. Everyone makes an effort to understand him...Socialized speech patterns begin to appear at age five or six, at about the same

¹⁹ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 72.

time children enter elementary school.”²⁰ Gauvain also includes this change in social conditions and in communication as contributing factors to the changes seen in modern child development, “The ecology of childhood is changing rapidly around the world. Increased urbanization, massive shifts in economic, political, and social conditions, and changes in the communicative environment have significant impact on children’s everyday lives.”²¹

Not only do socialized educational situations contribute to faster development, but this can happen within the home simply between parents and children as well. This is primarily due to two factors. The first is the overall increased education level of parents. Today, maybe more than ever, there is a strong societal focus on education, and young children are reaping the benefits of their parents’ education. Educated parents, whether they realize it or not, generally communicate to their children in such a way that stimulates learning.²² Parents do this through the way that they communicate with their children, through the questions that they ask them, through the activities by which they interact with them, and through the progress that they push for from them in their development.

The second dominating factor that contributes to faster development is modernization. True, America was considered “modern” when Piaget was conducting his research, but advancements in technology even from fifty years ago appear to be a major contributing factor in this faster rate of cognitive development. In speaking about the Flynn effect,²³ Gauvain states,

In recent years, the contributions of modernization to cognitive development have come to the fore in relation to the Flynn effect (Flynn, 1987, 1999, 2007), with its demonstration of worldwide secular IQ gains. Flynn suggests that resources associated

²⁰ Dorothy Singer and Tracey Revenson, 62.

²¹ Mary Gauvain and Robert L. Munroe, “Contributions of Societal Modernity to Cognitive Development: A Comparison of Four Cultures.” *Child Development* 80 No. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2009), 1641.

²² Mary Gauvain and Robert L. Munroe, 1639.

²³ Flynn Effect: The worldwide increase in cognitive scores across generations. The American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology defines the Flynn effect as: “The gradual rise of IQ level that has been observed since the time when records of IQs first were kept. Although the average IQ remains 100 due to periodic renorming of IQ tests, RAW SCORES have been rising. These increases have been roughly 9 points per generation (i.e., 20 years). The gains have been unequally distributed across the different abilities, with FLUID ABILITIES showing substantially greater gains than CRYSTALLIZED ABILITIES. [James Flynn (1934–present), New Zealand Philosopher who first documented its occurrence].” Gary R. Vandenbos, ed, *American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology*. (American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2006), 382.

with modernization, including exposure to certain forms of information stimuli (such as mass media like television), may be implicated in these gains. Although Flynn (1999) thought IQ to be related only weakly to intelligence, the rise in scores begs explanation... Both inside and outside the home children are exposed to changing modes of acting and interacting, and as a result, modernization has direct relevance to processes of human development, including cognitive growth.²⁴

Research has linked the advancement of technology to the rise in the education levels of even young children. Young children today are benefitting from interactive learning games that come in all different shapes and size, from handheld video games to educational DVDs and even web content. All these learning tools are designed and marketed specifically for young children. Research suggests that children learn by doing. *The Future of Children* journal reports, “Computer applications of many kinds, and especially computer games, are designed in ways that emphasize visual rather than verbal information processing.”²⁵ It seems one would be hard pressed to find a household in America that hasn’t been exposed to such forms of technology. Since this is the case, it is not surprising that children with use of such technology also seem to have a leg up on learning when compared to their predecessors.

One needs to be aware of such cultural factors when it comes to engaging children in learning in a worship setting. Children are easily bored with verbal communication, because that is not how they have been trained to learn. This does not mean that verbal communication cannot be effective. It can be when it is used properly. But a pastor or teacher who is aware of how children are spending their time and how they are learning at home (and often now in school) will seek to employ other means than simply verbal communication to get their message across.

Children are the future. That is the way it is and that is the way it always will be. As such, it is beneficial for pastors to remember these key insights into how children learn, into how they know, as congregations struggle with how best to involve children in worship: Simplicity is the key. Only one concept should be introduced at a time. Teach using concrete language. Understand that a child’s words may simply be audible thinking and it is then the instructor’s

²⁴ Mary Gauvain and Robert L. Munroe, 1628,1629.

²⁵ Kaver Subrahmanyam, Robert E. Kraut, Patricia M. Greenfield, Elishaeva F. Gross. “The Impact of Home Computers Use on Children’s Activities and Development.” *The Future of Children*, Fall/Winter (2000), 128.

goal to guide that thinking to correct understanding. Don't be afraid to engage multiple senses in learning. Finally, be prepared for egocentric mentalities. It is vital to stay in control of the lesson at all times so it does not run too far afield. It's best not to underestimate what children will be able to understand. Research has shown that children are learning more at a younger age than ever before. Learning the truths of God's Word and learning how to return praise to God in worship should not be left for a later date. Every time a child is in worship is momentous opportunity. A shepherd of God's flock needs to recognize and take advantage of every such opportunity.

3. CHILDREN IN THE CHURCHES

Children are an important part of any congregation. Jesus showed them much love during his time on this earth. God the Father shows a deep concern for them in his Word. It is only right that congregations hold that same mindset. It is important for every child to be involved and to be made to feel a part of a congregation and to share in the many and varied blessings that come with it. It is important for them to learn what it means to be a Christian, for them to learn how to worship their Lord, and for them to learn “the way [they] should go” as the proverb states. There are many ways to do this that are currently being employed. The following study of current individual congregational practices gives a snapshot into how this noble task is being carried out.

3.1 THE STATS

A survey of forty congregations within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was conducted in order to see what was being done to involve children in worship. This survey was completed by twenty-one congregations from the Western Wisconsin district and from the South Atlantic district in order to obtain information from both a historically well-established WELS area as well as from a more recently established WELS area. The survey involved two distinct regions in order to determine if there was a notable difference in the way that these two areas approached the issue of involving children in worship. No noticeable difference was found except that the South Atlantic district had considerably more churches that claim to have little to no children in regular attendance due to location around retirement communities. On account of this lack of differences in approach, all findings will be grouped together with no distinction of the areas from which individual surveys were taken.

In all, twenty-one surveys were completed. Of those twenty-one, 62%, or thirteen congregations, claimed to have a program currently in place that regularly involves children in worship. Of those thirteen, eleven use a children’s message, one uses a form of Children’s Church, and one uses both. On the other hand, 38%, or eight congregations, claimed no such programs. Of those eight, six listed the reason as being that they had little, few, or two or less children regularly in attendance at worship. One did not include a regular program for the stated purpose of not splitting up families during worship. The other claimed to address worship involvement through worship training techniques in Sunday School that could then be used in

worship and also through addressing children specifically when possible in the regular sermon delivery.

Although more than half of the congregations surveyed had a regular program in place focusing on involving children in worship, only four of those congregations used their respective programs on a weekly basis. Those that did not include the program on a weekly basis often stated that their children's message took place on non-communion Sundays. This would tend to imply that the reason for not incorporating the program each Sunday was on account of time constraints for the service.

In order to gain a perspective on how pastors themselves generally view the effectiveness of their programs, two questions were asked. The first question aims to the heart of the program: Rate in your view how effective this program is at teaching children the truths of God's Word. Pastors were given the choice of four options: *Excellent*, *Acceptable*, *Could be better*, and *Poor*. Thankfully, none of the responses came back *Poor*. Of the thirteen who have regular programs, three rated *Excellent*, seven rated *Acceptable*, and three rated *Could be better*. The second question dealt with how the program appeared to be working on a surface level: Rate in your view how effective this program is at involving children in worship. Again, none came back *Poor*. Of the thirteen, five rated *Excellent*, six rated *Acceptable*, and two rated *Could be better*.

These ratings seem to be consistent for more than just these two isolated areas of the country. Based on observations and conversations with pastors from other congregations, a more extensive survey would likely harvest similar results in other regions of the synod. It's easy to get children involved in worship. There are countless ways to do it, such as: utilizing their musical abilities, using them as greeters or junior ushers, addressing them specifically in a prayer, or creating a completely separate service for them altogether. But all of these efforts mean very little if children are being involved just for the sake of them being involved while their spiritual learning and spiritual needs are not being addressed. That is not to say that needs are not currently being addressed. Pastors are very aware of the need to involve children in worship and to reach them also on a spiritual level. But the fact remains that the goal of teaching children the truths of God's word in worship is not consistently at the level of excellence that many desire or that many see as a possibility.

3.2 THE DIFFICULTIES

There are a number of factors that pastors noted that make children difficult to minister to in corporate worship. The first is the entertainment factor. Many find it difficult to engage children without “entertaining” them, or rather they think that the only way to engage them is to entertain them. One pastor wrote, “Communication ability for that level--we're not trained as pastors for that.” That is probably a fair statement. When pastors believe that their only option is to entertain, many fear that worship might turn into a show or a spectacle that is merely sensory pleasure rather than spiritually strengthening. This is a legitimate concern. Many church bodies are moving in that direction, not only with regard to how they engage children in worship, but with regard to how the entire congregation worships. As a survey responder who does not use children’s sermons or Children’s Church noted,

I think that the early Christians looked at worship, and practiced it, with a different spirit than nowadays where “showmanship” and “entertaining” are strong influences or enticements in American worship, highly influenced by the “community,” “free,” and “evangelical” churches that put an emphasis on "entertainment" and showcasing a “group,” in place of liturgical worship, in order to "involve/engage the worshippers" (since they've eliminated the liturgy that would involve the worshippers!!).

Science does say that people learn best when all the senses are engaged in learning. Hewitt says, “Children use their whole bodies to learn...The same should be true in corporate worship. The children’s sermon is a time for the Bible to come to life for children.”²⁶ Hewitt’s words have value, although she takes it to the extreme. She suggests that the whole congregation be involved in acting out Bible scenes with the children, making the children’s message portion of worship into a drama production. But that is not the point of worship. Yet there is still value in her words. Children’s sermons can be done well when the children can see the story, hear the lesson in their language, and feel God’s hand in it along with their place in it. This does not have to involve a large production. Rather it can be done with simple, carefully crafted object lessons, colorful (yet concrete) language, a well-thought-out straight-to-the-point message, directed questions, or even through a song.

The entertainment factor is also a concern for those doing and those who have at one time thought about doing Children’s Church. This is especially true when the program involves

²⁶ Beth Edington Hewitt, 31,32.

children being on their own away from the corporate worship setting throughout the entirety of the service. There is only so long that a child can be engaged in learning before he or she seeks to be entertained, and that seems to be what most full-service Children's Churches fall back on. Can the children learn through entertainment? Absolutely. Can a child's faith grow in this setting? Yes. Are they missing out on the encouragement and maturation that comes with worshipping alongside adults? One could certainly argue that point. Are they being set up to expect more entertainment from their worship when they finally join the adult setting? It is certainly a factor that needs to be considered.

The second factor goes hand in hand with the first: Time. One pastor highlighted this frustration when he spoke of time being a factor "both in the service itself and possibly in preparing the message, depending on how much of a production some want it to be." On the one hand many pastors feel bound by a time limit in the length of their services. In order to keep people "interested and happy," something needs to be cut. A children's message is something that many congregations feel they can do without, as children and adults are both getting the message either way in the regular sermon (assuming the children are actually there). There is nothing wrong with that approach as long as an effort is being put into involving children in the sermon and giving them something to relate to. Children can have a sense of belonging in worship if they are included in any way. It gives them something to hold on too, a reason to want to come to church on a Sunday morning. How much more when that way involves feeding them on their level with the life-giving water of the Word? One pastor summed it up well by saying, "In the end, keep it simple. Kids don't need something big. They just need something--something that is theirs, that they can look forward to, and that they can understand."

Time, on the other hand, can become a hindrance on the preparation side of things. Pastors feel pressed for time as it is, getting sermon studies finished and putting a final sermon together, let alone learning to preach it. A finished sermon is already a condensed version of the text study, and it's hard to then go back into that same message and try to, as some say, "dumb it down" even more for a children's message. This becomes an even greater challenge if he considers that this simple message is "blowing the point" of the real sermon for all of the adults in attendance. Also, on top of "dumbing it down," pastors then feel like they have to create a production in order to actually get the message across to children. Such a thing is time

consuming and can be a very frustrating. Some may feel that it is better to do nothing at all than to do it all poorly and waste their and others' time.

The third major factor is one that deserves a good deal of attention. The question was asked: What do you see as the biggest challenge to involving children in worship? Of the twenty-one survey respondents, as well as responses from verbal interviews, the vast majority spoke of a need for more parental involvement. It's common knowledge that the people who have the greatest impact on a child's life, in any part of their life, are those who are closest to them. It only makes sense that when children's worship lives are suffering, parents need to step in. However, it seems that today parents are either less interested in or don't have time to apply Proverbs 22:6 in their own lives. Culture and society urges them away from it. Life has become fast paced in almost every aspect, which means parents are spending less time with their children and are not finding or making time to take on the responsibility of teaching their children the value of church, let alone how to worship. Not only that, but family dynamics are changing as well. There are more and more single parent families across America, which by their very nature means less parental involvement. Who then does this great responsibility of worship training fall on? It falls on the church, and specifically on the pastor. How is the pastor supposed to handle such a task?

Many churches have taken on the task of involving children in worship through the medium of Sunday School. Sunday School provides a perfect opportunity for children to learn hymns, prayers, and canticles so that when they enter church, they are ready and able to participate. Children are excited to hear songs and hymns that are familiar to them and are then often more than willing to follow along and participate. Frederica Beard highlights just how much of an effect this prep time can have on a child when she says, "It is worthwhile to have a child smile appreciatively across the church at her teacher when she hears a familiar tune, and to have another say, 'They sang our hymn in church this morning.'"²⁷ This program of training for worship outside of the actual worship setting doesn't just have to be limited only to Sunday School either. Another medium is through Lutheran Elementary Schools. Again, when available, this is a perfect setting for worship training to take place. Of course, Sunday School and LES

²⁷ Frederica Beard. "A Consideration of the Psychology of Worship, with Special Reference to Children's Worship." (*The Biblical World* Vol. 48 No. 1 July 1916), 35.

worship training are not the focus of this study. This does not negate their importance. In the end, the best way to involve children in worship is to teach them how to worship.

Unfortunately, one of the products of a schedule packed, hectic lifestyle is that children, let alone parents, are not always in church on a regular basis. When children are not present it is impossible to get them involved. One pastor expressed his greatest challenges as these: “Parents who allow their kids to sit and do nothing during the service. Worse yet, parents who don't bring their little ones.” Another stated, “Faithfulness in attendance and parents who, themselves, are committed to Jesus.” These pastors and many others have highlighted this major concern when it comes to involving children in worship. But the concern goes much deeper. If parents are not present in their child’s spiritual lives, chances are very good that that child’s spiritual life will suffer. Again, Proverbs 22:6 rears its head, as pastors often commented, “Parents are the children's best teachers and role models.” The best thing for a child’s future worship life is a present worship life. The worst thing for a child’s future worship life is no present worship life. Pastors would do well to implement a program of training parents how to train their children.

Pastors recognize the importance of parents in children’s lives. They recognize the need to turn this responsibility back to the parents. They are looking for ways to do it. A number of suggestions were offered. First a foundation must be built through the parents, “A commitment ahead of time that parents will regularly bring their children to worship and also that the parents will sincerely try to have them come up and be involved. The parents should also teach the children the right etiquette for being up front.” Some believe that training that takes place in Sunday School or in a Lutheran Elementary School would have more of an effect if the training were coming from parents. One said, “I am a firm believer in having kids in worship, and teaching them to participate. That means parents reading the words along with the younger kids, using your pointer finger if necessary. Teaching them the prayers at home. Singing the hymns at night. Making the parts of worship familiar to them. Then, when Sunday rolls around, they know what's happening and are familiar with it.” He also knows that this will not always happen and recognizes the need for an at-church program to supplement this training. He continues, “Someone who owns [takes it upon himself] finding ways and implementing special ways to involve them (simply making it a priority).” He raises a valid point. While he is the congregation’s pastor and shepherd, it is not his congregation. The congregation is made up of

members, and a pastor would do well to intentionally seek out and encourage members who show a desire for involving children and allow them to make this their baby, their project, their program. Let a member “own” involving children in worship. The pastor will certainly be there to support such a program with whatever means necessary, but pastors need to remember that members need to be involved in training tomorrow’s members.

The difficulties that pastors brought to the forefront through this survey are ones that every individual congregation needs to consider. The task of involving children in worship can be an exceedingly joyful one because of the nature of children. It is that same nature that also makes it extremely challenging. It is not a challenge that any pastor should face alone. While a pastor can brainstorm and plan and even deliver on his own, the survey (along with Scripture and common sense!) says that that is not necessarily the best option. Parents need to be involved. Members need to be involved. A congregation is made up of many people, many people who belong to the body of Christ. Christians by nature of the Spirit working in them will seek to involve all members of a body of believers in worship of their God. They will seek to encourage and build up. They will seek to look after their own, to take care of the different parts of that body. They will support the efforts of those who are trying to complete such a task.

3.3 BLESSINGS OF A CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

By the numbers, more churches attempt to engage children in worship through a children’s message than through any other program. Biblical principles tend to give more support to this form of involvement than to its counterpart, Children’s Church, where children are removed entirely from corporate worship for all or part of a service in order for them to participate in their own age specific service. That is not to say that churches that conduct Children’s Church are in the wrong. There are certainly blessings to having a separate “service” dedicated solely to the little ones. Also, God gives Christians the freedom to worship him in different ways. Some churches, looking at their unique situation, feel that the benefits of Children’s Church outweigh the negatives. Therefore, in conducting such a service where God’s Word is being taught in its truth and purity, biblical principles are being followed.

Yet when Scripture does speak of worship, it speaks of it as an event for the entire family, where all members of the family are able to learn and grow together and benefit from one

another. Of the two major programs currently in use, Children's Church and children's message, a children's message within a worship service better fits that mold. There are a number of advantages for entire families in this regard.

The first is that it keeps children in worship. Worship should not be thought of as a place that is not suitable for young children. As one pastor commented,

No one is able to overstate the blessing of children in worship. They exude life and hope simply by their presence. They are a living breathing reminder of the child like faith Jesus desires, and a living picture reminder of the necessity to pass on God's truths to the next generation. If those truths, apart from the power of the Word of God, do not instill a sense of urgency and importance to carry out faithful ministry, the people in the pews are probably dead.

Parents often become fearful when their little ones put up a racket or a fuss, when they talk loudly or make faces at other worshippers. This fear often leads them to remove their children from worship, discourages them from even attending worship, and can even build resentment if they see other parents giving them looks. Congregation members need to be instructed against giving such an impression. They need to be the ones encouraging attendance of children at worship. They need to do all that they can to help struggling parents with so-called rowdy kids and to show them that their presence and that of their children is valued at worship. Raising the next generation of Christians is no easy task. Do not entire congregations pledge before God to help in any way that they can to accomplish this task at a child's baptism?²⁸ Pastors need to find ways to encourage and empower their parishioners to do just that.

When worship becomes a welcoming environment for children, the added life that the pastor eluded to in his response can abound. The simple faith of little children will be an encouragement to those around them. The maturity of the adults will rub off on the children. Adults will then be able to hear the same message as the children and be able to relate as they talk about issues that arise in the life of the child at church or away from it. Furthermore, children can know that the same message that applies to adults applies to them also. They will know that they are part of God's kingdom. They will know that they are a part of the body of Christ.

²⁸ *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Northwestern Publishing House: Milwaukee, WI, [1993]), 14.

The second advantage is that a children's message within the regular service benefits not only children but adults as well. It does this in two ways. The first way is by giving the parents a real life example of an adult talking about spiritual matters with their children. This may seem like a trivial thing, but there is a real blessing to it. Many parents don't know how to talk to their kids about spiritual matters in a way that gets through to them. They don't know how to compete for their child's attention with their toys and video games. Most are happy to be able to have someone who can do it for them at church. But seeing it done can give hope to any parent. It can show them that it doesn't have to be complex. If the children's message is being done by a lay member it can show parents that they don't have to be a pastor or have to know everything about the Bible in order to teach their children the simple truths of God's Word. If the pastor is conducting the message, the children's questions can often reveal that even the pastor doesn't know the answer to every question. Hopefully such an example does not lead to despair on the part of the parent. A pastor needs to be aware of such an outcome and do what is in his power to aid the parents of his congregation in whatever way he can in order to help them learn how to teach their children.

The second way that it benefits the adults of the congregation is that, as mentioned, children are not the only ones who can have difficulties learning by verbal instruction. After many services with a children's message the comment has often been given, "Thank you for that children's message. It really helped clarify things for me." A number of pastors in the survey noted this event as well, stating that adults are often appreciative of the lessons that are simply taught in the children's message. It's fine if pastors believe that they can work such a simple message into their sermons, and true enough, the message of the gospel is simple, but working a visual message, a visual object lesson, and also using language that any child can understand into every sermon is a little more challenging. That's not to say it can't be done or that it can't be done very well. It can. But it might be more effectively or more efficiently done through the use of a children's message.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Scriptures are clear in the terminology and teaching of the value of children in the eyes of their Creator. Just as God values them, so ought man to value them and take the responsibility in training them in the way they should go. Psalms 127:3 says, “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.” In Old Testament times, it was the sons who carried on the family line and received the inheritance. The word “heritage” used here refers to this. Children are a heritage, not only to carry on a family name and bloodline, but in the context of worship and church to be the next generation of workers in God’s vineyard. Parents, teachers, and pastors need to see this reality in all the children that God has placed before them. Children bring joy and happiness. They exude energy and life. They are truly a reward from God. They also truly have a need as sinner/saints to know how to worship their Creator and Redeemer. It is vital that they be viewed as such. God was serious about the raising of children in the past, and there is no reason to believe that his view toward their spiritual training has changed. He says in Deuteronomy 4:9, “Watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” God gives further encouragement in Deuteronomy 6:5-7,

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

In other words, the entire life of a Christian is an example and a mode of teaching for any children that have been placed in that person’s life. Again, it starts with parents and applies also to pastors and teachers. The passage shows how important it is to live one’s faith in everything that one does, in word and deed, so that, as Paul says, “the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12). Children are a part of that body, and they certainly need “building up.”

Science in the realm of psychology has taken huge leaps within the last century. How children develop cognitively has been studied to no end, and that study will continue into future generations, no doubt with an ever-increasing ability to see more and more into a child’s mindset through continued research. Different theories are bound to rise and fall as to “how we know,” as Piaget would have put it. These theories need to be continually kept in mind as one goes about ministering to children and tackling the challenging task of involving them in worship in a way

that is beneficial to their spiritual training. The theories need to continue to be evaluated as well against the principles that Scripture lays down about who and what children are by nature in God's eyes. As different theories have attempted to negate these truths of Scripture in the past, so will they in the future. A faithful pastor will do well to prayerfully decipher between truth and lie, because there are insights to be gained.

Research has certainly brought to light some generalizations about how children develop and learn. A pastor or teacher will have taken a huge step toward involving children in worship when he comes to understand a few basic characteristics of how they learn and develop. Included in this paper are these: Children learn by doing. They tend to be very egocentric. Children need to understand things concretely before they will grasp abstract concepts. And finally, children tend to focus on a single attribute or perception of a situation and disregard all others. With these characteristics in mind it is also important to remember that children today are a product of 21st century culture. They learn more quickly than in generations past because culture mandates that they be raised this way. This is not necessarily a bad thing (although such a fast paced culture does come with many flaws). Pastors sometimes get too concerned that even the simplest message is flying way over children's heads. It can discourage them from even trying. This is not necessarily the case.

Children continually prove that they are able to grasp and understand more than adults give them credit for. Teaching children the truths of God's Word in and through worship is not like throwing spaghetti at a wall to see what sticks and what slides off in a gooey mess. Their learning should not be viewed as an experiment that might work every once in a while. One should always assume that children will be able to understand everything that they are being taught. Will that ever be the case? Probably not. Yet an instructor will have no incentive to improve his methods if every time he only feels he has a faint hope of success.

Every congregation attempts to involve children in their own way. Some make a more concerted effort than others. Some have more of a pressing need than others. In the end, any involvement is good. A specific program that addresses the needs of children is better. It has been shown that this responsibility does not need to fall entirely on the pastor. A pastor will do well to identify and encourage members of his congregation to take up this task. Even then, that person or committee should not be acting alone. Whoever is the head of such a program needs

the full support of an entire congregation. When a body of believers is prayerfully and faithfully committed to being nourished and built up through the Word of God and through the power of God, here especially in regard to its young, it cannot fail no matter the outcome.

There are various ways that congregations have undertaken involving children in worship. Some make use a Sunday School or Lutheran Elementary School to train their children to worship. This is a wonderful blessing and one that cannot be overstated. But even in this setting, a program in place within the actual worship setting would be beneficial as well. There are any number of ways to involve children in worship, many of which were mentioned earlier. Those activities can certainly be spiritually nourishing. Children's Church is a program that a number of congregations are starting or considering. It certainly has its blessings. But it is not, and in this writers opinion will not, ever get to the point where it should in every case replace a corporate worship setting for children. Families who worship together have a better opportunity to grow together spiritually.

There is a dire need among children for parental involvement. Pastors are sensing a growing amount of complacency when it comes to parental responsibility of involving children in worship. Parents need to be instructed and shown through God's Word the urgency and responsibility that they have involving their children. There are great blessings waiting for parents who take on such an active role in their children's worship lives. They need to know too that they are not alone. They need to have a congregation of support for them and for their children. They need to know that they are not going to be able to do it perfectly or maybe even able to do it all. Failure is bound to happen from time to time. Yet parents and friends and pastors and teachers and brothers and sisters in Christ, yes God himself, will be there every step to help them along the way.

It is for all these reasons that a children's message is a good fit for most congregations. If at this point anything has been left understated, let these few remaining responses from current pastors overstate the case for a children's message in worship:

Do not focus on splitting up the family into groups - divorce and society do that. How about this... Focus on worship with the whole family. (The children crying keep the rest focused on paying attention. A silent church is sad). Have quiet bags with crayons, books, children's bulletins. Explain that children in church are a good thing! Where else should they be?

Finally, “Anyone in this day and age who feels that a children's sermon disturbs the worshipful atmosphere needs a lot of help. I am 74 and find it helps serve my people and makes visitors realize that our church is here to serve every one of God's ‘children.’”

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE #1

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Objects: 1 bowl unsalted popcorn (slightly burnt, so it's not as good)
1 bowl salted popcorn (battered too is good)

Lesson:

Let each child take a few pieces of unsalted popcorn and instruct them to taste it.

Leader: Does this popcorn taste kind of bleh (*emphasize bleh!*)? Do you think you could eat a whole bowl of it? Now try this one.

Let each child take a few pieces of salted popcorn and instruct them to taste it.

Leader: I made this one different. Does this one taste better? How much do you think you could eat?

I took this yucky popcorn and changed it and made it better. No one wanted to eat it before. With the salt it tastes good and now you could eat a lot of it. Without Jesus, we were yucky. We didn't look good. We were sinful. We were children of the devil. We weren't anything special. But just like I changed the popcorn, what did Jesus do?

Answer: He changed us.

Right. Jesus changed us. He turned us from yucky sinners that weren't anything special into yummy believers that are very special. We are different. Because we are different, Jesus wants us to act different. He wants other people to look at you and see how great it is to have Jesus as your Savior from sin. Can you try to listen to how Jesus changed you in the sermon today?

Prayer: (*Instruct the children to repeat after you and only say a few words at a time*)

Dear Jesus / you changed me / by taking my sins away. / Make me like you / so that other people / can see you / when they look at me. / Amen!

Note on this lesson:

This is more of a "traditional" children's lesson which involves an object and a moderate level of abstract thinking through the use of a metaphor. These can work if they are kept simple and the connection from the abstract to the concrete is not a difficult one. Note also here: 1) A very concise focus: "He changed us." 2) Short. It should last 3-5 minutes. 3) Involves the senses: Sight, taste, and touch.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE #2

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Object: Yourself

Lesson:

After the children come up, greet them and then say,

“Excuse me. Hold on one second. I’ve got to do something.”

Turn around and make it look like you aren’t doing anything for about 10 seconds. Turn back and face the children.

“Ok, now I’m ready.” They might ask you what you were doing. That’s great. Continue. If not, say, “Is anyone wondering what I was just doing?”

Now tell them what you were doing. You were saying a quick prayer to thank God for the children who came up today. Ask them if it made sense for you to hide what you were doing. It doesn’t make sense to hide something like that. Show how we often try to hide the fact that we believe in Jesus from other people by not letting them see things that we do like saying a prayer. Explain to them that God wants others to see us do these things, because when we do them, other people can see that there is something special about Christians and in turn give glory to God.

Prayer: (Instruct the children to repeat after you and only say a few words at a time)

Dear Jesus / You made me special / by taking my sins away. / Please use me / and the things that I do / to point other people / to you. / Amen!

Note on this lesson:

This lesson is much more concrete than EXAMPLE 1. It involves an object lesson, but there is no metaphor where abstract thinking is required. Also, it is free of incredibly tight verbal restraints, so the instructor is able to express himself more naturally. It is simple. It is short.

Note also the prayers in each lesson. They are an excellent way to involve every single child in the lesson and also a good way to get them to express verbally what was learned in the lesson.

APPENDIX B

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP SURVEY

Please answer all that apply.

1. Do you have a program in place that regularly focuses on the children who are in worship?
 - A. Yes (*if yes, continue with 2*)
 - B. No (*if "No", please indicate why and then skip to 5*):
2. What program do you use to involve children in worship?
 - A. Children's Sermon/Message
 - B. Children's Church
 - C. Other (*if "Other" please explain*):
3. This program includes involvement...
 - A. Weekly
 - B. Bi-weekly
 - C. Monthly
 - D. Other (*if "Other", please explain*):
3. Rate in your view how effective this program is at teaching children the truths of God's Word:
 - A. Excellent
 - B. Acceptable
 - C. Could be better
 - D. Poor
4. Rate in your view how effective this program is at involving children in worship:
 - A. Excellent
 - B. Acceptable
 - C. Could be better
 - D. Poor
5. What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) to involving children in worship?
6. Do you have suggestions/ideas/strategies that you think might benefit yourself or others when considering involving children in worship?
7. Additional Comments

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Jay E. *Studies in Preaching, Volume 3: The Homiletical Innovations of Andrew W. Blackwood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 1976.
- Beard, Frederica. "A Consideration of the Psychology of Worship, with Special Reference to Children's Worship." *The Biblical World* Vol. 48 No. 1 (July 1916) p. 25-38.
- Bland, Dave. "Thinking Through the Children's Sermon." *Homiletic* 32 No. 2 (Winter 2007) p.31-32.
- Brown, John Seely. "Growing Up Digital: How the Web Changes Work, Education, and the Ways People Learn." *USDLA Journal* Vol. 16 No. 2 (Feb. 2002).
- Capek, Allen D. *The Responsibilities of Christian Parenthood*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File: Delivered at Southern Pastoral Conference S.E. Wisconsin District November 10, 1970.
- Carr, James A. "The Children's Sermon: An Act of Worship for the Community of Faith." *Perkins Journal* 36 No. 3 (Spring 1983): p.1-57.
- Diehl, Walter A. *The Age of Accountability*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File: Arizona-California District Pastoral Conference, Mesa, Arizona, October 28-30, 1980.
- Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998.
- Gauvain, Mary and Robert L. Munroe. "Contributions of Societal Modernity to Cognitive Development: A Comparison of Four Cultures." *Child Development* 80 No. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2009) p.1628-1642.
- Gerlach, Joel C. *What Can Be Done to Make Our Children Active Church Members?* Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, (Date Unknown).
- Glende, Philip A. *What is the Responsibility of the Parent, the Teacher, the Pastor, and the Lay Person in Educating the Child*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File: Pastor, Teacher, Lay Delegate Conference, Jenera, Ohio, January 21, 1986.
- Goode, David A. "Kids, Culture and Innocents." *Human Studies* 9 (1986) p.83-106.
- Hewitt, Beth Edington. *Captivating Children's Sermons: Crafting Powerful, Practical Messages*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005.
- Hughes, Dana Steffee. "Worship in the Urban Church: Who are these children and what are they doing here?" *Call to Worship* 42 No. 2 (2008) p.47-48.

- Jones, Christine Yount. *Teacher Tips / 3-5 Years: Teaching Abstract Concepts to Kids*. Online. Children's Ministries. Available:<http://www.childrensministry.com/articles/teaching-abstract-concepts-to-kids> (8 February, 2012).
- Kastens, Gerald. *A Changing World...An Unchanging Challenge: God's Plan for Rearing Children*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File: Joint Metro-North Pastoral Conference and Dodge-Washington Pastoral Conference, Inn on Maritime Bay, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, January 20-21, 1992.
- Kilner, Adam. "Ministry: Why Bother?" *Touchstone* 29 No. 1 (Jan. 2011) p.36-37.
- McEntyre, Marilyn Chandler. "Preaching to Preschoolers: A Children's Sermon is a Time to Feed their Imaginations, not their Egos." *Christianity Today* 45 No. 10 (Aug. 6, 2001) p.65.
- Odegard, Timothy N., Crystal M. Cooper, James M. Lampinen, Valerie F. Reyna and Charles J. Brainerd. "Children's Eyewitness Memory for Multiple Real-Life Events." *Child Development* 80 No. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2009) p.1877-1890.
- Osmer, Richard Robert. "Teaching the Catechism in the Children's Sermon: A New Possibility for Biblical and Theological Literacy." *Journal for Preachers* 22 No. 4 (Pentecost 1999) p.37-43.
- Piaget, Jean and Barbel Inhelder. *The Psychology of the Child*. Basic Books: New York, 1969.
- Sims, O Suthern. "Children's Worship: Empirical Research Findings on the Children's Sermon and Suggestions for Implementation." *Review and Expositor* 96 No. 4 (Fall 1999) p.549-564.
- Singer, Dorothy and Tracey Revenson. *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks*. International Universities Press: New York, 1978.
- Staal, David. *Words Kids Need to Hear: To help them be who God made them to be*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2008.
- Stonehouse, Catherine and Scottie May. *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI, 2010.
- Subrahmanyam, Kaver, Robert E. Kraut, Patricia M. Greenfield, Elishaeva F. Gross. "The Impact of Home Computers Use on Children's Activities and Development." *The Future of Children*, Fall/Winter (2000), p.123-144.
- Vandenbos, Gary R., ed. *American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology*. American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, 2006.
- Walsh, David, PH.D. *Doctor Dave's Cyberhood*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2001.

Weisheit, Eldon. *God's Word in a Child's World: Messages and Guidelines for Sharing the Gospel with Children*. Augsburg Publishing House: Minneapolis, MN, 1986.

Westendorf, Rolfe. *Today's Children – A Lost Generation*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, (Date unknown).

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal. Northwestern Publishing House: Milwaukee, WI, [1993].