

PARENT LINES



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Sit Still and Be Quiet, Please!

What can parents do to get their child ready for school? Is part of the answer to get them ready for church? This mother of eight thoughtfully shares some ideas.

As a young mother reading *Little House on the Prairie* series to my children, I marveled at the expectations placed on the young characters to sit quietly for hours. In our modern times, even adults wouldn't have the ability to be so attentive. What was the difference? What have we gained, or lost, in our present-day society by doing everything faster? While these questions are beyond the scope of this article, I believe that training our children to sit quietly and listen for an extended period of time is a virtue that will benefit them throughout life. Following are a few thoughts and practices that I have gleaned over the years.

- It begins early. Train your child to be quiet as soon as they start making noises with meaning, for example: *mama* or *no no*. Meal time prayers and family devotions are a great place to start. By the time your child is talking, they should be able to stay quiet in church services.
- Expect to have to train them. While this sounds like a no-brainer, it's easy to think that a child should just behave because they know better, but most children will need a parent to remind them. Again and again.
- It begins in the home. It is not the Sunday school teacher or the grade school teacher's job to see that your child sits quietly. The child should gain this discipline before then.
- Dads need to be involved. Small children generally sit more quietly for their fathers.
- Keep the electronics away. Don't use them as a babysitter or even as educational toys for young ones. Your children

will have plenty of screen time in their lives without it.

- Teach by example. A young child wants to be "big." Point out to them that Daddy, sister, brother, etc. are sitting quietly also.
- Skip the toys and food for church services. Feed your child a good breakfast and keep the diaper bag for diapers. More stuff does not make a child quieter, in fact, it usually has the opposite effect.
- Make staying in the church auditorium more pleasant than being elsewhere. While this may seem contradictory to the above point, make every effort to stay sitting in church by having a special toy or book to play with. Also, if a child knows that they will be disciplined when taken out, they will likely think twice before making a fuss.
- Do not relax on the rules. If you do need to take your child out because they are being noisy, keep them sitting on your lap just like you would in the pew.
- Teach them how to sit properly. Don't allow them to stand up on the bench or on the floor, if they are too big to stand on your lap.
- Expect them to be involved. By the time your child can read, they should help sing and follow along in their Bibles with everyone else at church.

Finally, God has vested parents with the authority to teach and train our children. He will supply the wisdom and patience needed to complete the task.

—a mother of eight

Let Me Guide a Little Child

Dear Lord, I do not ask
that Thou should give me some high work of Thine,
Some noble calling, or some wondrous task.
Give me a little hand to hold in mine.
Give me a little child to point the way
over the strange, sweet path that leads to Thee:
Give me a little voice to teach to pray.
Give me two shining eyes Thy face to see.
The only crown I ask, dear Lord, to wear
is this: that I may teach a little child.
I do not ask that I may ever stand
among the wise, the worthy, or the great;
I only ask that softly, hand in hand,
This child and I may enter at the gate.

—Author Unknown