

segregation is closely correlated to “antisocial behavior and to socialization for competitiveness and aggressiveness” (Schlegal as cited in Sasse, 2017, p. 93).

**Unfortunately, decreasing numbers of young people have intergenerational worship experiences and social networks which has adverse theological and sociological effects because, Sasse (2017) explains that, as community density weakens, contexts for sharing wisdom also sadly evaporate (p. 92). Intergenerational worship is the practice of most family-equipping churches, notes Jay Strother, as they intentionally co-champion the church-home partnership (Stinson, 2011, p. 258). Since children being in church together with their parents for worship is both the biblical pattern and historical precedent, Rienow (2021) emphasizes that churches should therefore intentionally call parents to bring their children to church (p. 340).**

#### References

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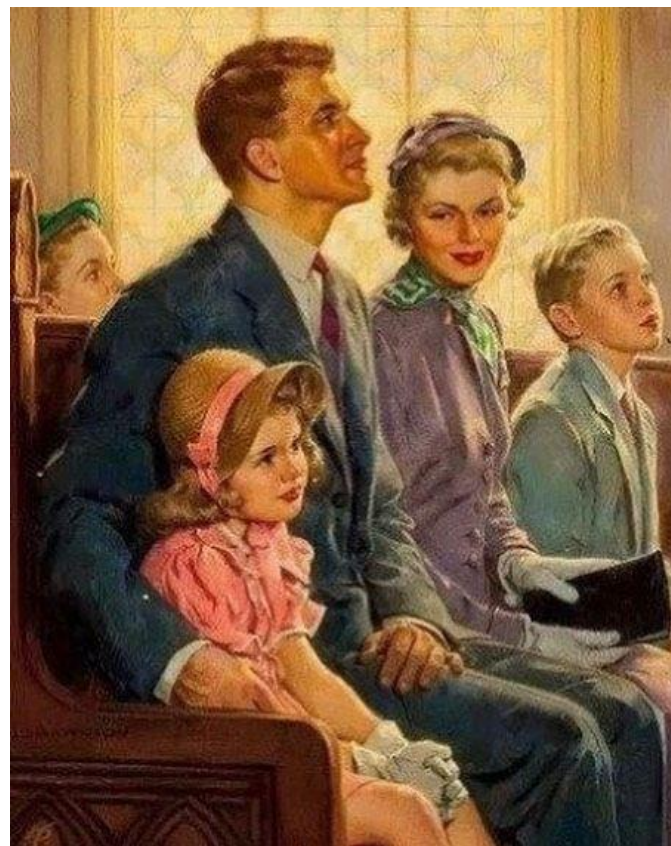
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## *This is Why Children Should Be in the Entire Worship Service*



*“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them...’  
Matthew 19:14a NKJV*

*“Children being in church together with their parents for worship is both the biblical pattern and historical precedent. Churches should therefore intentionally call parents to bring their children to church.”*

*Rob Rienow, Visionary Family Ministries*

**Whether children should be a part of the corporate worship service in the local church or separated into a discipleship environment designed especially for them is a question that Rienow (2021) notes was rarely asked because for nineteen hundred years of Christianity, there was a universal answer and universal practice** (p. 331). Although the testimony of church history bears witness to the reality that children worshiped with their families in the weekly worship service, this alone is insufficient as Holy Scripture is authoritative for shaping our understanding of worship and the purpose of the local church (Rienow, 2021, p. 331). Dr. Mark Dever in *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* explains that the Regulative Principle states that everything we do in a corporate worship gathering must be clearly warranted by Scripture (Dever, 2005, p. 77). Whereas the Regulative Principle forbids anything not commanded by Scripture, Dever (2005) notes that the Normative Principle allows anything not forbidden by Scripture (p. 77).

**The issue of whether or not children belong in church is a practice established upon biblical commands and clearly expressed patterns unfolded throughout the Word of God.** Rienow (2021) observes that in the Old Testament, God commanded Hebrew parents to celebrate Passover with their children (Ex 12:24-27), God commanded Israel to worship with their children in the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 16:9-11, 16:13-14, 31:9-13), families worshiped together during the time of Joshua (Josh 8:34-35), they repented together under Ezra’s post-exilic ministry (Ezra 10:1), and God also commanded Israel to worship together with their children during the time of Joel’s prophetic ministry (Joel 2:15-16) (Rienow, 2021, pp. 332-334). In the New Testament, Rienow (2021) further notes that children were included in church services in the book of Acts as Eutychus is recognized as a boy between the ages of seven and fourteen years of age (Acts 20:7-12) (pp. 335, 343). **It is also quite interesting to see that children were also included in the**

**church services in Ephesus and Colossae** as indicated by Apostle Paul’s divinely inspired address directed to children and their responsibility before God in relation to parental authority (Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20) (Rienow, 2021, p. 335).

Speaking to this issue, Douglas Wilson writes in *Future Men* that **the testimony of Scripture teaches that children are not to be automatically and routinely excluded from the public worship of God** but that children were not universally included in public worship as a necessary requirement either citing Nehemiah 8:1-3 (Wilson, 2001, pp. 96-97). Wilson (2001) further explains that the “pilgrim festivals” of Israel, held in Jerusalem, required only males so there may be times when it is appropriate to have those who cannot understand back in the nursery (Ex 23:17) (p. 97). Rienow (2021) contends that there is no explicit reference to children in the Nehemiah passage and can therefore not be used as an overarching text to be used to justify the systematic exclusion of children from the corporate worship gathering of the local church while ignoring the plethora of other biblical texts that do explicitly address children in public worship (p. 336). Wilson (2001) does advise that **squirmy little boys should especially be present in the worship of God early in their lives and that modern parents be committed to the hard discipline of family discipleship and not get accustomed to the convenience of not having to train their children** in the understanding of how to worship God in an intergenerational context of church (pp. 95, 97).

**It is fascinating to see that multiple generations of a family in worship together was the norm until the 1980s and 1990s**, when, according to American historian Ben Sasse, mall-like mega-churches began offering services and programming tailored to the market segments inside their congregations (Sasse, 2017, p. 92). **The biblical and historical precedent is actually substantiated by research studies** conducted by the Fuller Youth Institute which indicate that “involvement in all-church [intergenerational] worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation” (Sasse, 2017, p. 92). Social science also validates adolescent interaction outside their peer bubble as University of Arizona anthropologist Alice Schlegel has studied 186 preindustrial cultures and found that age