

“The worship of God by children is a beautiful moment in the corporate worship experience. If we as ministers, parents, and teachers are to nurture children into faith, we need tools that will equip, support, and enhance that moment. Kelly Belcher’s book of sermons offers fresh ideas for the timeless scriptures that flow through the church year. These sermons are filled with creative connections that guide children to offer their presence and praise to God. Most notably, these sermons are held together by the common thread of God’s deep love for God’s children and the conviction that children need to know that their place in the body of Christ matters.”

Ruth Sprayberry DuCharme,
Associate Pastor for Faith Formations for Families,
Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, GA

Nurturing Faith in Children

*52 Children's Sermons
for the Church Year*

By Kelly L. Belcher
Carol Brown, Editor

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Gratitude to Monica Vaughan of Greensboro, N.C., for sponsoring the publication of this
volume of children's sermons.

Cover image by David Cassady.

DEDICATION

For my teachers and heroes, Owen and Kera

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FOREWORD

By Kelly L. Belcher

There is nothing more wonderful than participating in the worship of God with children. Their curiosity, receptivity, joy, appreciation and noisy wiggling help us as worshipping adults to stay human; they allow us to embody God more fully.

If you'd like a resource to engage children in weekly worship that welcomes and affirms their questions, furthers their Christian formation, and enables them to become worshippers themselves, then keep reading! You have such a resource in hand.

Helping kids get a handle on the depths of faith is no small job. A recent cartoon showing Jonah inside the belly of the whale, where he was mighty surprised to find Pinocchio, illustrates how confusing the biblical material can be for them.

We may have kids from age 2 to teens in the sanctuary hour. We might have a shifting group with visiting kids as well. It's easy to spend more time just shushing kids than helping them comprehend what worship is, why and who and how we worship, and what is their place before the altar of The Lord God Almighty.

This collection of children's sermons provides ideas and direction for including kids in worship times along with adults. We hope it helps worship leaders help kids participate without making them into a show to entertain adults.

These children's sermons have been compiled and edited from the weekly contributions that were part of the initial Nurturing Faith Bible Studies, giving attention to the cycle of the Church Year.

May these lessons spark the imagination of those who lead children in worship so the children's time is tailored to the leader's personality and the worship setting.

Many thanks to Carol Brown whose editing finesse and experience in shaping the faith of children has brought this collection to its final form. And gratitude to Monica Vaughan of Greensboro, N.C., for sponsoring this volume.

May this Sunday-by-Sunday journey of faith help all of us to sit for a while on Jesus' knee.

INTRODUCTION

God calls us to love everyone as beloved children of God. To love someone we must desire to understand them, to listen to them, and to pay attention to them. This includes the youngest among us—the children in our congregations. If we hope to encourage children to develop a personal faith in God, we must first love them. Loving children means paying attention to children. It means thinking about their experiences and trying to see the world through their eyes.

As we gather as a congregation of believers to worship God each Sunday, our children are watching and listening. By providing a time to tell the stories of God in a way that the children can understand, we are demonstrating to the children that they are important to God. We are saying that God loves them and desires their worship as much as the worship of the adults. The children's sermons that we share during this set-aside time should draw children into the rhythm of worship and help them connect to God in a deeper way. By focusing on the scripture passage or sermon theme of the day, the children's sermon can illustrate the scripture for the children and enhance the worship experience for adults and children alike.

From the first Sunday of Advent to Christ the King Sunday (the end of the church year), the church year seasons reflect the rhythm and seasons of our lives. Following the movement of the church year and choosing scriptures and themes from the lectionary will broaden our worship services to include texts that we would often not choose on our own. When our children are included in these same church year themes, we can expose them to many rich stories, scriptures, and biblical characters that they might not discover through the typical Sunday school lessons and stories.

In this book, you will find 52 children's sermons—one sermon for each Sunday in the church year. Each sermon is based on a focus passage, with a short portion of the passage noted as a memory verse. The author has provided a bit of background to summarize the focus of each children's sermon. Most of the children's sermons presented in the book include objects or props to help bring the words to life for the children. The props are included in the "Items for Preparation" list before each sermon. Each children's sermon concludes with a prayer, which is usually an opportunity for the children to repeat the simple prayer as the leader says each line. Children learn religious practices through modeling and practice—your prayers can introduce young hearts to the language of prayer.

Let these sermons serve as a guide. Adapt them as you see fit so that your group of children will grasp their meaning and grow in their understanding of spiritual themes. As you spend time with children in worship, count it a privilege to convey to your children a love of scripture, a passion for learning, a desire to know the heart of God, and a love for the wonderful stories of the Bible.