



May 17, 2026 | Matt Magee

Series: Acorns to Oaks: The Worshiping Family

Sermon: Tour Guides Training Participants in Corporate Worship

Main Scriptures: Nehemiah 8:1-3; Deut 31:11-13

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CHURCH BODY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Review this week's **Newsletter**

ICEBREAKERS

- Have you ever visited a famous landmark or museum (like the Grand Canyon)? What is the difference between wandering around by yourself versus having an expert "tour guide" point out what to look for?
- When you think about Sunday morning worship with children, what is the first emotion that comes to mind? (e.g., joy, anxiety, exhaustion, expectation?)

PRINCIPLE: Children belong in worship as active participants, not quiet spectators.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-3 together and discuss: Notice who was in the assembly: "both men and women and all who could understand what they heard." The Hebrew word here implies a threshold of comprehension, not a minimum age limit. Why do you think Ezra was so intentional about including the children in this six-hour reading of the Law?

Read aloud a few of these cross-references as a group:

- **Deuteronomy 31:12:** *"Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones... that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord."*
- **Joshua 8:35:** *"There was not a word... that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones..."*
- **Ephesians 6:1:** *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."* (Note: Paul wrote this letter to be read aloud to the gathered church, fully expecting the children to be present to hear it!)

Discuss: How does this consistent biblical pattern challenge the modern cultural idea that "big church" is only for adults? What does it mean for our children to be active *participants* rather than just quiet spectators?

PROBLEM: We often resist this because we manage kids as distractions instead of participants.

- Let's be honest about the struggle in the pews. When our children squirm, drop crayons, or ask "Is it over yet?", two deep root idols that flare up: **Comfort** (wanting an uninterrupted hour of peace) and **Control** (wanting the people behind us to think we are successful parents). Which of those two do you struggle with the most on a Sunday morning?
- When we operate out of a desire for control or comfort, we end up playing "behavior whack-a-mole." How does this inadvertently teach our kids that faith is just about "faking it" and not bothering the adults?

GOSPEL: Jesus shed His blood to welcome distracted sinners as full participants.

Read Matthew 19:13-14 together. (*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them..."*)

- The disciples acted like spiritual bouncers, shooing the "distracting" kids away because it was "adult time." How did Jesus respond? What does His response tell us about His heart for young *participants*?
- Pastor Matt reminded us that Jesus absorbed the ultimate distraction of our sin on the cross. He lived the life of perfect patience we fail to live. How does knowing that your standing before the Father is based on Christ's perfect record—and not your child's pew behavior—free you from the crushing pressure to look "perfect" on Sundays?

RESPONSE: We get to train our kids as participants by becoming their Sunday morning tour guides.

- If you don't have children, how can you support and help parents with children?
- A crying child in the assembly isn't a disruption; it's a sign the church is alive. What does it practically look like to be a "tour guide" for a child during the service? (Hint: Whispering during a song, explaining communion, or using tools like the "My Church Notebooks.")
- Whether you are a parent, a grandparent, or a single adult, David Michael reminds us that we all share the responsibility to nurture the next generation. What is one specific way you *get to* help a child in our congregation become an active *participant* this coming Sunday?

PRAYER PROMPT

Close by praying that God would free the parents in your church from the idols of comfort and control. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower your congregation to rest in the finished work of Jesus, so that you can joyfully and patiently whisper the truths of the Gospel into the ears of the next generation.