



The Church Family Moment

Assisting all ages with actively engaging with scripture during worship

Definition and Purpose of a Church Family Moment

How many times have adults commented after worship that they connected very well with the Children's Sermon? They might even say something like, "I got more out of the children's sermon than the adult sermon!" Often, when this happens, we are tempted towards frustration and dismissal—but what if we listened to them? Or what about the church where children are not really even considered when planning worship? Enter the Church Family Moment.

The Church Family Moment is a dedicated time during the worship service when people of all ages are given ideas for engaging more deeply with the scripture during and after the worship service. This eliminates challenges with a traditional children's sermon: the children are not brought up to sit on display, they aren't singled out as the only people who need active ways to engage with scripture (and truthfully, they aren't). This offers an opportunity to journal, take notes, and create art. It also provides suggestions for those who are worshipping at home via technology for some things to do while all ages in the household worship together.

This model includes a written component that is printed in the bulletin with instructions, and a spoken component for a liturgist to lead.

Getting Started:

- Read the passage.
 - Read several translations and find the story in a few children's Bibles as well. Is there a picture book that tells the story?
 - Spend some time in silence and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what about this passage is significant for the people your context.
 - Visualize the passage: what do you hear, see, smell, taste, touch?
 - If the passage is very abstract, what is a basic idea that will translate for concrete thinkers? What words in the passage need to be defined for them to be developmentally appropriate?
 - After you have read the passage, what questions do you still have? Write these down and put them aside for your journaling questions.
- Consider your listeners.
 - What current events (local, national, global) are impacting your congregation this week?
 - What basic idea about God do they need to understand from this passage? Or:
 - What basic aspect of the Christian life can they learn from this passage?

Planning the Written Components:

Tip: Many of the written components are especially helpful for people worshipping at home or for in-person worshipers to do later, but some should be doable for folks in the sanctuary. If they need special supplies,

consider having these available for in-person worshipers as they enter. Plan to include several different options/activities in this written piece.

- Journaling
 - Include 3-4 journaling questions every week in the Church Family Moment.
 - If you can coordinate questions with the preacher of the day, they are even more helpful.
 - If you get stuck writing questions:
 - Consider some wonder questions. “I wonder why Jesus said...”
 - Prompt writers to put themselves in the passage. What would they say? Who would they be in the passage?
- Art
 - Illustrating a Bible story in comic strip style is a great way to help with sequencing and recall.
 - Consider asking people to fold a piece of paper in half and illustrate a time when they embodied the aspect of Christian living and a time when they did not.
- Play
 - Especially for folks worshiping at home, think about a way to “gamify” the story. For example, the lost sheep and a game of hide and seek.
 - Some scriptures naturally lend themselves to being acted out. Ask people to quickly assemble some supplies during the next hymn and then act the story out as it is being read.
 - Encourage families to play games in the car on the way home after church.
- Sensory Experience
 - Is there a way to make this into a sensory experience? For example, could worshipers walk through their neighborhoods and listen to the sound of creation? Could they bake bread or taste salt? The freedom of worshiping at home means they have access to lots of sensory items.
- Connection
 - How can you turn this moment into a point of connection? Can you ask worshipers to write a letter or send a text to someone?
- Multimedia
 - Look for a video of a storybook that connects well. Union Presbyterian Seminary’s Storypath website is a great resource for making these connections. (<http://storypath.upsem.edu/>)
 - Other great multimedia resources are hymns that go along with scripture, videos of Bible stories, Kid President videos, and Sesame workshop videos. Always preview videos before linking to them.

Planning the Spoken Moment:

- Depending on whether your church family moment comes before or after the scripture reading, you may need to give a broad overview of the scripture.
- If the scripture is a story, you might tell or retell the story in an interactive way.
- Ask one of the journaling questions.
- If one of the activities in the written part of the Church Family Moment is to create something, you might show an example.
- Point all ages to the additional ways to engage the scripture printed in the bulletin.

Example of a Church Family Moment

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

Written Component

1. Make a sound storm! Start by snapping your fingers for tiny raindrops. Then pat your legs to make the sound of bigger raindrops. Clap your hands for big raindrops! Stomp your feet for thunder! Now count to 3 and stop suddenly. Don't make a sound. In today's story, Jesus calmed a storm!
2. Jesus helps us to feel safe when we are afraid. Create a safe and comfy spot in your home. What will you put there? Will you cover the area like a fort? Will you use pillows and stuffed animals?
3. Make a small boat using whatever you can find around your house. Here's a hint about things that will float: ivory soap, Styrofoam, balloons, egg cartons, and more! Put it in the water, and then make a storm come around it. Before your storm ends, proclaim, "Peace! Be still." If there were people in the boat, how would they feel? How did it feel to make the storm? How about to stop it?
4. Journal, using these reflection questions:
 - I wonder if you have ever slept through a storm...
 - Have you ever prayed when you were scared and asked Jesus to be with you?
 - Why do you think Jesus fell asleep?
 - How would you have felt if you were a disciple?

Spoken Component

Tell the story and have the whole congregation participate in making the sound storm, show a small boat made from an egg carton, and then read a few of the journal prompts out loud.

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