V CORRECTION

Have a plan before you need it. Both parents agreed, settled in advance. Discipline is a process, not an event, and never a reaction in the heat of the moment.

Do not negotiate. You are the adult in the situation. Redirection has limited value, and empty threats and visible frustration help no one.

Correct in the pew first. Instruct quietly before you head for the door. If you must step out, instruct, restore, and return. Never let the hallway become the reward for a meltdown.

Explain, then correct, then restore. Tell them what the offense was. Correct privately. Give them time to sit and recover. Bring them back, have them name what they did, hear "I'm sorry," and answer "I forgive you." It ends with a hug.

Match every correction with affection. High discipline and high affection, turned all the way up. Discipline drives things out; love puts things in. Correction without saturation love does not form a child, it only teaches him how to get your attention.

VI AFTER THE BENEDICTION

Reward attention. At Sunday lunch, ask "What was the Big Idea today?" Two things named from the sermon earns dessert. This is not bribery; Scripture affirms the principle of rewards.

Take their questions. Ask what they heard, what we sang, and what we prayed for.

Name their identity. God confers identity in baptism. Tell your covenant child that they belong to Christ, that this is a Christian home, and that you are raising them as Christians.

Pray for them, and give it years rather than Sundays. Consistency and prayer are what change children.

> Children in worship is not childcare in the sanctuary. It is a training ground.
>
> *You can expect more of your children, because Jesus does.*

The only thing worse than the sound of children in the church is the sound of no children in the church. Some of us are parents, some are grandparents, all of us are godparents. We took a vow at their baptism. Be patient, be encouraging, and lend a hand.

BEVERLY HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Parenting *in the* Pew

RAISING WORSHIPPERS

Training our children in the pew at Beverly Heights

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them."

MARK 10:14

We do not come on Sunday to sit with our children. We come to offer worship, and training them is part of the offering. It is a lot of work to bring children to church, and that is exactly the point. It costs us something.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

> Parents spending themselves on their children in the pew *is* the worship, and it is how an inheritance of faith is stored up.

I BEFORE SUNDAY

Know the goal. All training requires an end. Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. It cannot be the chief end of the children of this church if it is not the chief end of its members.

Guard the Lord's Day. Worship outranks sleepovers, birthday parties, and Sunday sports. Birthdays are good, sports are good, music lessons are good, but they are not Jesus. These are real goods in the wrong order.

Train all week. Let them hear you pray, read Scripture, give thanks, and ask forgiveness. Have Sabbath suppers and read the Word around the table. Faith is not a compartment; it is learned by immersion.

Practice sitting and whispering. Stretch the time a little each week at bedtime stories and family worship. Teach the difference between an inside voice and an outside voice. The Reformation Room is a good rehearsal hall.

Worship begins Saturday night. Clothes picked out, breakfast planned, worship bags and diaper bags packed, tithe money set aside, everyone in bed.

II SUNDAY MORNING

Feed them breakfast. A hungry child cannot attend to anything else.

Bathroom and water before the service. Barring a medical need, we can manage until the benediction.

Arrive early enough to settle rather than sprint.

Sit as a family, not with friends.

Choose the pew that helps you train. There is no right pew. Some families do better up front, where children can see what is happening. Others do better near the back, where a wiggly child is easier to manage and the Reformation Room is a short walk. Choose what serves your family, and change it as they grow.

You get what you inspect, not what you expect.

III IN THE PEW

Aim at participation, not silence. The goal is a worshipper, not a well-behaved statue. Stand, sing, pray, listen, give, say amen.

Men, sing out and lead the way. A child will never engage more than what he sees the men and fathers of this church doing.

Learn the hymns together. Point to the music in the hymnal. "This is our heritage, son. This is a gift, daughter. Isn't it great?" If you cannot sing well yet, say so and learn alongside them. Use the singing to let out a few wiggles.

Use the bulletin. It exists to guide us in worship. Help them follow along. No child should sit or stand there lost.

Model it. A great deal of the parenting we do in the pew is simply letting our children see us worship. Teach them to love coming to church because you love coming to church.

Guard the reading and the preaching. That is when stillness matters most. Time any necessary movement for the transitions in the service, and make necessary noise quickly and be done with it.

Children's rooms are for training, not for relief. Infants and toddlers may need time in the nursery or the Reformation Room. Take them, care for them, train them, and bring them back. Spending yourself on your child in the pew is your sacrificial offering of worship.

IV WHAT TO EXPECT, BY AGE

Under 2 Start and end in the sanctuary every week, whatever happens in between. Trade off with your spouse. Keep something in their mouth: bottle, sippy cup, pacifier. Expect noise, and expect to walk.

2 to 3 One sheet of paper, two or three crayons held in your own hand, a few cheerios given out one at a time. Nothing more, and nothing until the sermon begins. Stand when we stand.

By age 4 Sitting through the entire service, on their bottom, facing forward. Toys and snacks are finished. This is the standard, and it is reachable.

5 to 8 A children's Bible, a notebook, a pencil. Draw the sermon. Find the text and follow along. Full quiet for the whole hour.

9 and up Own Bible, own notebook, own pen. Real sermon notes. Full participation in every part of the liturgy.