

INSPIRING KIDS TO WORSHIP

By Frank Hernandez

**“EDUCATION IS NOT THE FILLING OF A BUCKET,
BUT THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE”**

-William Butler Yeats (pronounced ‘Jerts) 1865-1939

(An Irish poet and dramatist, and one of the foremost figures of 20th-century literature.)

As children’s workers, it’s not our ‘job’ to just teach kids facts about the Bible, or the character of God, or how to sing songs and lift their hands on cue in church. This is only the ‘filling of a bucket’. No, our ‘calling’ is to light that ‘fire’ of understanding of who God is and to inspire every child to respond to His wonderful presence wherever they are, as long as they live!

In this workshop let’s explore some practical ways to help you help kids connect with God and walk in worship.

Who should inspire kids to worship?

- ❖ You should! Are you already involved in worship arts? A worship leader? A singer or instrumentalist? A painter, actor or dancer? Just someone who loves kids? If you feel that God has given you a passion to influence others in worship, remember that Jesus admonished us, ‘Let the little children come to me’. What better way to let kids come to Jesus than through worship!
- ❖ Leading kids in worship is not a staff position, it’s not a job – It’s a calling – something God puts on people’s hearts! Do you have:
 - A love for God
 - A love for kids
 - A passion to see kids love God
 - A love for creating something out of nothing?Then you should consider being a worship leader!
- ❖ Leading kids into a life of worship is something we are all called to do, whether we’re parents with 6 kids or single with no kids! It’s called discipleship!
 - Matt. 28:19-20 *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, eve to the end of the age.”*
- ❖ Helping kids develop their ministry gifts through which they can worship God creatively is called mentoring.

Why should you inspire kids to worship?

- ❖ You can have a life-long impact on children:
 - By **being an example** of someone who worships God through:
 - *Music

- Art
- Puppetry
- Dance
- Drama
- Helps

*Of course, my emphasis today is directed more toward music because most of you are probably musicians! However, even if you are not directly leading worship, but assisting, you can have a genuine influence as the kids see you worshipping.

- By **training them** to minister to the Lord and others through their gifts!
 - Most importantly, by **helping them to recognize** God’s presence in their everyday lives and **to respond** to Him in love, faith and obedience.
- ❖ Musically speaking, praise and worship songs can have a deep and life-long impact on children.
- They can come to know Christ (*Into My Heart*)
 - They can learn about the character of God (*Have Patience*)
 - They can learn about what God has done (*For All You Do*)
 - They can learn scripture, theology, and principles of Christian living (*Hide ‘Em In Your Heart*)
 - They can be encouraged in their walk with God (*Be Bold*)
 - Their hearts can be prepared for the teachers’ lesson or pastor’s message.
- ❖ Children have as great a capacity for worship as adults! Their bodies may be smaller, but their spirits are deep, their hearts are open and their faith is genuine.
- Stories:
 - Kids leading adults in worship
 - Kids in the back seat during a storm
- ❖ It’s a great way to grow in your gifts.
- Don’t wait until you think your playing ability is ‘good enough’. Get good by playing!
 - Kids are much more forgiving of our mistakes and lack of polish.

When should kids begin to worship?

- ❖ The sooner the better!
- Babies - Volunteer to rock babies in the nursery! Sing lullabies to them. Pray and worship with them in God’s peaceful presence.
Psalm 8:2, Matthew 21:16 *“From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise (“out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou has perfected praise.”)*
 - Preschool – They can learn basic truths... the building blocks of faith!
 - God, Jesus-His Son, The Bible, Praying, Praising, etc.

1 Sam. 1:20-22 (20) *So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel saying, “Because I have asked for him from the LORD.” (21) Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and his vow. (22) But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever.”*

- Elementary age – Learning to minister to the Lord and to others.
 - 1 Sam. 2:18 *But Samuel was ministered before the LORD – even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.*
 - Proverbs 22:6 *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*
 - Discovering their gifts – Music, arts, drama, etc.
 - Learning to use their gifts in ministry.

How do you inspire kids to worship?

- ❖ You start with YOU. You must first be a worshipper.
 - First and foremost, is He your God, your Savior, your Lord?
 - Does your life reflect the culture of this world or the culture of the Kingdom?
- ❖ Read/Study/Meditate on what true worship is.
 - Begin, of course, with the Bible! The book of Psalms.
 - Seek out opportunities to get into God’s presence, to worship in spirit and in truth through private devotions and corporate worship.
- ❖ Volunteer! Get on a worship team, or start one! Even if you’re not a great musician, God will use the gifts you have!
- ❖ Determine to be a worship leader, not just a song leader
 - They are not the same thing!
 - Just because they’re singing doesn’t mean they’re worshipping.
 - Just because they’re not singing, doesn’t mean they’re not worshipping.
- ❖ Be strategic. However short, use your time with your kids to help them grow in their understanding of genuine worship.
 - What is worship? What is praise? Is there a difference?
 - What makes a song a worship song? (Old MacDonald had a church?)
 - Why do we worship?
 - Who do we worship?
 - Where do we worship?
 - When do we worship?
 - Keep in mind, you don’t need to cover all of these at once!
- ❖ Be encouraging! Encourage the kids to worship God by honoring Him, thanking Him and praising Him during the rest of the week:
 - Wherever they are: at home, in the car, at school, with their friends, etc.
 - Whatever they’re doing : Playing sports, doing homework, Singing or practicing an instrument, etc.

Leading Kids in Worship Through Music

Preparing to lead worship

- ❖ Though it's an advantage, you don't have to be an instrumentalist.
 - Team up with others who can play and/or sing
 - Sing a Cappella
 - Use recorded tracks
- ❖ Build a kids worship repertoire
 - CD's / Internet downloads / iTunes
 - Learn from other kids worship leaders
 - Find appropriate adult worship choruses for older kids
 - Hymns
 - Write your own
 - Practice, practice, practice! Learn them well. Be comfortable with the songs.
- ❖ Create and maintain a Master Song list. If you know how to create or use a database on your computer, this is a great tool for listing and sorting worship songs according to age or grade, tempo, theme, etc.
- ❖ Create a Song Usage List
 - Keep track of the songs you use each week (A tool for you and for CCLI purposes)
- ❖ Put together a lyric notebook with all the songs you know (or want to learn).
 - Organize it in alphabetical order. This will help you in choosing songs and finding the lyrics quickly.
- ❖ And of course, PRAY for the Lord's help as you seek to be a faithful steward of this powerful ministry. Pray that you will grow in your gift!

So... you've been asked to lead worship

- ❖ Get all the information you can about:
 - Who you will be leading in worship?
 - What ages or grades?
 - How many kids?
 - How much time will you have?
 - Is there a theme to choose songs for? (Sunday school lesson, holiday, etc.)
 - Is there a sound system?
 - Depending on how many kids you'll be leading, a sound system is important in order to keep their attention and maintain control. You shouldn't have to shout above the kids! A loud whisper works wonders!
 - Will the system be up and running?
 - Will there be someone available to help in case it's not.
 - Are music stands available?
 - If you are using CD's, is there a CD player available?

- How early can you arrive to set up? Will the room be unlocked?
- Will there be an overhead transparency projector and screen or Power Point capability?
 - Will someone be available to run that for you?
- Are there any other activities taking place before or after you lead worship?
 - Will someone else be using the room before you
 - Will you need to clear your equipment away immediately afterward?

Choosing songs for your worship set

- ❖ Take your time. Don't attempt to throw a worship set together just before leading! (I often take 2 hours to put together a ½ hour set.)
- ❖ Keep in mind:
 - These are kids!

Many adult worship songs are too long, with melodies and ranges too difficult to sing, and concepts too complex or abstract for a child to understand.

 - Remember, worship songs are often prayers being sung. Choose songs with words that kids would actually use! Prayers they would actually pray! These are the songs they'll continue to sing through the week.
 - Kids have shorter attention spans. Better to sing 2 verses 3 times than 4 verses once.
 - Subject matter - Find out if there a theme, a holiday or an object lesson this week? (i.e. Thanksgiving - *Every Beat of My Heart*) Reinforce it with a song!
 - Ages of the children you'll be leading
 - Preschool vs. Elementary – Big difference in songs you should use
 - If possible divide your kids into different worship times.
 - K – 3rd grades vs. 4th - 6th grades - Gear your set toward the larger (not older) group without leaving out the smaller.
 - Older kids will not be inclined to do motions. Older boys are more self-conscience about singing out.
 - Younger kids will lose attention more quickly.
 - Size of the group of kids... 10 kids or 100 kids?
 - The more kids, the more you need to work to keep the kids engaged
 - Possibly more up-tempo or action songs
- ❖ When choosing songs, consider such elements as:
 - New song vs. songs they already know. It's good to introduce new songs, but no more than one or two, depending on how many overall.
 - If you introduced a new song last time, it's a good idea to include it again in your set possibly 2 or 3 weeks in a row so they can get familiar with it.
 - Variety of tempos (praise songs vs. worship, not all fast or slow)
 - It's usually good to begin with an up-tempo song to get their attention right away.
 - Fun!
 - Motions
 - Using different words (If Jesus Is Your Captain, This is the nose that the Lord has made, The T-I-B-L-E)

- Changing speeds
- Contests – Boys louder, Girls louder, different grades louder, etc.
- Individual kids singing solos (*Ho Ho Ho Hosanna*)
- Repetition - (*Forever*)
 - I like to use ‘Echo Me’ songs!
- Content they’ll remember - i.e. God’s character, God’s Word, ect.
- Keys (Try and keep the melody between middle C & 1 octave up)
 - It should be comfortable for you, but even more comfortable for those singing with you! Tenors, watch those high notes!
 - If you’re a guitarist, a capo is your friend! Learn to use one.
- Prepare more songs than you’ll need
- After choosing your songs, play and/or sing through them. Be sure you know them well enough to focus your attention on the kids, not the songs.
- It’s best to know all the words, but don’t hesitate to use lyric sheets. Put all your sheets (and your lyric transparencies or PowerPoints) in order.
- Be sure you have everything you’ll need, i.e.:
 - Guitar/ Instruments, Cables, Picks, Tuner, CD’s, Transparencies or Powerpoint files.
- Pray for God’s leading, His anointing and His blessing to accomplish all He wants to do during your time with the kids.

Before leading worship

- ❖ Arrive in plenty of time to set up and make certain:
 - Your own gear is working
 - The PA system is on and working properly. Mics are all on and volume levels are good.
 - If possible, have at least 1 extra mic available in case one of the others malfunctions.
 - Have a sound check and/or if there is time, run through all the songs at least once.
 - Overhead projector or Power Point is ready to go
 - Be sure you have someone to operate it
 - Lights are all on
 - The seating or standing area is as it should be. (Are more chairs needed?)
 - Seating can be important in order to maintain a good visual contact with your kids. I prefer not to use straight rows, but rather rows that are curved so the ends are closer to the worship leader.
 - If you are not using chairs, curved, colored taped lines on the floor or carpet can be very helpful when lining up preschool or younger elementary-age, i.e. *“First grade on the blue lines!”*
 - If teachers or volunteers are bringing in preschoolers for worship, try using brightly-colored knotted ropes for the kids to hold onto as they are moving in and out of the room . This will help maintain order promote kids staying with their class.
 - Song sheets are in order
 - Music CD’s are in order (if these are being used)
 - Guitar or other instrument you may be using is tuned
 - You and your team have prayed!

While leading worship

- ❖ Immediately get the kids' attention!
 - Have the kids stand
 - Pray and help them to focus their praise and worship on Jesus, who is right there!
- ❖ Let the kids participate!
 - If you don't already have a worship team who regularly sings with you, when it's possible, choose one or two of the kids in the audience to come up and sing on the microphones, joining you in leading the songs or actions.
 - Even if they can't sing very well, it's a blessing to them to join you for one song.
 - If a child can sing well, let them keep singing! Try and get their name. In the future you may ask them to join you or your team on a more regular basis. Who knows, they could be one of your church's future worship leaders!
 - Be sure to acknowledge the kids and thank them before you have them return to their seats.
 - Ask questions and let the kids answer. (What does 'Amen!' mean?) If they don't have the correct answer, encourage them for trying.
- ❖ If needed, briefly explain abstract words or concepts in a song's lyrics (God's glory?)
- ❖ Have the kids do what they're singing.
 - If they're singing a song about giving thanks, let the kids volunteer to pray out loud and thank God for specific things.
 - Raising their hands
 - Clapping
 - Bowing
 - Hand motions / Sign language
- ❖ Maintain your connection with the kids... ALL the kids! You can't concentrate only on those in the front row. Be sure they're hearing you and seeing you all the way in the back row!
- ❖ If you are losing their attention, do something different:
 - Change the words to the song
 - Change the tempo of the song
 - Change your volume (sometimes your whispering will quiet a noisy room!)
 - If you are multi-lingual, change your language (I've started reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish before!)
 - Change where you are standing (i.e. move down an aisle or to the back of the room!)
 - Change who is singing the songs (Girls sing, boys do the motions, 3rd Graders only!)
 - Change the song!
- ❖ If any of the kids are causing a distraction (talking/being disruptive), have one of your parent volunteers or teachers quietly talk to them or take them aside. Try not to direct your attention to them.
- ❖ Moving into more focused worship
 - Give them the opportunity to quiet down. You may want them to sit, but don't lose their attention.
 - Encourage them to close their eyes, to raise their hands, or to kneel at their seats.

- Ask them to listen carefully and to expect the Lord to speak to them
- Have them verbalize their praise and thanks to God, and to tell Him how they feel about Him. Let them tell the Lord that they love Him for who He is and what He's done.
- Don't be afraid of silence... even with kids. Yes, they can be silent.
- Try to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. You may sense an opportunity to direct the children to ask Jesus to come into their hearts if they have not yet done that.
- After a quiet time, ask the kids if the Lord said anything to them. Let them share.
- Close with prayer. If possible, give the children the opportunity to pray aloud as well.

After leading worship

- ❖ Thank the Lord for what He did through you! Pray that the kids will continue to be aware of God's Spirit and presence in their lives even after they've left church.
- ❖ Be prepared to help the teachers or staff make the transition to the next activity or class.
- ❖ Be sure to thank your team or those who helped you. They'll appreciate your appreciation! Remind them of any up-coming rehearsals.
- ❖ If required, be sure to leave the room in the same condition in which you found it.
- ❖ Check and make sure you have all your equipment before leaving!
- ❖ Debrief. Which songs did the kids connect with? Which songs didn't seem to work? Why or why not? Tempo too fast or too slow... key too high or too low?
- ❖ Continue to walk in worship!