



*"This is hope: 'I do not know what's next but I am catching a glimpse of something beautiful.'"*⁰

Doesn't that inspire a shift in perception of these COVID19 days! I don't know what God is up to, but I do believe with all my heart that He is making good and beautiful things in our hearts, homes, and communities. Teaching us, stretching us, refining us, providing for us. The church has not been closed, buildings have been closed-we are the church and we can remain open!

Hopefully you've been catching Pastor Gary and Erik's updates (gracecomm.org/updates). When we do gather again in person on June 7th it will look differently: social distancing, masks, multiple services, and children remaining with parents. Because we will not be offering childcare during the summer months, I wanted to take a moment to give practical direction on what that means along with practical tips for you to make the most of this opportunity for your family!

What it means:

To comply with Larimer County ordinances, **children must stay with the adults they live with** while they are inside the building and ages 3 and up must wear a mask. Children 5th grade and under must be accompanied by their parent to the restroom. **They may not go by themselves. Siblings may not accompany them.** The children's wing will not be accessible except for the Infant Room for nursing mothers only.

Practical Tips:

Remember the Positives this opportunity gives:

- We want our children to grow to see church as a place they belong, we want them to know Jesus, and to worship God with reverence and awe. This affords you the privilege of actively impacting that!!
- "There are few greater encouragements to a child's faith then seeing their parents worship God with reverence and joy."¹
- Remember, you are not trying to just keep your child quiet or entertained, you are teaching them and inviting them to participate in corporate worship at their level.

Begin now!

- During these weeks before we meet, have your children practice listening to the sermon with you. Encourage them to use their Bible, experiment with appropriate figits and coloring, etc...
- Use this time to teach them how you want them to listen and behave. Then when we can meet together-(hopefully soon!) you will be ready!

Prepare for Success:

- Have a bag that is just for church.
- special coloring notebooks and pencils/crayons that you only use at church.
- Pipe cleaners are a great quiet fidget. (i have lots if you need some)
- if age appropriate, gum or mints can help.
- Bring their bible, help them open it to the passage being preached on.
- Try different things out and see what works!

Set Clear Expectations:

- Every week remind your children what to expect and what is expected of them.

Social Distancing Expectations:

- We must limit contact with others outside of the family as much as possible and our children will need help to understand this. Talk to them ahead of time-letting them know **they must stay with mom and dad.**

- Tell them what they can do: wave to friends, wink at them, say hello from a distance. Show them what 6' looks like.
- Tell them what they cannot do: run around through the halls, hug their friends, get up and down during the service, sit with grandma or grandpa, etc...
- For young children, hold their hand if they need help to stay with you as you move in and out of the sanctuary.

Worship Expectations:

Children under 6

- Talk through each portion of the morning. "When we go to church, first we will sing together, stand with us and sing the words that you know!. Next we will sit quietly and listen to our pastor. You may look at your Bible book or color your picture to help you and mommy and daddy listen. Fold your hands when it's time to pray. Then we will get to sing together again!"

Children over 6:

- we will use the bathroom and get a drink before service starts, not during.
- We keep our bodies to ourselves.
- We stand and sing together, follow along as best you can!
- we sit and listen to what the pastor is saying.
- our coloring, figits, etc.. are to help with listening.
- we whisper when we have a question for mom or dad.

Right Combination of Discipline and Grace:

- Don't be afraid to step out if you need to address something.
- Start small, and add as you go.
- Celebrate Progress! Talk over the morning, share what you learned from the sermon, what you appreciated about how they listened and participated and what you would like to see different if correction is needed.
- Be honest about where your heart is. Your excitement and love for singing and hearing God's word is contagious!! But if you are struggling and not feeling it, share that too-It is good for our children to understand our commitment to gathering together when we don't feel like it and then share how the Lord lifted our head and encouraged us by coming!

Persevere! It is worth it!

- The Word of God is powerful and we have Jesus promise that it does not return void²
- The Holy Spirit is present and He gives help in times of need, wisdom in generous measures, and love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.³
- We know so much is caught for children and they often are learning much more than we realize!

I do look forward to when we can teach your children as we have in the past. But one of the things this season has revealed is that what we offer to your family in our *Grace Airways* programming is one part of the whole of their discipleship. May this summer time of corporate worship together reinforce the work you are doing as a parent, motivate you to value your discipleship role in your child's life in a new way, and foster a deeper relationship with your children and with your Ever Present Savior.

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⁰ unknown ¹John Piper ²Isaiah 55:10-11 ³John 16:13, James1:5, Galatians 5:23,

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