

# Leaving Your Child at the Door

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CHURCH

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Leaving your child at the door of her Sunday School class doesn't have to be a stressful ordeal for either of you. Most children experience separation anxiety during their early preschool years. It's a normal step in your child's emotional development. But, take hope. There are measures you can take in order to help your preschooler have a happy start to her day at church.



### Setting a Happy Tone Before Arrival at Church:

- Make Sunday morning less stressful. Preschoolers can sense your stress. Set out your child's clothes on Saturday night. Label all of your child's belongings and pack diapers and a change of clothes in his diaper bag.
- Feed your child before you leave for church. Separation is more difficult when a child is hungry.
- Sing a song about church or Jesus while dressing your child. Make up words to a song, using a familiar tune. You might sing these words: "We are getting dressed for church, dressed for church, dressed for church. We are getting dressed for church. We like to go to church" (tune "Mary Had a Little Lamb").
- Talk about your child's teachers and friends in her room while traveling to church.

### When You Arrive at Your Child's Room:

- Knock on the door and wait for a teacher to open the door. The door of the room is closed so that noise and people in the hallway do not distract preschoolers for Bible learning.
  - Encourage a child who is walking to walk to the door and into the room. It is easier for your child to separate from you if she is not in your arms.
  - Notify teachers of any changes in your child's routine. One teacher may take your child while another teacher talks with you and records schedule changes.
  - Face your child toward the teacher. More anxiety is created when your child feels she is being pulled away from you.



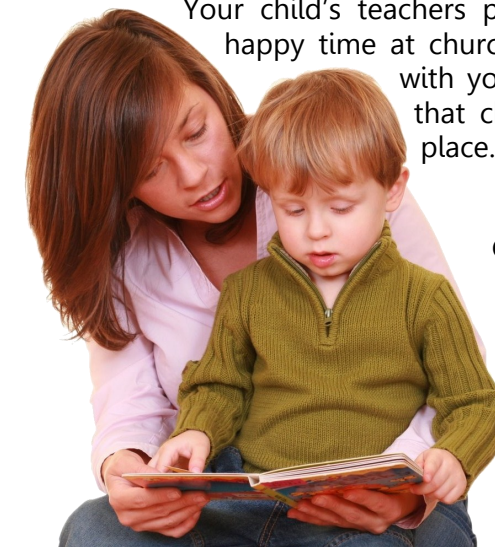
- Follow the security procedures outlined in your church's preschool policies. Have your security tag filled out and checkout a pager.
- Interest your child in the teaching item the teacher brings to the door. A teacher may bring a book, a nature item, a picture, or a toy to the door to help ease the transition into the room.

### What to Do If Your Child Cries at the Door:

- Tell your child good-bye.
- Reassure your child Mommy and Daddy will be back later. **Then leave.** Prolonged separations make it more difficult for your child to adjust.
- Avoid going back to your child's room to check on him. If your child sees you, it may upset him and the tears will start to flow all over again.
- Know that your child's teacher will page you if she is unable to comfort your preschooler after a reasonable amount of time.

Don't be alarmed if you have tried these suggestions and your child still cries at the door. Separation anxiety can be a brief period in your child's development or it may last months. Regular attendance at church does help your preschooler overcome this anxious stage. Promptly picking up your child after church reassures him that you will come for him in a timely manner.

Your child's teachers pray that your child will have a happy time at church. As teachers share Jesus' love with your child, he will come to realize that church is indeed a loving, happy place.



**GINNA ASHBY** is a parent and the director of preschool ministries at Fruit Cove Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida.