

Families Living in the Fabric of Faithfulness

Parents and children describe what works

By

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Acknowledgement

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It is unusual for scholars to publish books on the internet. Both of us have worked with prestigious publishing houses in the past and we considered doing so again for this project. However, the teachers and parents Gloria has worked with in Africa, India and other countries throughout the world have expressed great interest in the wisdom of the people we interviewed for this project. Many of these teachers and parents cannot afford the book and shipping prices of American publishers. So, we decided to make this project available to anyone who had access to a computer, or anyone who had access to anyone who had access to a computer. The internet is changing the way we disseminate information and we are eager to hear from readers. Please feel free to contact us with reviews or responses at the email addresses below.

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Introduction

We live north of Spokane, Washington, and there are many days when the air is very still; there is no wind at all. If it snows on such a day, the snow comes straight down, gathering on the branches of the tall ponderosa pines. The pines do not sway and bend, but now and then they break. From the freshly broken branches comes the wonderful smell of the forest.

Walking among those pines one cannot help but be aware that the new is always there among the old. It is as though God were playing a mystical hide-and-seek with us. Just when we think we know all there is to know about the forest, a new surprise is before us.

For Christians, to live in a fallen but redeemed world is to live in the tension between wanting to know God and recognizing that we will always see only “in part.” As we write these words we know that this is a world torn with strife. Our own country is at war, and our citizens fear terrorism. Natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami in Asia have caused terrible destruction and left sadness and mourning in their wake. But, at the same time, on any given day we can look at the tall pine trees and rest in awe at God’s power. We hold newborn children and marvel at the new that is repeated over and over with each birth.

This book is written for those who long to fully know God, but recognize that while we live on this earth we are responsible to live in ways that reflect God’s love and God’s concern for justice. We do not claim to know how all of us should live, but we have collected ideas and suggestions from thousands of people who struggle to live in ways that reflect the deepest commitments of their hearts.

Both of us are parents and educators. For much of our professional lives we have worked with students in the age group from 18 to 22, and we have become convinced that God desires all of us to be faithful citizens. The colleges we attended as students and those where we teach have always emphasized the obligation of Christians to live a holy life and to evangelize throughout the world. But, after watching generations of students graduate and face adult life, we believe that more can be done to encourage everyone to think more deeply about God’s calling in our lives.

In 2001 Whitworth University embarked on a multi-faceted plan to help students become more intentional about connecting their beliefs to the way they actually live in the world. The project we developed was inspired by the “Shalom” teaching of Nicholas Wolterstorff, and it was based on research done by scholars Steven Garber and Sharon Daloz Parks.

In different ways, Garber, Wolterstorff and Parks all ask these questions:

- How does a worldview become a way of life?
- Why are some people able to connect what they believe with how they live while others are not?
- How do we encourage each other to connect our beliefs about the world with how we live in the world?

Parks and Garber, in separate projects, found that if you look at adults who have made it through their 20’s and 30’s with their convictions and character intact, they often have several experiences in common.

First, they were taught a worldview that was sufficient for the questions or crises of the next 20 years.

Second, they often had a mentor who incarnated the worldview that they were coming to identify as their own.

Third, they made the choice to live out their worldview in the company of mutually committed friends and neighbors.

Fourth, they had taken time to “practice” the commitments of their hearts. They had first hand knowledge of the struggles of those with less in our society.

Whitworth’s project developed ways to encourage students and faculty to work on these four elements. Over the course of the last seven years we interviewed thousands of people about their attempts to live with intentionality in the fabric of God’s faithfulness.

We began this book recognizing that all of us are to live according to Christ’s summary of God’s law: Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22). And, we are to reflect the virtues of the beatitudes (Matthew, Luke): we must care for the poor and the sick, the widowed and the orphans, and we are to show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and self-control. It’s a tall order. But, our work brought us into contact with students, parents, teachers, scholars, mentors, and children—all of whom had much to teach us. You’ll see their wisdom reflected in bold throughout these chapters.

Finally, we must acknowledge that we believe one of the most important things either of us has ever done has been to raise our children. We did not do it perfectly. At times we did not even do it very well. But through God’s goodness and grace, our children have learned that living in the fabric of God’s faithfulness cannot be done alone, in isolation. It always involves others. Many sections of this book address the raising of

children. All of us are the children of someone and most of us are or will one day be parents. Our families are a big part of the way we develop a shared self-understanding of how to live in the world. Both of us have learned more about our own beliefs through raising children than in any other professional or personal endeavor. This book is dedicated to our children and to all of those we interviewed, from whom we learned so much.

J: The hardest part about raising children is that you never get to practice beforehand. You don't get to have one made out of paper, to be thrown away when mistakes are made.

G: One can find countless books about caring for newborn babies and parenting them through each stage of their lives. But little has been written concerning how parents can help children learn to care about things that matter...that are truly worth caring about.

Throughout these chapters we have integrated conversations between ourselves—conversations that occurred as we conducted interviews and did the writing. “J” stands for Julia and “G” stands for Gloria. We have also integrated comments, suggestions and stories from the students and parents that we interviewed. These contributions are in bold. We promised anonymity to those we interviewed but we are grateful for the pieces of their lives that they shared.

Chapter 1

Living in the Fabric of Faithfulness

The reason why Christians are so similar in their attitudes values, and lifestyles to non-Christians is that they were not sufficiently challenged to think and behave differently – radically differently, based on core spiritual perspectives – when they were children. Simply getting people to go to church regularly is not the key to becoming a mature Christian. Spiritual transformation requires a more extensive investment in one’s ability to interpret all life situations in spiritual terms.

– CHRISTIAN RESEARCHER GEORGE BARNA –

In his book, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving together belief and behavior during the university years*, Steven Garber explains that he dropped out of college during his sophomore year. He went to San Francisco and his experiences changed the way he thought and read.

From the Stanford Chapel, where I sat on the floor to hear Daniel Ellsberg and Joan Baez speak about Vietnam, to “hippie houses” in Berkeley where I met gurus representing a world of worldviews, to long conversations in “on-the-cheap” restaurants in San Francisco’s Chinatown, I began to sort through what I wanted to learn about life and the world.

And so I began to read with a new reason for reading. For the first time I saw that “ideas have legs”; that there was always a connection between worldviews and ways of life; that in fact there was an integral connection between education and life.¹

Garber describes the difficulty many idealistic students have when they emerge from their university experience. They are dismayed to discover how difficult it is to live one’s life with the basic integrity that is part of being faithful to one’s basic beliefs and the commitment made to others.

But, not all students struggle. Some students make the transition in very positive ways.

. . .there are students who come through that crucible with habits of heart and mind so in place that they move on into the responsibilities and privileges of adulthood without compromising their basic integrity or giving in to cynicism...

Who are they? What happens during their university years

that so forms their vision and virtues that they make it through the proverbial “valley of the diapers” of their twenties and thirties with their convictions and character intact? How does a person decide which cares and commitments will give shape and substance to life, for life? How do students learn to conscientiously connect what they believe about the world with how they live in the world?²

Garber found that the answer to the question lies in our understanding of our own worldviews.

The college years need to help students develop ways of thinking and living that are coherent, that make sense of the whole of life. It is the difference between a worldview which brings integration to the whole of one’s existence and one which brings disintegration. In those who were interviewed, simply said, it was the integrity between what they believed about the world and how they lived in the world that marked them as so deeply different.³

It’s never too late to consider the connection between our beliefs and behavior. But, we have to start with our worldview.

What is a worldview?

Every person has a worldview, a religious or philosophical orientation that provides not only a vision of what life is like but also an overall guide for life. That worldview is usually unstated but is acquired through both beliefs and experiences. One’s worldview determines which things truly matter to a person and how one will answer difficult questions that are part of life, such as:

- What does it mean to be human?
- What is wrong in the world?
- How can this wrong be made right?
- What, then, is my task? How should I live?

At first we make our choices for how we will live in terms of our immediate way of looking at things. Only later do we see that some of the choices we made opened or closed the doors to future choices we will want to make.

Scholars Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton describe a Christian worldview this way:

Consider the biblical notion of a “walk of life.” The Scriptures tell us to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh (Gal. 5:25). Paul does not mean that we should leave our bodies behind, attempting somehow to be bodiless spirits. No, Paul is saying that the orientation of our walk of life, our direction, should be one of obedience to God, not disobedience. We are to set our eyes and our vision one way and not another. That gets to the heart of what a worldview is.⁴

There is a very real connection between worldviews and ways of life. They always inform each other. It really is true that what we believe is most clearly seen in how we live. And continuing to live in a particular way deepens and strengthens our worldview. When someone’s actions and conversations reflect a strong desire to connect “what they believe about the world with how they live in the world” we recognize that they have woven about them a “fabric of faithfulness.”

We need to ask ourselves questions such as: Are my beliefs best seen from actions that I refrain from doing? Or are they best revealed in actions that I do? We should ask and answer those questions because the decisions we make for ourselves will either nourish or destroy our connectedness with others. Steven Garber describes it this way:

Choices we make about our vocations lead to deeper commitments or greater dissatisfaction. Attitudes we nurture about “common good” responsibilities cause us either to be more fully engaged or to retreat into the sphere of those who do not care. Day by day we are forming characters and forming cultures in the way we respond to the world around. If we are to avoid the paralysis of destructive cynicism and debilitating sorrow, somehow, somewhere, we have to make sense of the world—not only of our own lives, but of life.⁵

Answering the questions in figure 1-1 helps us discover what our worldview actually is.

Figure 1-1

Examining My Worldview

What things do I truly believe are worth caring about?

Which things matter the most to me?

What do I believe is wrong with the world?

What could I do to repair what is wrong?

Is it true that what I believe can be seen in how I live?

Examples of ways in which my beliefs are revealed in actions that I refrain from doing are these:

Examples of ways in which my beliefs are revealed in actions that I do are these:

What decisions have we made in our family that nourish the connectedness I want to have with my children?

What decisions or lack of decision are in danger of breaking that connectedness?

What tendencies have been developing in my own life?

What tendencies do I see developing in my children?

Young adult: No event in my life has been more significant in shaping my current worldview than the sudden, unexpected death of my father and its lasting effects on my family. I had been in college for a day when my dad suddenly died. My mother, a secondary wage earner whose focus had been child-rearing, suddenly became the breadwinner of the family. I saw how she had been ill-equipped educationally for that role. I also began to see that the system itself had handicapped her. My father’s high school education could get him a good union job in an aluminum plant. My mom’s high school education qualified her to be a para-educator in a school, a receptionist, or a retail clerk. None of these jobs could begin to compare in terms of earning power or benefits. Moreover, I saw how others assumed that she wasn’t quite as qualified or capable as my dad, simply because of her gender. The real world isn’t a friendly place for a single, high school-educated woman in middle age.

I saw all this at 18 years old and started to wonder why this was. I quickly realized that my mom wasn't the only one, either. I began to see the injustice of it all – my mom had played by society's rules, stayed at home, raised her kids, done everything those prophets of "family values" had told her to, and had gotten kicked in the teeth for it. I decided then that I wanted my work, and the way I lived my life, to be about empowering women. I wanted every woman to have access to education, to better jobs, and to the tools necessary to provide for their basic needs without living on the margins. And the more I learned, the more I became convinced that such a future would require widespread systemic change on a variety of levels. That event, and its after-effects, are the wellspring for my subsequent life journey to this point.

What does my worldview have to do with raising my children in the fabric of faithfulness?

As parents, we have been given responsibility for our children. It is not enough that we help them to have good grades in school. It is not enough that we do all we can to keep them from bullying or being bullied and help them get along socially. The vocation of "parent" also involves nurturing caring in our children. It involves teaching commitments that can be sustained throughout life.

Parent: I think making children aware of the world around them is critical to making them good citizens and caring people. When our children were in preschool I did a lot of reading with them. I read them books about historical figures that made a difference. For example, on Martin Luther King's birthday, which became an official holiday when they were little, I read them books about him and Rosa Parks. Then, we took a bus ride (at the back of the bus) and talked about the world and how it had changed. Of course, reading the Bible and talking about what Jesus did can make a huge impact too. Involving them in mission activities that they can grasp early on and make their own is important.

Christian parenting helps children learn to connect *knowing* with *doing* and *belief* with *behavior*. The trouble is that the values of the world around us influence all of us. This means that sometimes what we think we are teaching our children is different from the expectations they perceive we have for their lives.

It doesn't matter what we teach our children if our actions and expectations demonstrate to them a vision that is muddled. We teach our children that being a Christian means we love God with all our heart and soul. And, if we truly do love God completely then we will love others because they are God's people, whether or not they know it.

Loving others means caring for them, nurturing them and protecting them from harm. If our children see that we tell others of the saving grace of Jesus Christ but in our families we emphasize that the most important things in life are being popular, being better than others in academics and sports and getting along well socially, the vision of life they get from us will be muddled. On the other hand, our children might watch us helping those who are in need and sharing what we have with others. But if they never hear us explain that we do so because the teachings of Jesus Christ and the prophets of the Old and New Testaments tell us that is how we must live, they will think that helping others is nothing more than a matter of choice.

In order to determine the extent to which your worldview is present in the way you live your life, try to answer the questions in figure 1-2 as honestly as you can.

Figure 1-2

Is My Worldview Reflected In The Way I Think About Families?

Mark the following statements with a “1” or “2” (“1” statements are your highest hopes and “2” are hopes you have that are not as important.) After each statement about your children, use the same ranking to show the place the statement actually holds true in your own life. If you do not have children, change the questions to reflect the relationship between you and your parents.

- I hope my children will be good students.
- I was a good student.
- I hope my children will tell others of their faith.
- I tell others of my faith.
- I hope my children will get along well socially.
- I get along well socially.
- I hope my children will be kind and helpful to classmates and others in school.
- I am a kind person and I eagerly help others.
- I hope my children will learn to actively work at seeking justice for others who are in need.
- I work for justice for those in need.
- I hope my children know most of the biblical teachings that are to guide our lives.
- I know most of these biblical teachings.
- I hope my children will be good at athletic games, such as basketball and baseball.
- I was good at athletics.
- I hope my children will be brave.
- I am a brave person.
- I hope my children will be honest.
- I am an honest person.
- I hope my children will do exactly as I tell them.
- I always did exactly what my parents told me to do.
- I hope my children will learn to analyze issues and become critical thinkers.

- I am able to analyze issues and I am a critical thinker.
- I hope my children will try to stay aware of what is happening in the world.
- I do my best to know what is happening throughout the world.
- I hope my children will be popular.
- I was and am popular.
- I hope my children will be happy.
- I am a happy person.
- I hope my children will be generous to others.
- I am a generous person.
- I hope my children look for ways to serve others who are in need.
- I serve others who are in need.
- I hope my children will want to keep learning throughout their lives.
- I try to keep learning new things.

Look carefully at your expectations and hopes for your children and compare them with your honest answers about your own life. Then ask yourself:

- Which of my hopes and expectations reflect what I say is my worldview?
- Which of my hopes and expectations for my children reflect experiences that were present or lacking in my own childhood and adolescence?
- Are my hopes and expectations for my children in keeping with my worldview? Or are they more in keeping with a worldview that I reject?

How we spend our days, of course, is how we spend our lives.

– ANNE DILLARD –

Many of us find that we must parent in ways that counteract the value system our children see in the world around them. When our children hear of the Wall Street scandals or of court trials of famous people or watch the television show *Deal or No Deal*, they form a picture of adults as people who scheme to get as much money as they possibly can, legally or otherwise. Donald Trump's "*The Apprentice*" reinforces the value system that supports greed for money and the things money can buy.

Parent: My family was very politically aware and we watched a lot of news growing up. My friends used to tease me about the fact that if they wanted to know what was going on they just needed to come over to our house. The Vietnam War and Watergate were hot topics at home when I was in high school. (We watched all the hearings and my dad even purchased the official copies of the Nixon tapes that were available from the US government). My conversations with family influenced me more than conversations with peers in college.

The movie, *The Passion of Christ*, portrays in a dramatic way the last twelve hours of Jesus' earthly life. Many Christians enthusiastically encouraged their children to watch the movie in order to more fully understand who Jesus is. However, we also want our children to learn what the teachings of Jesus mean for their everyday lives. Jesus taught that we should love others as we love ourselves. He taught that we should feed the poor, care for the sick, visit those in prison. What do those teachings have to do with the way we choose to live, or act on our political choices?

Tendency Learning

After interviewing Christian parents and children we discovered that most of us would agree that the following tendencies are among those important for ourselves and our children to develop. The chapters that follow take up each of these topics:

- We want to develop the tendency to be people of strong Christian faith.

- We want to develop all of our God-given abilities and ways of being intelligent.
- We want to develop the emotional intelligence necessary for empathy for those who suffer.
- We want to develop the tendency to recognize and be outraged by injustice in any form. We should become willing to take action against injustice, and we should live with kindness and generosity.
- We want to develop the tendency to be curious about the world around us, to grow intellectually, and to become critical thinkers.
- We want to develop the tendency to be moral and of good character.
- We want to develop the tendency to live with gratitude and happiness.
- We want to be lifelong learners in God's Creation.

If the teachings of Jesus Christ are to be taken seriously, then caring for others is what matters most. If we truly do love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves, our entire lives will be directed toward justice. If we truly do live with gratitude to God for our salvation, we will be deeply concerned and unceasingly active about such issues as economic inequality, unequal schooling, and limited or no health care for some. We will work for a just American policy toward other nations and civil rights in a time when the nation is fearful about terror strikes. These are the things our children must learn from us.

But, how do we do this? Is it possible to make children care about the world? Raising children isn't easy. Sometimes we have no idea what they are thinking. Sometimes we have all we can do to make sure they are safe, fed, and don't hurt each other too much when they fight.

Parent: I bungled along and things went pretty smoothly until Sarah, the oldest, reached junior high. At that point she was mature enough to rebel in a way that caused me to call my parenting practices into question. I think I tended to follow a modified version of the parenting practices of my own upbringing: parents have complete authority; children are to be obedient without question. Thankfully, Sarah rebelled and I realized that I could not, and should not control my children.

I learned to listen, to recognize my children as individuals, to respect their ideas and concerns. My greatest regret in life is that I didn't learn this sooner. I don't mean to imply that this was an easy transition, nor that I executed it flawlessly. It is, however, the single greatest contribution that shaped my ideas concerning parenting.

A central part of raising children in the fabric of faithfulness is helping them learn to develop the tendencies that are an important part of that commitment. What is a tendency? A tendency is more than a habit. A tendency is something that one does without thinking. A tendency begins with a commitment that arises from a worldview. The tendency is a response to that commitment, practiced over and over, until it becomes part of one's self. It is a commitment to a particular action that is practiced so often it becomes as natural as breathing.

Educator Craig Dykstra calls these tendencies "patterns of intentionality": the habits of heart that characterize the individual's effort to live so that their walk will match their talk.⁷ In parenting, the commitment first is made by the parent and as the action in keeping with that commitment is practiced over and over in the family the commitment with its tendency to action becomes the child's.

Sometimes we are shocked to see that our children have developed tendencies that disturb us. Where have they learned such tendencies? Tendencies are learned at home, from television and videos, at school, on the playground, and everywhere else. Garber quotes from an op-ed piece, written by a Harvard junior, in The Washington Post.

Meet the Beavis Generation. I have, and it scares me. Sad to say, the ascent of Beavis and Butthead marks the dethroning of Bart Simpson as the king of adolescent rebellion. This is profoundly significant. Bart, for all of his run-ins with Principal Skinner, is as smart as he is tough. Beavis and Butthead boast IQs safely in the two-digit range – a fact that this new generation revels in.⁸

Children learn tendencies by:

- a) listening to and watching the people they admire;
- b) having the reasons behind those words and actions explained to them;
- c) imitating the language and actions of those people; and

d) being in an environment that nurtures the development of such language and actions.

The tendencies children develop can be positive or negative but they normally appear to be related to what they hear and see in other people.

Ideally, the first people children will admire and imitate are those who are raising them, in most cases the parents. We cannot overestimate the importance of parents speaking and acting with respect toward each other, toward their children, and toward others with whom they come in contact.

Of course children need guidance in addition to role modeling. They also need to hear stories of Christians who demonstrated these tendencies in their own lives, in spite of great hardship. They need discussions concerning famous people who made difficult decisions, not always knowing what was right or wrong. And they need actions that lead them to form consciences in keeping with God's holy word.

Our worldviews should determine our actions. But, as we get caught up in the busy work of raising children, paying the mortgage, cleaning our houses, advancing in our careers, it is easy to lose sight of the important issues in life. Taking stock of our own beliefs and the beliefs we want to pass on to our children is a good first step toward living with intentionality in the fabric of faithfulness.

Parent: It is very important for us to hear from our kids their thoughts about faith and generosity and values. But we have come to realize that part of their humility is not sharing or broadcasting their "good works" with us. Part of their integrity is not sharing a lot of thoughts that would make us feel good that they have carried on our values and our faith. So there are times we have wondered. But it leaks out, and others around them have shared things with us that make us realize how deep their faith and generosity and thoughtful care is for others. We have to leave the result up to them and God. Faith and values have to be so important to us that we follow them, no matter how our kids pick up on them. That heart-deep commitment is probably a prerequisite, from the human standpoint, of kids following in our footsteps.

Discussion questions

1. How would you describe your own worldview?
2. When other people watch the way you live, would they describe your worldview the same way you do?
3. To what extent does the way you live deepen and strengthen the worldview you profess to have?
4. Under what circumstances might it be appropriate for parents to have hopes and expectations for their children that reflect disappointments in their own lives? Under what circumstances might that be harmful?
5. Do you believe that Christian parents should have a politically committed spirituality? What might that mean? What does it not mean?
6. What tendencies do you see in your children? Have you an idea as to how those tendencies developed?
7. Do you agree with importance of the tendencies that were listed in this chapter? Would you add others to this list?
8. To what extent can we shape our children's ideas and tendencies? Isn't some of it innate?
9. Someone has said, "Give me a child until the age of seven and I will show you the man." Do you believe that, for the most part, a child's attitudes and habits are fully formed by the time he or she is seven years old? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

Trends and Forecasts

For Our World

Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.

– JOHN F. KENNEDY –

Once we have an idea of our worldview and we have thought about the kind of tendencies we are developing, we need to be aware of the world around us. It isn't enough to say "As Christians we are to be in the world but not of it" nor is it enough to say "we are to be salt and light." Both of these things are true but neither identifies the kinds of things we must face in a broken but redeemed Creation.

When we know what we are facing, we can determine our responsibilities and develop strategies for action. The things we face sometimes change with respect to our culture, and sometimes our own developmental place in life shapes our responses. Recently we saw the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* in which former Vice-President Al Gore describes the effect of global warming. One of us saw it with a group of 14 year olds. Their response was "we're all going to die so what's the point of worrying about it." But, one of us saw it with a group of 100 college students who identify themselves as committed to doing justice in the world. Half were Democrats and half were Republicans. Almost all of the students responded to the film with hope and enthusiasm. The film suggests a website that has several ideas for those concerned with the environment (www.climatecrisis.net). The college students quickly accessed the site and organized groups to carry out some of the ideas.

Developmentally, 14 year olds are very concerned with themselves. College age students are more ready to think about others. But, the 14 year olds will someday be the college students watching documentaries. How do we help them become young adults with both hope and a sense of responsibility?

First, we have to know the world that they inhabit. Every year Beloit College in Wisconsin puts together a "Mindset" list to help adults understand the world the new 18 year old frosh have come from. Tom McBride, a professor who puts the list together, says the list is important to help faculty and parents understand the "touchstones and benchmarks of a generation that has grown up with CNN, home computers, AIDS awareness, digital cameras and the Bush political dynasty. We should also keep in mind that these students missed out on the pleasures of being tossed in the back of a station wagon with a bunch of friends and told to keep the noise down, walking in the woods without fearing Lyme Disease, or setting out to try all of the 28 ice cream flavors at Howard Johnson's."

Here, in part, is a recent list:

- They don't remember when "cut and paste" involved scissors.
- Heart-lung transplants have always been possible.
- Pay-Per-View television has always been an option.
- They never had the fun of being thrown into the back of a station wagon with six others.
- Iran and Iraq have never been at war with each other.
- Al-Qaida has always existed with Osama bin Laden at its head.
- They learned to count with Lotus 1-2-3.
- Car stereos have always rivaled home component systems.
- Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker have never preached on television.
- Voice mail has always been available.
- The federal budget has always been more than a trillion dollars.
- Condoms have always been advertised on television.
- They may have fallen asleep playing with their Gameboys in the crib.
- Money put in their savings account the year they were born earned almost 7% interest.
- Michael Jackson has always been bad, and greed has always been good.
- Judicial appointments routinely have been "Borked."
- Aretha Franklin has always been in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- It has always been possible to walk from England to mainland Europe on dry land.
- They have grown up in a single superpower world.
- "Baby M" may be a classmate, and contracts with surrogate mothers have always been legal.
- RU486, the "morning after pill," has always been on the market.

- There has always been a pyramid in front of the Louvre in Paris.
- Irradiated food has always been available but controversial.
- They do not remember "a kinder and gentler nation."
- Black Americans have always been known as African-Americans.
- Digital cameras have always existed.
- Jimmy Carter has always been an elder statesman.
- America's Funniest Home Videos has always been on television.
- Their nervous new parents heard C. Everett Koop proclaim nicotine as addictive as heroin.
- They have always been challenged to distinguish between news and entertainment on cable TV.

Many of us view with alarm the state of the world today. We learn of terrorism and wars and wonder about our children's future. Throughout the ages parents have had these sorts of questions about the world their children will inhabit.

G: In the 1960s, when you and your brother were in elementary school, I watched what was happening in this country and I wondered whether there would be any societal controls at all when you grew up. The use of illegal drugs had proliferated and it seemed as though young people were throwing off any restrictions they had been taught by their parents. And yet, I could see that some very constructive changes were happening, as well.

J: And didn't you once tell me that your parents had friends who, having lived through the depression and WWII, were so fearful about the future that they predicted dire events in the lives of your generation?

G: They were people with little formal education but some of those predictions came true, just the same. Still, think of the changes you and I have experienced in the last twenty years.

J: For one thing, twenty years ago neither of us had any idea that using email was even a possibility. Now communicating by email is part of our everyday lives, though it's almost obsolete for my text-messaging son. Remember how great we thought our Apple IIe computer was?

G: The Internet is another factor. When we began using the Internet none of us dreamed of the important role it would play in our lives. If that

technology has made such a difference in our lives, think of the place technology plays and will play in your son's life and in his future.

What are the trends we see today that will influence our children's lives in the future?

Michael Marien, editor of *Future Survey*¹⁰, and researchers M. J. Cetron and Owen Davies in *50 Trends Shaping the Future*¹¹ studied the writings of scholars in many different areas and selected what seemed to them to be significant shapers of the future. Their list includes the following:

- Surveillance technologies have become less expensive and are being used everywhere. Secret, on-the-job surveillance is widespread and changing workplace cultures in remarkable ways.¹² This results in lack of trust among employees and between employees and supervisors.
- Cheating is increasing everywhere in the United States due to increased competitive pressures and less job security.¹³ Not only is cheating increasing in high schools and colleges but many students appear to have little reason to believe that cheating is wrong. They believe it is just one more tool for competing in this game of getting good grades.
- Government loans and scholarships have decreased for college students, eroding the opportunity for low-income students to attend college.¹⁴ The result of this will be a widening of the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots."
- Two-fifths of employed Americans work mostly in the evening, at night, on a rotating shift, or during the weekend. These trends are also seen in Europe and they weaken the family structure.¹⁵ Because of different schedules it is becoming increasingly rare for families to sit down together for a family dinner.

Cetron and Davies predict the following trends that our children will encounter in the future.

- The world's population will double in the next 40 years with people living longer than ever. This is likely to result in a competition for resources between the large elderly population and the smaller working population with their children. There will be greater need for doctors and nurses for the elderly along with other health care resources.¹⁶

- In spite of the furor about outsourcing, companies will continue to farm out secondary functions to individuals and firms located in other countries. This increase results from better education and cheaper wages in countries such as India.¹⁷ This issue is challenging because acts that might hurt the economic security of children in this country can have the effect of increasing economic security for much poorer children in other countries.
- Developed societies will increasingly be influenced by Generations X (people born between 1961 and 1981) and the dot.com entrepreneurs rather than from the baby boomers. Many of the dot.coms already feel they have more in common with others like them around the globe than they do with their parents.¹⁷ Some scholars even argue that the identity of the nation-state is changing because of economic and cultural relationships between people in different countries.
- Huge discount stores will continue to grow in the United States and spread to Europe, Japan, and eventually to China. As people grow in their ability to compare prices online the only advantage smaller stores will have will be in the services they provide.¹⁸
- Some young people are more health conscious and becoming more responsible consumers of alcoholic beverages than their parents. Better health in later life will lead to increased use of cosmetic surgery and treatments.¹⁹ But, other youth in American society are struggling with obesity and poor eating habits. Strain on medical services will increase as the uninsured population grows.
- Because of its success, the women's equality movement will lose its significance. Generations X and dot-coms are virtually gender-blind in the workplace compared with earlier generations. Women's increasing entrepreneurship will result in "old girl" networks being formed. As the family becomes increasingly dependent on the woman's income, life insurance companies will sell more policies to women than to men. Careers that presently remain relatively closed to women will open wide in the years ahead. Demand for excellent day-care will continue to grow. Over the next 20 years American companies will compete for employees with their counterparts

in Europe where national taxes pay for day-care and other family services.²⁰

- Growing numbers of children are becoming homeless or being cared for by grandparents as the AIDS epidemic orphans more children. This is especially true in Africa where there are more than 12 million orphaned children. Large numbers of African children live with no adult care. These children provide a challenge for those of us concerned about justice for the orphans, but they also provide a practical challenge for everyone. Children growing up poor, without families, are easy targets for those who recruit for terrorist organizations.
- The consequences of neglect and indifference to environmental issues will become increasingly evident. Increasing use and upgrading of computers in the U.S. and throughout the world will add to the stockpiles of trash. This will provoke a political backlash but the only solution will be more restrictive regulations.²¹
- Recycling has delayed the "garbage glut" that threatened to overflow the world's landfills but the threat remains. In June 2002, New York City abandoned its 14-year-old recycling effort because city authorities said it was not cost effective. By contrast, Seattle presently recycles about half of its solid waste. Seventy percent of U.S. landfills will be full by 2025.²² In the face of so much bad news, we have to keep in mind that new technologies along with changed behavior can result in dramatic improvements.
- Water shortages will be a continuing problem for the world. One-third of the population of Africa along with most of the major cities in the developing world will face water shortages. The European Parliament estimates that 70% of the continent's drinking water contains dangerous concentrations of nitrate pollution. In the U.S. global warming will make drought much more frequent—even the norm—west of the Mississippi. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population could be living in regions with chronic, widespread shortages of water.²³
- With the growth of major cities in the developing world, environmental concerns will become even more problematic. Seventy percent of the energy used in China comes from coal-

burning power plants, unequipped with pollution controls. By 2025 China will emit more carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide than the United States, Japan, and Canada combined. During the next ten years broad regions of the planet will be subject to pollution, deforestation, and other environmental ills.²⁴

- The pace of technological change increases continually. Eighty percent of the scientists, engineers, and doctors who ever lived are alive today. All the technical knowledge we work with today will represent only 1% of the knowledge that will be available in 2050.²⁵
- Education and training are needed and expanding throughout society. In electronics, half of what a student learns as a freshman will be obsolete by his or her senior year. Rapid changes in the job market and work-related technologies will necessitate training for virtually every worker. Schools will train both children and adults around the clock.²⁶
- Loyalty to the corporation is decreasing rapidly. Gen X'ers watched their parents remain loyal to employers only to be downsized out of work. The work ethic is changing as some of generation X sees that work is only a means to their ends: money, fun, and leisure.²⁷ On the other hand, we see a resurgence among some generation X'ers regarding concern about ethics, quality of life and meaningful work.
- Time is becoming the world's most precious commodity. In the United States and increasingly in Europe, workers spend about 10% more time on the job than they did a decade ago. Stress-related problems will continue to grow. As time for shopping continues to evaporate, Internet marketers will flourish.²⁸

J: There are trends we recognize in college students today, as well. For example, we know that most colleges and universities are reporting a higher ratio of women students to men students. Each year the gap seems to widen. One can only wonder what an increase in well-educated women and under-educated men will do to leadership in families, in government, in church and in society in general.

G: It is important to note that scholars who make these observations and predictions are not just pulling them out of a hat. They gather information from various fields and analyze it in ways unique to sociologists, economists, scientists, and historians.

Using present trends concerning computers and telecommunications to forecast possible future developments

The social and cultural changes that infotech will bring about will surely be important but they are very difficult to predict. No one could have predicted the ways in which television and video games would draw people away from other activities. Edward Cornish, president of the World Future Society, has suggested ninety-three possible changes that could happen within the next 20 years as a result of increased use of communication technology in our daily lives.²⁹ We cite just a few of them here.

- Many, if not most, of the exciting new infotech that is predicted will disappoint us. The videophone as a good example. However, a few will really take off and surprise us. Think of the changes email, cell phones, and fax machines have made in our lives.
- A global culture will develop as infotech ties the world's people together and as the global culture grows, local cultures will decline.
- Television, the home computer, video games and other such technology will tend to isolate people from their social groups.
- Education at home and in school will be dramatically enhanced and there will be a boom in packaged educational products available at lower costs. Teachers will be able to handle students with widely different abilities and interests. Students with special needs will be greatly helped.
- With the knowledge base expanding so rapidly, society must make difficult choices concerning what students really do need to know. Teachers and college professors may resist facing the task of omitting information they normally taught in order to make room for what students must come to know.
- Living standards will climb throughout the world but the poorest people will remain as poor as in past centuries.
- Because of the proliferation of information sources such as television channels, specialized news services and databanks, people may lose the ability to focus on a single idea and think it through. That will reduce much of their ability to think rationally and make wise decisions.
- Skyscrapers and large city offices were needed so that people could be close together for easy communication.

Fax machines, email, and cheap long-distance telephoning enables people to live anywhere and still participate in the stock market or in business.

Cornish concludes his findings with this warning:

First, we are building up unprecedented power to do whatever we want to do. Infotech is amplifying our ability to produce the material goods of life, to cure diseases, and to expand the human enterprise into the universes. We are becoming godlike in our capabilities.

Second, we do not know how to use our growing power wisely. Rather than growing wiser as our power has increased, we seem actually to be less able to agree on appropriate actions or to delay immediate gratification to achieve long-term goals. Worse, the new supertechnologies can be used in ways that do us tremendous harm.³⁰

Some of this sounds rather grim. Are all of the changes negative?

G: In 1996 I read the book, “The Future Turning”, by futurists Strauss and Howe.³¹ They researched historical happenings and concluded that the U.S. was on the surge of a crisis. Their prediction was that the decade beginning in the year 2000 would be a very difficult decade for this country. Think of all that has happened since the beginning of this decade.

In a more recent book, *Millenials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, Howe described the generation born between 1982 and 2000 in more positive terms. According to him, the children of the baby boomers and of the older Generation X group are harder workers than any generation since WWII. Also, they are more ready to build community rather than living completely for themselves.

They will rebel against the culture by cleaning it up, rebel against political cynicism by touting trust, rebel against individualism by stressing teamwork, rebel against adult pessimism by being upbeat, and rebel against social ennui by actually going out and getting a few things done.³²

J: Almost all of my adult friends bemoan the time their kids spend on MySpace, video games and text-messaging. But, often I think that popular culture today can be more intellectually challenging and certainly no worse for brain development than the popular culture of history.

G: That certainly is a radical statement. Can you give examples?

J: Think of the shows from the “Golden Age of Television,” such as I Love Lucy, Father Knows Best, Perry Como, Milton Berle, Doctor Kildare, or Jackie Gleason. They really required very little mental reasoning to figure them out. Compare them with some programs that are on now or were recently available. Shows such as West Wing, Law and Order, 24, 7th Heaven, House or even the Simpsons or Project Runway. Compare The Price is Right, a show that has been on for decades, with Jeopardy or the Daily Show.

G: That’s interesting. I notice that you left out some of the really dreadful shows. Can we find the same improvement when we look at video games and computer games?

J: Marshall McLuhan said, “The student of media soon comes to expect the new media of any period whatever to be classed as pseudo by those who acquired the patterns of earlier media, whatever they may happen to be.” If we say that kids would be better off reading books than zoning out with their computer or video games, we need to be careful. That just might not be true.

People who have studied the positive and negative implications of trends on our future lives do not forecast what actually is going to happen. Rather, they warn of the inherent dangers if we continue on the path we are on. Should Christian parents then, like the Amish, decide to refrain from using any new technology until they have asked and answered, “How will the use of this new technology change us?”

It is almost impossible to do that unless you have a clear grasp of the capabilities of the new technology. For example, Steven Johnson in *Everything Bad is Good for You*, describes how the new generation of “screenagers” carries the idea that the images on a television screen were supposed to be manipulated rather than just there for passive consumption.

...the screen is not just something you manipulate, but something you project your identity onto, a place to work through the story of your life as it unfolds. . .

The second way in which the rise of the Net has challenged the mind runs parallel to the evolving rule systems of video games: the accelerating pace of new platforms and environments. Your mind is engaged by the interactive content of networked media – posting a response to an article online,

maintaining three separate IM conversations at the same time – but you’re also exercising cognitive muscles interacting with the form of the media as well: learning the tricks of a new e-mail client, configuring the video chat software properly, getting your bearings after installing a new operating system. The type of problem-solving can be challenging in an unpleasant way, of course, but the same can be said for calculus.³³

Living in the fabric of faithfulness does not mean turning our backs on new technologies. On the journey technology can help us or it can hurt us. We have to learn to think with intentionality about the effects of technology on the way we live. We and our children must learn to develop a passion for renewing our vital resources, for preserving what is precious, and for finding ways to lift up and support those who are in need. We want our children to learn to engage culture and to live responsibly as thoughtful Christians. Helping them learn to do so is a huge task requiring much wisdom. And, it is the topic of the following chapters.

J: I read hundreds of terrible romance novels as a child. My son doesn't read books but plays video games. I don't think the medium is key – it's still the same important question: what do we do with our time?

Discussion questions

1. Ask your own parents about changes they saw that made them fearful for their children’s future. Did those changes have a positive or negative effect on your live?
2. Which of the trends listed here could have positive effects for the future?
3. Which trends could have negative trends for the future?
4. Should Christian parents, like the Amish, decide to refrain from using any new technology until they have asked and answered, “How will the use of this new technology change us?” If not, how should they think about using new technologies?
5. Do you see any signs that Howe was correct in the way he described young people born between 1980 and 2000?
6. Do you think it is a serious matter that more young women than young men are receiving a college education? Why is it serious? Or why not?

Chapter 3

Spiritual Lives in the Fabric of Faithfulness

Parent: At a recent Christian school basketball game the varsity team knelt in prayer together. They didn't pray for a win but for God's grace and strength. Then, they took the floor and as they beat the other team we fans could see swear words come from the mouths of most of the players. After the game I asked my son if he felt this was odd. He said, "It's just the heat of the moment, mom. God understands." I can't decide if I should make a big deal of this since he never swears otherwise or if I should let it go.

People reach age 16, the beginning of older adolescence, having come through one of the most fragile periods of their lives. The 12-15 age period is a most tumultuous time during which young people examine the beliefs and attitudes held by their parents and teachers in order to begin to understand what they will hold as true for their own lives.

What are these values they are reexamining? In the early 1990s both Newsweek and Time had front cover news stories concerning the fact that in the mainline denominations young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-seven leave the church and denomination of their childhood, often never to return. Those who do return to participate in the life of the church usually do so only when they have young children.

With that information in mind we wondered what was happening in the faith lives of Christians younger than that age group. In 1993 we made a survey of 1726 middle school students in ten different Christian schools.³⁴ One of the questions we asked was, "What things about your faith make you the most worried or concerned"? We found the following as the most typical of the questions they asked:

- I worry that Jesus isn't real and that some weirdo wrote the Bible. He just made it up or something. I have so many doubts and it worries me that I won't go to heaven or something.
- I am so scared I won't go to heaven.
- If others believe so strongly in things like Buddhism and they believe as strongly as we do, then can't we be just another group of believers with a God that really doesn't exist, like Buddhists?
- I worry so that I'm going to hell.
- I am worried that my faith should be better. Since I believe in God I shouldn't do bad things. But I might sin over the limit and won't be forgiven any more. Is there a limit?

- I worry about death a lot. Sometimes I feel like the only reason I am obeying God is because I don't want to go to hell. This could be to my advantage, though. It will keep me out of some trouble.
- I am so afraid I will someday forget about God and not want to go to church anymore. What if I lose my faith?
- I worry if my faith is strong enough. How strong was the faith of all those who went to heaven and how weak was the faith of those who went to hell? And where do I fit in?
- I am so afraid that I'm going to Hell for not listening in church. But I just can't.
- Sometimes I don't feel like going to church. That's like saying I don't want to worship God and that scares me. But church is so hard.

Recently we began wondering whether the changes in family life and the frequent use of different kinds of technology might be limiting the amount of time and, therefore, the ability young people have to engage in their newly developing skill of reflective thinking. If so, would there be a change in the questions they are asking? For this study we accumulated 2510 responses to our survey, all coming from seventh and eighth grade students in 17 Christian schools across North America³⁵. The students were asked to list questions they would like to ask someone but probably wouldn't dare to do so. We discovered that our concern about lack of reflective thinking was unfounded. When it came to matters of faith we found many of the same questions given earlier. In addition, however, the questions from this age group now sound more soul-searching.

- I would really like to know if God is as loving as everyone believes, why does he let evil happen?
- Why do I question God's existence?
- I would like to ask why God won't just show all people who are lost a great miracle and then they will all believe in him.
- What's the point? Besides asking God for things and saying thank you for other things, what's the point? Why do we need God? Why do some people yearn for God or want more of him? I've never felt that way. What's the point of God? Does our life matter at all? I mean, I'd rather be alive, but, again, what's the point?

- Why did God test Adam and Eve if he knew they were going to sin?
- How did everyone get here if only one man and a woman were here first. I mean everyone started in Israel. Then how did they get to North and South America and become Indians and have a whole different language?
- Why did people live longer before the flood?
- Am I a good Christian? Am I doing God's will? Can you stop being a Christian?
- How can you change the ways you have been so that it pleases God (like get rid of bad habits)?
- How do I know if I am forgiven? How do I know if I am growing in faith? How do I make myself stronger in faith?
- How do I witness without shoving the gospel down people's throats and being annoying?
- How do we judge things not in the Bible?
- How often should we pray?
- I love God, go to church, and go to a Christian school but don't feel closer to God. What does that mean? I read my Bible everyday. Why do I still feel so far away from God?
- Why am I drifting apart so far from God? What has happened to me? I feel like a chameleon I have to change in front of every new person I meet or have meet.
- How can people talk about the greatness of Christianity, when it is stained by so much bloodshed?
- If I don't want to go to church, is it sin? If we don't go to church, and just believe Jesus, do we go to the heaven after we die?
- If you are a Christian but you hate going to Sunday school... does that mean you're not a Christian?
- Isn't Saturday the Lord's day of worship? Why do most people go to church on Sunday?
- What exactly are saints?
- What is Lent about, why do they do it?

- How does God interact with life on other planets?
- Is there life in other galaxies? Do they know about God? Why couldn't God make other intelligent life in the universe(s)?
- Does anyone else wonder if God is really real? Because Buddhist thinks Buddha is God. I feel Bad for asking that but I wonder sometimes.
- I want non-biblical proof that Jesus rose.
- I want to know the truth how History and Biblical history fit together. I want to know the answers to all the questions I have that make me doubt my religion.
- If God already knew the world would be corrupt why did he make it in the first place?
- When Satan sinned was he in heaven & if so how could he be in heaven since you can't sin in heaven?
- Who does Satan think he is?

Ask Christian parents what they wish for their children and they will likely say, "I want my children to have a Christian faith and to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ." When you probe further you will likely hear, "I want them to be honest and to work hard. I would like them to go to church regularly, to be leaders in their church and community, and to be good parents."

The Bible teaches that faith is a gift. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts and makes it possible for us to have faith. In Romans we are told to think of ourselves with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given us. (12:3) Clearly, we are to believe that faith originates with God. And we can only have faith through the grace and mercy of God.

But faith is also something we must do. All through Hebrews 11 we read of people who are commended for doing their faith. The book of James is full of the idea that you do things as a result of your faith.

And just as other aspects of the human being grow and develop and mature, so does faith grow and develop and mature. *Intelligence* is given to us by God but we expect it to grow and develop and mature. *Love* is given to us by God and we expect it to grow and develop and mature. It is the **pattern** of faith development that we want to look at here.

It is impossible to think about patterns of faith in isolation. We are people of faith in our hearts, in our beliefs, and in our knowing. As soon as we say "in our knowing" we include an aspect of intellectual development.

These things cannot be separated, but we would be wrong to think that as the intellect matures, faith necessarily matures. In like manner the Bible teaches that the faith one has in early life is as good as the faith of later years. Look at the book of Matthew. In Matthew 11:25 Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.” In Matthew 18 the disciples want to know who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and Jesus says that *unless they change and become like little children they shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

However, patterns of faith development do provide an interesting way to think about and understand our own faith and the faith life of our children. Scholars have talked about a “model” of faith development. Many agree that there are at least two things any model of faith development must provide.

1. It must allow for recognition that faith in the very earliest stage is not only saving faith, but can also be a very deep faith, depending on the individual. Most of us who have worked with children a great deal recognize that there are children who show a strong faith commitment at a very early age.

Many Christians recognize that there are a few children who seem to have the gift of very deep faith. It is not mature faith yet because they are still children. But it is unusually deep faith.

Laura was a little second-grader when she first was diagnosed with childhood leukemia. At that time the medications were not very successful in treating the disease. After some time away from school for treatment, she returned wearing a wig that was really too big for her. When the other little girls told her that it didn't look right she said, “But my head gets so cold.” They explained that she could tie a “babushka” style scarf around her head to keep her warm. The next day all the little girls came to school wearing babushka scarves and the boys told them, admiringly, that they looked like pirates.

For the following two years Laura would miss school for a while because of the disease but she very easily kept up with her schoolwork. She was a lovely little girl and everyone hoped that she would soon recover.

At that time our family was responsible for the “Dutch night” program at the Museum of Science and Industry’s “Christmas Around the World” celebration. To keep it very simple each year I would select a class of school children, teach them a few Sinterklaas songs, and on stage they would pretend to be in a school, waiting for a visit from the old saint along with his helper, Peter. The year Laura was in grade 4 I selected her class.

As we waited behind the stage curtain I noticed that Laura was very pale and her eyes looked big and dark. I hoped it was just the effect of the stage lights that made her appear to be so sick. The program went very well and the children acted just as they were supposed to.

One week later Laura took her last breath. During that week she told her mother who should have her books and toys. And then she said, “Now, whenever I go to sleep will you or Daddy hold me? That way if I die in my sleep I will go to sleep in your arms and wake up in Jesus’ arms.” And that is what happened.

Laura’s deep faith is the kind that we would wish for our own children and, indeed, for ourselves as well. Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” I wonder whether he was thinking of children like Laura.

When we teach our very young children about Jesus their belief almost becomes greater than our own and can put our faith to shame. In western Kentucky, where we lived when our children were small, daytime lightening can strike very low to the ground. One summer afternoon when the lightning began, I ran out to get three-year-old Billy. Holding his hand as we entered the house I said, “Oh, Billy, we had better turn off the television set because lightening might strike the antenna on the house.” Just before I touched the knob there was a loud crack and the television set went dark. I screamed and fell back, still

holding Billy's hand. He wasn't at all afraid. "That's alright, Mother. We'll go in the bedroom and kneel by the bed and pray. Jesus will take care of us." That was less comfort for me than it should have been. I remain very afraid of lightning.

Anyone who has worked with children a great deal will be able to think of stories like these. And any model of faith development has to allow for such events.

2. The second thing that a model for faith development must do is to recognize that we do not put an earlier stage behind us as we mature in faith. We keep the needs and intuitions and sometimes even the emotions of the earliest levels of faith and integrate them with our new understandings.

Are we raising our children in the Christian faith?

In a large study, reported by the Barna Research Group in February 2005, of how Christian and non-Christian parents view child raising, George Barna noted that the faith commitment of parents made surprisingly little difference in how children were raised.

You might expect that parents who are born again Christians would take a different approach to raising their children than did parents who have not committed their life to Christ – but that was rarely the case. Barna explained, “For instance, we found that the qualities born again parents say an effective parent must possess, the outcomes they hope to facilitate in the lives of their children, and the media monitoring process in the household was indistinguishable from the approach taken by parents who are not born again.”

The California-based researcher pointed out that there was one substantial distinction. “Born again parents were twice as likely as others to teach their children that there are certain moral absolutes they should obey. However, even on that matter, less than six out of ten born again parents took such a position.”

One of the most startling observations, according to Barna, was how few born again parents indicated that one of the most important outcomes parents needed to help their children grasp was salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. “Only three out of ten born again parents included the salvation of their child in the list of critical parental emphases,” he noted.

Parents cannot force or ensure that their kids become followers of Christ. But for that emphasis to not be on the radar screen of most Christian parents is a significant reason why most Americans never embrace Jesus Christ as their savior. We know that parents still have a huge influence on the choices their children make, and we also know that most people either accept Christ when they are young or not at all. The fact that most Christian parents overlook this critical responsibility is one of the biggest challenges to the Christian Church.³⁶

Prior to this study the Barna group has often reported on findings showing that the way Christians think and behave doesn't differ very much from the thoughts and behavior of nonbelievers. Faith seems to matter little in their daily lives. If we are going to change this, if our lives are going to really reflect the commitments of our hearts, then we first have to understand how faith develops. Theologian John Westerhoff is helpful here. His theory of faith development helps us to understand how all of us move through phases in our faith lives. He speaks of experienced faith, affiliative faith, searching faith and owned faith.

EXPERIENCED FAITH. During the preschool and early school years, children typically act with what we call “experienced faith”. That means that faith is first experienced before it is understood or described. Experience is foundational to faith. A person first learns Jesus Christ not by theology but by affective experience. For children and for adults, it is not so much the words we hear spoken that matter the most but the experiences we have connected with those words. A young child first hears Bible stories while sitting close to the parent or to the teacher. At that point, the words may be forgotten and need a great deal of repeating, but the experience of being close is essential.

When we pray with our children, we often pray about the table at meal time. Parents and children sometimes hold hands as they pray together. The experience of feeling their hands being held in the family prayer circle is important to very young children. Listening to older brothers and sisters, as well as parents, pray around the family table is very important to their coming to know Jesus Christ. Kneeling beside the bed and praying with a parent is also very important for them. Praying with heads bowed and hands folded, or praying around the dinner table while holding hands, or praying while kneeling are ways we use our bodies in prayer and that is extremely important for the faith of children.

But very soon comes the need for hearing the answer to, “And how do I fit into this picture?” So the need for the child’s own faith story is there. For example, just as we explain to the young child over and over how it was when he or she was born...what the doctor said...what daddy said. Or if children are adopted, they will need to hear over and over the story of how “we waited for news that a baby was ready to be adopted. Then the telephone rang and we were so excited...” The need is there for showing that the child has a place in the family but also in the church. Children must feel that they belong.

Hearing Bible stories over and over is very important to young children. What needs to be developed at this stage is a sense of story about the faith and a sense of belonging to that story.

The need for experienced faith never leaves us. When Gloria first spoke with Russian Christians in the Eastern Orthodox Church they told her that on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday they stand in the church all night to commemorate Jesus Christ’s agony in the garden of Gethsemane. That is a wonderful faith experience, even though it must be extremely difficult, physically.

AFFILIATIVE FAITH. If the needs of experienced faith have been adequately met during the childhood and early adolescent years, persons may begin to adopt an affiliative stage of faith. We say “may” because not every person of faith moves to this stage. It takes risk to move forward in anything and some people don’t like to take risks. Remember, now, that we are talking about students in approximately grades 6-10.

“Ask her!”

“Ask her yourself.”

“No, you ask her. She’s your mom.”

I was working in the kitchen when I heard the raised voices from the group of six junior high boys who had been talking in our family room. Sensing that there was a problem, I walked in and sat down with them, asking what was going on.

Joey began the explanation. “We were talking about George. You know, he’s the kid who was killed in the accident last week.” George was from another town and I hadn’t known him, but they had told me about the accident earlier. “What we want to know is this. Is George in heaven or in hell now? And if he’s in hell it must be God’s fault.”

I tried not to show how shocked I felt because I knew they were very serious in their concern. “You’ll have to explain your reasoning to me before I can answer.”

The boys were uneasy but finally my son, Bill, said, “We don’t think you know how bad George really was. He was nice to his parents and then did exactly the opposite of what they said. He swore a lot when there weren’t any parents around.”

“He was even worse than us, Mrs. Stronks,” said Jerry. For some reason, that remark gave me very little comfort. “We think he was too bad to go to heaven. And if he didn’t, we think it was God’s fault.”

“You’ll have to explain that to me.”

“Well, you know lots of boys our age get into some kind of trouble. But then they grow up and just before they get married they make profession of faith. You have to do that because otherwise they won’t baptize your babies. And after that they have children and pretty soon they become deacons and then elders in church. It will happen to us, too. And it would have happened to George, if God had let him live long enough. But God let him die now before he was old enough to change. That’s why we think it’s God’s fault.”

What young people at this age need most from the Christian community and the church is to feel that their particular local church and school and community really needs them. That it would have difficulty functioning well without them. They need to feel that their own personal participation can honestly make a real, much-needed contribution to other people. Actually, we all need to feel needed, whether it is in our homes, our churches, or our schools.

We should do a better job in our schools and churches to take advantage of this need to feel needed and to be involved by providing many opportunities for service to those in need. We believe that churches and Christian schools ought to develop a “curriculum of service” that begins in the lower grades and extends through high school. What might that look like?

Grades K-5: Children should hear or read stories of missionaries and of people who lived lives of service. There should be an emphasis on helping each other in the classroom, developing the idea that if one person has difficulty with an assignment, the others must help out so that person will learn.

Grades 4-6: Continued emphasis on cooperation in classroom but times when students help lower grade students with oral reading, writing or art projects.

Grades 7-9: There should be study of particular needs in the community. One-and-a-half hours in the middle of the week during school time, students should work one-on-one with helping elderly people in rest homes or helping handicapped children or adults. There should be service activities. And, there should be in-school integration of these activities into study units. Students can do drawings or paintings, essays, studying laws affecting lives of these people.

Grades 10-12: Required one-week of service in needy communities. Also required individual service outside of school hours, with reports.

SEARCHING FAITH. Providing that the needs of affiliative faith have been met some time during late adolescence, persons may expand into searching faith. This may take place during the later high school years or even later in life.

Searching faith has these characteristics: First, there is the action of doubt and of critical judgment. This is often painful but those with searching faith need to act over against the understanding of faith acquired earlier.

In order to move from an understanding of faith that belongs to the school and church community to an understanding of faith that is our own, we need to question that faith community. The questions which arise during searching faith are often not even expressed, not even verbalized. "What is truth? Who am I? What communities are worth belonging to? What causes are worth living for?" "Is any cause worth dying for?" While searching faith does not necessarily include having doubts as to the truth of the Christian faith, it surely includes questions about the meaning of that faith for life. And this kind of questioning for many people leads to what has been called, "the dark night of the soul."

At this point the "religion of the heart" becomes the "religion of the head". Or at least the religion of the head becomes equally important with the religion of the heart. Acts of the intellect, critical judgment, and inquiry into the meanings and purposes of the ways by which the community of faith lives are essential to this stage. Serious study of the Christian story and engagement with historical, theological, and moral thinking about life become very important. The despairs and doubts of the searching soul need to be recognized and to be affirmed and persons need to join others in the intellectual quest for understanding.

Another characteristic of searching faith is experimentation. People in searching faith explore alternatives to their earlier understandings. The strong interest in the use of crystals, interest in shaman or priests believed to have magical powers through communication with spirits can be a matter of real concern for our young people. Excessive interest in such matters ought to be of great concern to parents of high school and older adolescents. Teachers of students in grades 10 and 11 need to be reasonably knowledgeable about the attractiveness of new age experimenting. What is happening is this. A time when a young person is examining his or her own faith group and finding them and their teachings wanting is a time when the religion of the heart needs to become the religion of the head. This is when young people are most vulnerable to New Age philosophies. They are searching for spirituality and finding it in many places. Young people in searching faith need to be grounded in knowledge of the Bible.

Many Christian adults never reach the point of searching faith. Is that so bad? Isn't it much more comfortable and secure not to go through searching faith? As people move forward intellectually, it is necessary that they ask very difficult questions if their faith lives are to be integrated closely with their intellectual lives. It is necessary to go through searching faith if one is to arrive at mature faith.

Others remain in searching faith for the rest of their lives which can be a reason for some kinds of depression. We must remember that people with searching faith still need to have all the needs of experienced and affiliative faith met, even though they may appear to have cast them aside. And they need to be encouraged to remain within the faith community during their intellectual experimentation, and first endeavors at commitment, because it is that faith community that provides their support.

Searching faith is difficult and sometimes dangerous, but we must go through it if we are to reach the next style of faith, owned faith.

OWNED FAITH. Providing that the needs of searching faith have been met some time in early adulthood, we may expand into an owned style of faith. All people who come to owned faith come to a point in their lives when the faith which they claim changes every area of their life. And it changes their life because they have gone through a truly discerning period, the period of searching faith.

Even within owned faith, there can be stages of maturity. Mother Theresa, a woman who seems to have eliminated any dissonance between her faith and her actions in the world is an example of an extremely

mature owned faith. But most people with owned faith want and need the help and support of others in sustaining and in putting their faith to work.

In owned faith, the characteristics of searching faith are never eliminated. But they are dealt with in new ways. John said “Whoever claims to be dwelling in Christ, binds himself to live as Christ lives.” (2:6) And, that is the challenge for owned faith. When I was about 13, I read book that was and still is read by many young people, *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon. It is a novel about Christians who agree together that before any of them do any action they will ask, “What would Jesus have done?” and they will act in accordance with that. At thirteen we think, “Well, of course, that’s exactly what people should do. What’s so great about that.” It was not until we become more mature that we understand how very difficult it can be to consistently have every action and spoken word consistent with a Christ-filled life.

People who reach owned faith, know the incredible pain of giving up their choices in order to live Christ-filled lives. It is painful to make a business decision which is not popular with your associates and which will mean losing money, simply because that decision seems to you to be in keeping with what Christ wants. It is painful to stay in a marriage relationship and to act decently and with warmth within that relationship when you want nothing more than to leave it, but you know how Christ wants you to live.

It is not that if you are in owned faith you do not feel the painfulness of these decisions for your life. It is rather that you let the pain wash over you and drive you to Christ. Owned faith, personal identity in Jesus Christ, is God’s intention for every person. To reach owned faith, our full potential, is a long pilgrimage in which we need to be provided with an environment and experiences that encourage us to act in ways that assist our expansion of faith.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: TO SEE THE CHURCH THROUGH THEIR EYES

(This is a speech Gloria has given to pastors thinking about the faith lives of young congregants.)

I was talking with a student in one of those educational psychology classes one day and I asked, “How did you come to decide to be a minister?” He looked a little embarrassed and said, “Well, I had been a rather unhappy little boy. I was picked on sometimes by the other kids. Then when I was in seventh grade I got sick of it and thought ‘someday I’ll show

them’. I looked around in our community to see what person had the most clout, the most power. And I decided it was the minister. So at that time I decided that’s what I should do. And then no one would ever pick on me again.”

I loved the frankness of that answer. Then I asked him, “What did your minister say when you told him of your interest. “Oh, I never talked to him about it.” he replied. “In fact, I never talked to anybody about it for many years.

What was interesting to me about that conversation is that during those early years he had told no one what he was thinking. It is absolutely true that your students who are between the ages of 12 and 15 are thinking in ways that are, for them, new and sometimes frightening. And it is equally true that they, particularly the boys, are not likely to talk about these new thoughts.

There is a great deal of concern for the adolescents in churches these days.

Physically, these young people are growing rapidly. That rapid growth means that for many of them their bodies hurt. Especially after long periods of sitting without moving around.

Records indicate that biologically today’s 12-15 year olds are about two years ahead of their grandparents and great-grandparents at that age. Think of it. If you have a little baby son or daughter or grandson or granddaughter right now, by the time that child is 13, he or she will be biologically two years ahead of your parents or grandparents when they were 13. And with physical maturity comes the need to make very important decisions about your own body...decisions which your parents and grandparents didn’t have to make.

Socially, we consider your thirteen-year-old children to be younger than their grandparents were. You see their grandparents had at that age already been given a great deal of responsibility and knew they were needed if the family was going to function well. The present day 12-15 year old often isn’t given that kind of responsibility and truly isn’t needed for help with family survival if we think of survival in terms of having enough to eat and a place to live. So as a result, these young people act less mature than their grandparents were.

Yet, they are able to produce children at an earlier age than ever before in history. This is true throughout the

western world...likely because of better nutrition. And this early onset of puberty requires that they take responsibility for their sexual behavior at a much younger age than was ever required of earlier generations. We truly have a new and rather strange situation and we need to think about what that means for the way we parent and pastor these young people.

Emotionally, they are impulsive. They sometimes keep their hurts inside but they also sometimes blurt them out inappropriately. In that way, people at age 12-15 are very much like elderly people. Young people at this age crave acceptance and approval by their peers and they resent authority. They often adopt an air of pseudo-sophistication in order to cover up their worries, doubts, and feelings of uncertainty. They appear rebellious toward adults but they feel hurt because they believe that adults cannot understand them. They appear to think that their parents aren't very bright and their lives are almost over, but they look to their parents, teachers, and pastors as models for their own lives.

In spite of all of this, research studies show that the majority of young adolescents feel good about their parents and enjoy spending time with them. However, it is also true that the shift back and forth in loyalty between peers and family often causes conflict both within themselves and in their relationships with their family. Above all they need to feel needed. In the old days, in rural communities, young people of this age group were badly needed to do the chores and to help in the fields. And they *knew* they were needed. It was clear to them that the family really would have difficulty functioning without their help.

These days it is quite a different matter. Many of the families in our church communities will do anything for their children. They will go out of their way in rearranging their own schedules so that their children may have special lessons or may participate in or watch special athletic experiences. Parents would like the church to provide special organizations for each age group. And all of that is wonderful.

But what young people at this age need most of all from the church is to feel that their particular local church really *needs* them. That it would have difficulty functioning well

without them. You see, when they were small children they needed to know the story of their faith and the story of their church. At that time they needed to feel they and their family belonged and had a place as a family in that church. But if they have been part of a family within a church, then when they come to early adolescence they need to feel that their own personal participation can make a contribution to the church.

As a matter of fact, all of us need to feel that we matter to our particular church and that the church needs us. I belong to a church right now that meets in a school. In order to do so, each Sunday morning a group of people, at the time when we joined, had to take their turn setting up the gym for worship. It took about an hour. And then, after the evening service that group had to clean up the place. It really isn't a very nice job and I would never look forward to doing it. Well, we had scarcely told the minister that we intended to become members of the church when we had a call telling us that it was our turn to help set up the church for the next Sunday. My husband and I looked at each other with raised eyebrows and shrugged and agreed to do it. Then, the next Sunday we were told that they really needed us to serve coffee and juice. And the following Sunday we were asked to bring the bread and wine for communion.

You know, the effect on us by the end of that month was to feel very much needed in that church. Very much a part of the church. In fact, we were not exactly certain what they had done without us. And it was a nice feeling, in spite of the fact that we had done some activities which we wouldn't have chosen to do.

All of us need to feel needed in the church. But this need is new to the 12-15 year old and it *must* be met. If young people at that age are not made to feel needed it is very possible that their later faith development will suffer.

Traditionally in our churches we have selected a few very respected people to take turns serving on the church counsel. And we guard the activities of collecting offering and ushering for only the most respected and faithful of members. The problem is that from early adolescence on, people *need* to be actively serving the church. My husband and I used to

live in Bowling Green, Kentucky. I was teaching an enormous third grade class and I wanted to prepare some wood for a special project we were going to do in art. So I asked a tenth grade boy named Brian if he would help me saw the pieces exactly right. We drove out to his farm and used the lathe and rasp and he laughed because they were wonderful new words for me.

In the course of our working together Brian told me that he went to the huge white Baptist church that you will find in the center of many southern towns. He said that he had been kind of a rascal and hated church but that this year he started really liking going to church and he was pretty sure he always would. I asked what made the difference, thinking that I would hear a story about conversion and baptism. Brian told me that the church school superintendent had rounded up him and some of his other ninth grade friends and told them that there was a problem. When the children's worship was finished and the little children had to come back and sit with their families for the end of the service, they couldn't find their parents back. The church was really huge and always packed. So Brian and his friends were asked to go out and meet the little ones and help them find their families.

What happened was that the little kids started to notice the tenth graders with delight and to greet them with little waves. The parents thanked them for their help. Brian said, "It makes all the difference. We really are important to the people in that church and now we know it." They need to feel needed.

Intellectually these young people are inquisitive and curious. They are learning to be better at logical thinking and need practice in doing so. As they move into this type of reasoning, they love to identify the inconsistencies of their parents or teachers or pastors and of the teaching they receive.

We often accept stage of development with the adolescent in the family but we have difficulty knowing what the implications for that are in the church. For example, my wonderful adult daughter, at the age of 15 sometimes thought I was hopelessly out of date and misguided. In fact, she acted as though she usually thought that. And that was

pretty hard for me. But it was necessary for her to believe I was wrong sometimes in order for her to acquire her own identity. She had to separate from me and to judge me and find me wanting in order to find out what she was going to be like. Unfortunately, most of us give our children plenty of opportunities to find us wanting. But fortunately, when a family is close and supportive, the judging that needs to go on is done in a loving, accepting environment. An environment in which the young person has learned to feel, "I am noticed here and needed here and loved here." And even when the pain of judging and separation are going on, the feelings of loyalty and love developed earlier remain.

What implications does that have for the church. In order to move from an understanding of faith that belongs to the family and to the church community to an understanding of faith that is our own, young people need to go through a period in which they question that community. They need to judge it and perhaps recognize that some things that community of people says and does are not necessarily the best way. The act of looking closely at that church community, examining it and even finding fault with it-- finding it wanting--helps them to acquire their own identity in the faith.

Now much of this examining occurs, usually, after the 12-15 age period I have been talking about. But just as in the home when the family has created a supportive environment for the 12-15 year old which carries him or her through the next period with the questioning and judging. So, too, the environment which the church has created for the 12-15 year old has important implications for the way they go through the years after age 16. If the questions and the judging and the separating of the older adolescent are carried out in an environment created earlier of "I am noticed here and needed here and loved here," it makes a great deal of difference in the faith life of the older adolescent.

We wanted to know what young people in this age group were thinking about their church life and so Gloria wrote to ten different Christian schools from across North America. Four of them were in Canada and six in the United States. She asked if they would distribute a

questionnaire to the students in the 12-15 age group. On the questionnaire, she asked the students to write a few lines in answer to four questions. The first question was: What things about your faith in Jesus Christ make you very happy? The second was: What about your faith in Jesus Christ causes you some worry or concern? The third was: What things would you like to have your minister know about you and your age group? And the fourth was: What things would you like to have happen in your church for you and your age group?

In the letter to the students she promised that she would never tell who they were or where their school was located. But she told them she would be speaking to ministers and she assured them that this was their chance to be heard. All of the students were in Christian schools.

This is what they said:

Over and over came the concern that they would not have strong enough faith to be saved and to go to heaven. And they would very much like to know how much sin they may do before God says, “That’s too much. I no longer want you.”

“I am so afraid I will someday forget about God and not want to go to church anymore. What if I lose my faith?”

“I used to think that if I did something really bad God has a little check book and if I had too many checks I would not get into heaven when I die. I don’t believe that now but I still don’t feel safe. I wish someone could just help me feel safe.”

“I worry if my faith is strong enough. How strong is the faith of all those who went to heaven and how weak was the faith of those who went to hell? And where do I fit in?”

“I haven’t really made a decision about my faith because I still have many questions. How do we know there is for sure a God? How do we know he’s good because in the Bible there are always killings going on? I do believe that there is a God and that our sins are forgiven but how do we know for sure? And how do we know that our CRC is the right church to go to and has the right beliefs? I mean all the other religions think that their religion is the right one. So which one is it?”

“I am so afraid that I’m going to Hell for not listening in church. But I just can’t.”

“Sometimes I don’t feel like going to church. That’s like saying I don’t want to worship God and that scares me. But church is so hard.”

That is generally how they answered questions concerning their own faith. When I asked what they wished their ministers knew about them, this is what they said:

“I just wish he knew my name.” More than anything else, they want the minister to know them, even when they act shy or silly or unconcerned.

“Sometimes it’s like we aren’t in the congregation at all. He needs to know that we are here and not just people that sit in church on Sunday.”

“I don’t really want anything in my church to change, if you mean activities. We have enough of those. I just wish people would think we were as important as anyone else. We just don’t count. We think differently from the older people. We want a place to fit in in the church, just as much as older people do.”

“I want him to know that we aren’t just naughty little kids that don’t care about anything. We do care about the church and want to be part of it. We want to be active in the church. We want to understand sermons but we can’t. We are the church’s future. We need more things to help us live a Christian life.”

“The only thing I would want to have my minister know is that he’s doing a great job with the youth group and because of him I am fired up for the Lord. I really like my church services because he sets aside dates where the different parts of the congregation can do something during the services. I can worship then because it’s my worship.”

“He needs to know that we want to be more active in our church. For example, couldn’t we make decisions and do activities? We ought to be doing things.”

“We need more attention.”

“I don’t want to change anything for my age group at my church. We have youth groups that go places to minister. We have teen light where kids can go places like Chicago or Splash. We have different kinds of worship services for different people. You can pick if you want to be in Bible study or catechism. But neither one is boring.”

“I’m a boy. I wish the church was up to date and interesting

so that I would want, really want to go. I mean its o.k. but I'd like it to be so good you would talk about it the next day."

"I just wish the minister and the consistory would relate to us like they do to any other person in the congregation. We're not that different, you know, but we are important and what we think and how we act counts."

"One thing is I wish my minister would be willing to talk to me at any time about anything. I also feel that he should know and maybe have special meetings with people my age about sex and love. And tell us his opinion on the subject. I am in the eighth grade."

"I'm in grade 8 and my name is Greg. You can say my name in your speech if you want because this is important. I think people my age should be able to give our say in matters that concern us. Like cadets, for instance. All we do is Bible studies. It's not that I don't like them, but a kid my age needs more than that. On the other hand, I feel very happy about how easy the Lord makes it for me to be His child and servant. Like being able to go to heaven just because you love and praise the Lord. It's very easy and nice and I love it. I'm trying hard to be a persistent believer."

"My minister seems like a father or brother and is very nice. I love my church."

"Well, my minister knows me pretty well because my minister is my father. And there is nothing I would change in my church because everyone is like ages 13-27 age group except for my father. But he's pretty young too...he's 39. But my mom is 41."

Most of these young people complained about the sermons. According to them, sermons are very boring. In fact, of the 1004 responses, 721 said that sermons are terribly boring. They need more illustrations, need to be related to real life.

"I wish he knew that his sermons are hard to understand."

"I wish he knew that some of us, like me, actually do listen to the sermon. But we can understand them better when you relate them to life. I wish we could participate in the service, like us giving announcements."

"Do you know that I just sit there in church? It is all aimed at the little kids or the adults. No part of it is for me. The sermons are so terribly boring and I am afraid that when I am out on my own I will quit going to church. And then I won't go to heaven. I am so afraid."

"Don't you think the minister could direct his sermons toward us once a month? Then we would be willing to tolerate those other sermons that are like Greek to us the rest of the times. But this way we get nothing at all. Because the sermons are either for the adults or for the little children. But I look around the church and there are just as many of us as there are of either other group."

"We don't always enjoy coming to church and when we do we would rather sleep through the sermons. I know that preachers get yelled at when parents think the sermon is not for them. But what do you think we feel like?"

"I wish he knew that we get more out of sermons with examples. I would have us take part in the service."

"I really wish my minister had some idea how hard it is to sit all the way through church and then all the way through Sunday School. I bet he would have trouble doing that. It is hard on my body."

"I wish we all could find some way to make worship in church something we could look forward to and like. None of it seems to apply to us."

"I don't know my minister. All I do is say hello to him. But I do that almost every Sunday because I really would like to know him. If I could change my church I would let the boys sit with girls. But they don't. Girls don't bite...at least not in catechism."

"I just wish my minister knew me."

"I wish my minister knew that I am loving God more during adolescence than at any other time in my life. In fact, I feel I am almost ready to make profession of faith. I'm changing all the time."

"I wish the minister knew that our age group isn't bad. Most of us usually don't steal things out of the kitchen and sabotage the copy machine...usually."

“Well, I just wish he would be more informed about us.”

“I really wish the minister knew how our age group feels about God. If he knew our concerns and problems he could help us with them. I know he could. But he just doesn’t know.”

“I just wish he knew that we are old enough to participate in the church service and old enough to participate in congregational meetings so we could put in some ideas that would help us in our faith and worship. We are part of the church, too. And we are old enough to join into the Lord’s Supper because we are ready. And thank you for reading this because I really feel safe in God even though I want some things changed.

“Our names! Our minister knows the names of all the adults and not ours!”

“I wish we could take Lord’s Supper without having to make confession of faith first. Lord’s Supper is my faith. It’s not like I have to pass a test or something. That’s how they make it seem.”

“We need to do things in the service. We are restless and church goes on so long and we can’t pay attention for a very long stretch. But part of church should be doing things.”

“My minister knows all there is to know about me because he is my dad. I sit at the table with him and I can tell him what I want him to know. I wish he knew more about the kids my age, though. He hardly knows their names and doesn’t know them at all. But I don’t dare tell him that.”

“Nobody in my church thinks I’m a good person. Nobody ever trusts teenage guys but they do trust teenage girls. If they keep treating us guys as if we are evil and not part of them, pretty soon we won’t be part of them.”

“Catechism in my church needs to be changed. I wish my minister knew the things we go through like trying to keep a job while keeping your grades high. And all the peer pressure to smoke and drink. My minister talks to me but he doesn’t really know or understand what’s going on in my life. Catechism is the most boring way to teach about God and help us with our faith. And we need help. But the kids hate it so much that ultimately they stop even going to church at all.”

“I know this is impossible but I wish the minister knew more about how I live and think and act. And he has no idea how important stories and examples are in his sermons. It’s the only way we can listen.”

“I think he should know that we do not feel respected in the church. And I think the church service should move our hearts and not bore our minds.”

Andrew Lester in *When Children Suffer* interviewed pastors from many denominations about their ministry to children. He found that few pastors structure a pastoral conversation with a person at this age even during a crisis. He says that pastors are the victims of a cultural myth that pictures this age as a time of fun and happiness. Childhood and early adolescence are largely idealized in our culture, as a time of innocence. It isn’t easy for young people of this age to share their inner thoughts with adults. They can only do so if they have established a trust with them.

So what can be done? We went through the answers we received to see whether the young people themselves can provide direction.

1. The minister has to be present where they are. Even if you have a youth elder or a youth pastor, the preaching pastor must know these young people and be known by them. He or she must know their names.
2. The minister and the adults of the church must listen to them when they talk to you. Look directly at them and remember what they say. If you don’t know them personally now, don’t expect to be of help to them in any time of crisis. If you don’t know them personally now, don’t expect them to come and talk with you about problems they have with their faith or with the church. They will just leave.
3. Arrange special times to talk to them about their personal feelings about faith. Remember that during age 12-15 a person begins to feel that the central themes of religion are directed personally to him or her and to what their lives are like. That feeling marks the beginning of maturity in faith. It is not as self-centered a time as we formerly thought. They need to think for themselves, to belong, and to feel needed.
4. Find practical ways in which they can be used and needed in the church. Let your planning committees know that any helping activities that can be done by the 12-15 group

should be done by them. Serving coffee, ushering, setting up chairs, working with church school, painting church school furniture, decorating the church nursery, cleaning up the church grounds. Don't rely simply on getting their participation by putting an announcement in the bulletin. They need to be personally asked to do an activity. And the boys need to be asked by a man. They are individuals and want to be seen that way.

5. Arrange for serving activities for them in the community. They need to learn that disciples of Jesus Christ serve others. If you want them to grow up to be helping, participating adults in the church, make certain that you provide experiences for them to be helping young people at this age. Visit rest homes where they can read and talk individually to older people. Arrange for one-on-one visits with handicapped children or adults in your community on a regular basis.
6. They are extremely social beings and need social activities for their age group.
7. You must not allow your minister to have boring sermons. These kids want to listen to sermons. But if the sermons are boring you will drive them into daydreams and finally drive them out of the church. All of us need stories and examples and illustrations. We need them to be appropriate, of course, but we need stories. These stories need not come from your own personal life, although at times that is acceptable. But if you read widely, the stories and examples will be there. Actually, the kind of preaching that is good for the 12-15 age group is often very good for the adults in your congregation.
8. Recognize that the Sunday service is a time for worship, not just for preaching. Try to get your minister and your worship leaders to think..."What can we bring to these young people to help them worship? Instead of thinking "What do we want them to know?" If they do servanthood activities outside of church bring references to what happened in those situations into your sermons. Make sure that you demonstrate in the worship service that their age group and their activities are an important part of the church. Not just something that has been created to keep them busy and happy. Recognize that they need to worship with their bodies and emotions if their

minds are going to be involved in worship. It is extremely important that at least some part of every worship service is deliberately planned to engage the emotions of the people of every age.

These young people will be at this fragile age for just a little while. But what happens to them will affect their faith life for years to come. So please take good care of them.

Survey question for parents: Do or did you see signs that your children will become people who live a life according to the commitments of their hearts?

No, I had dreams that my children would be highly involved in changing the world – they are more interested in withdrawing from the world, rejecting materialism but not working for change.

No, I didn't realize how gifted one was with children until she began working as a student companion for a student with special needs...I expect her to be an outstanding special educator, an important influence on the lives of her students and their families, and a positive role model in the schools in which she works. The other daughter has been very positively influenced by what I've heard her refer to as outstanding professors in college. (It is the authenticity she has seen in her professors' commitment to her success and well-being that will bring her back to campus to complete her degree program there.) She went to college as an 18 year-old struggling to find her niche. She has developed a passion for history, for women's and children's rights, for politics, for her Christian faith. I didn't know what direction her life would take when I brought her to campus for that first tour, but I believed that college would provide the opportunity and support she needed to find that direction. And about that I was right. I am happy with the foundation she has laid for her life during her college experience.

No. Our daughter showed little innate interest in adventure, and our son appeared to lack the discipline required for college. Later, however, our daughter showed an early heart for the homeless. She was ten. She refused to eat her lunch at a restaurant in San Francisco, and then tried to find a homeless person she had seen earlier so she could give it to him.

Survey question: What might parents do to help their children develop in their faith lives? (Parents' answers)

PRAY – model church involvement, small groups, participating in their faith journey.

It is really important to go to church, regularly, every Sunday, with both parents. Don't just "attend," but be involved. And it is important to be consistent with what is learned in church. If a family attends church, but their lives are a contradiction to what was heard in church by the children, it will certainly create confusion. Practice what is preached.

The best way to teach faith is for parents to model faith by living by faith. This then becomes part of the family culture. Christ is the personal Savior of each of our three kids and they learned early on to consult him regarding all aspects of their lives through prayer and praise.

We gave our kids the foundation and it is up to them to decide what the Bible says to them personally.

In our family, church was and is a given that they would join me for church each week. During a divorce when the girls were 7 and 10 years old, we never missed church, and we would talk about God's help He was giving us to be a strong family of three instead of a family of four. I think over time this impacted how my daughters felt and learned about faith. We talked about it and we did our best to live it. I also remember the girls looking forward to seeing their grandparents and cousins at church each week. I'm sure that made going a bit more palatable.

Run away from legalism, and allow the children to develop their own faith with guidance.

Surround them with good people of faith; participate as a family in your faith community.

Also sharing with them how faith helped them (the parents) through difficult times.

Pray for them. My children's acceptance of Christ as Savior is their personal decision, one I cannot make for them. The development of faith in an individual's life is the result of their response to the call of the Holy Spirit, so I pray that my children's hearts might be open, I pray for the call of God on their lives.

Let them see you reading the Bible and praying besides at the dinner table. Have daily devotions every day they are in the house. Attend a church with a good youth program devoted to youth growing in the Lord. Keep them involved even when they are "bored." Send them to church camp. Give them every opportunity to experience Christianity: concerts, camps, mission trips.

Children need to attend church with their parents, receive developmentally appropriate religious education from knowledgeable teachers and have meaningful discussions with others. They need to see others (parents included) exhibit their faith daily in word and deed. This is not always easy – I am very imperfect.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe you know your children's secret concerns about their faith? Should you know them? To what extent should parents try to know their children's secret concerns?
2. How would you answer children who ask how we know our God really exists and is real?
3. Why is it so difficult for some parents to talk with their children concerning deep faith questions? Where might such parents find help?
4. In what ways might the way Christians parent their children differ from those of a nonbeliever?

Turning Apathy into Empathy through Service by Judith Palpant

“O Lord, baptize our hearts into a sense of the conditions and needs of all people.”

– GEORGE FOX 1624-1691, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS –

“There once was a boy named Pierre who only would say, ‘I don’t care!’” begins Maurice Sendak’s cautionary tale. It is rollicking fun to read this small book to a child as the scowling Pierre repeats the same answer to every question: “What would you like to eat?” “I don’t care!” “Some lovely cream of wheat?” “I don’t care!” His parents end up leaving their obstreperous son at home and go to town. While they are out, a lion visits Pierre. “I can eat you, don’t you see?” says the lion. “I don’t care,” says Pierre. When the parents return, they find the lion in bed and ask, “Where is Pierre?” “I don’t care,” the lion growls. “Pierre’s in there!” they say, realizing the lion has eaten their son. They drag the animal to the doctor and eventually out rolls Pierre, a smiling boy who wants to go home. “I’ll take you there, if you would care,” offers the lion. “Then everyone looked at Pierre who shouted, “Yes, indeed, I care!” The final picture shows the family riding home on the lion’s back. The caption reads: “The lion took them home to rest and stayed on as a weekend guest. The moral of Pierre is: CARE!”

This little children’s book is part of our family lore. If one of the kids shrugged and said, “I don’t care,” their dad and I naturally countered with “Is your name Pierre?” which usually helped the furrowed brow resolve into a smile. They remembered Pierre; no need for another Jonah-like journey into the belly of a lion. We wanted to keep the jolting phrase “I don’t care” at bay, or better still, nip it in the bud before it became entrenched in their vocabularies, their thinking.

But turning apathy into empathy is not easy. It has been said that there are two kinds of people in the world, guests and hosts. Before the lion came, Pierre exemplified the whining guest who is thinking only of himself. Once he shouted, “I care!” he made the first step towards becoming a host to the world, ready to look outside himself to care about others. Years ago I borrowed a helpful phrase from Ron Hutchcraft of Moody Radio who encouraged his listeners to “Go MAD. Go make a

difference.” My children heard this reminder every day as they headed to school, a call to keep their eyes open for ways to make a difference on the bus, the playground, or in the classroom. They could serve others with a smile, by saying “thank you,” or by asking “how can I help?”

Still, it isn’t enough to tell children to care and make a difference. Modeling matters as they mirror their parents’ or grandparents’ attitudes and actions. I like a story told me by my good friend Jenny. One summer in the late ‘50’s, when she was seven, Jenny spent a few days alone with her Grandmother Julia in southern Arkansas. Her grandfather had died some years earlier. She remembers one day her grandmother said that Trull, her African-American gardener, was sick. Jenny helped her pick vegetables. Together, they washed and chopped them to go in a pot of soup. When the soup was ready, they climbed into her grandmother’s 1953 Ford and drove up a steep, rutted road and back into the woods. In doing this charitable act, this lovely, white southern lady risked following Christ and crossed the cultural mores of the time. Jenny described the hounds running out and sniffing them with their noses. Trull, with his gray, grizzled hair, ambled out of the small dilapidated house. Her grandmother cheerfully greeted him as she carried the pot of soup past the hounds and into the kitchen where she rattled around until she found a ladle, bowl and spoon. She prayed for Trull and then he, in turn, poured out words of profound gratitude to God for Grandmother Julia and Jenny. After his heartfelt “Amen,” her grandmother ladled the steaming soup into a bowl and served it to the ailing old man. “That experience has shaped everything I have done in my life,” Jenny told me.

Indeed. She has cooked up pots of delicious soup for the sick and sorrowing. Jenny sometimes ministers to them in her own home. Intentional or not, the impact of Grandmother Julia on her granddaughter is still felt today. One woman who falls upon Jenny’s mercies time and again once said to me, “Don’t you know that Jenny is the Patron Saint of the Down and Out?”

It has been said that the energy of God’s love enters our personalities best, not through the will, but through the imagination. Reaching out to others can help expand the parents’ community while building the child’s moral imagination: a young mother bundles up her infant daughter and goes to comfort her newly widowed neighbor while another allows her small son to carry the milk carton as she delivers Meals on Wheels. Parents of two teenage daughters write in their Christmas letter, “We have made it a goal to make space in our lives for people in crisis.”

In the first chapter of James we read: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” Service is never convenient. It takes courage, commitment and time. By starting with young children, parents can move past good intentions and prayerfully take the child by the hand to go help someone near or far. Everyone benefits.

Judith Palpant, an educator, speaker and author, has contributed pieces at the end of some chapters. She is the mother of three adult children and grandmother of five children. She and her husband, Sam, spent 1979-1985 in Kenya serving as medical missionaries with the Quakers. Upon returning to the U.S. she and her family hosted six foster children through Healing the Children, a national organization that brings children to the U.S. for surgeries not available in their home countries. Judy speaks and writes on the topic of raising children in the spirit of service.

Chapter 4

Service To Others In the Fabric of Faithfulness

Genuine politics –politics worthy of the name – the only politics I am willing to devote myself to – is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole.

– VACLAV HAVEL –

In the book, *Educating for Life*, Philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff says that the Christian life must be a life of seeking justice for those who need it—for the poor, the downtrodden, the needy.

Why is that true? Wolterstorff says that everything we do, whether it is hunting, gathering, teaching, or studying, we do out of gratitude to God for our salvation. The Greek word for thanksgiving is *eucharistia*. In many Christian traditions the Lord's Supper is called the Eucharist, because it traditionally opens with a prayer of thanksgiving. And Wolterstorff says that every act of our life, our teaching, our studying, our playing should be regarded as eucharistic activities. Our lives are to be activities of thanksgiving.

A college student who had been considering issues of worldview, faith and justice told us this:

My worldview dictates that the root of measuring justice is always looking at the needs of “the least of these.” That includes the widow, orphan, foreigner, poor, ill, disabled, imprisoned, the vulnerable and others. Throughout the Bible, justice was defined based on the needs of the lowliest and weakest of society. Mosaic law was filled with provisions protecting vulnerable people, and Jesus upheld this viewpoint through most all of His activities during His time on earth. The book of James reminds us that the essence of true religion is how we treat the neediest among us. So, regardless of the means and ways God leads them to participate in service, justice should be a priority of every Christian at all times. To be honest, I never thought of these things as justice. Justice, to me, was whether or not wrongs were punished and rights were rewarded. I mostly only thought of justice as the “justice system.” However, discussions with one professor, in particular, really did expand my definition and helped

me see that serving others isn't just nice or just for evangelism; serving others is living out our calling to follow Christ's example for treating others.

The Great Commandment

Remember that the Great Commandment Jesus gave us for our lives has two parts.

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22: 36-40

Christians are often very good at keeping the first part of the Great Commandment. However, we often give only lip service to the second part, loving and caring for others. And who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is anyone who needs our help. Our neighbor is every person who suffers from abuse, or scorn, or ridicule, or hunger, or lack of shelter. Our neighbors are all human beings made in God's image, even if they do not, themselves, know God.

- They are classmates who are alone and lonely because they haven't found a group of friends.
- They are special needs children who feel left out by other children.
- They are parents who are exhausted because their special needs children take so much of their energy.
- They are parents in the “sandwich generation” who are weary taking responsibility for caring for their children and for their own parents at the same time.
- They are people in rest homes who have no visitors at all.
- They are children in Christian schools in South Africa who write with pieces of lead because they have no pencils.
- They are people living in cardboard and tin shelters on the hillsides in the city of Rio de Janeiro. They can't find work and have no other shelter.

- They are the hundreds of children living in the sewers under the streets of Ulaanbataar, Mongolia, because their parents cannot afford to feed them. These children search the restaurant garbage bins for bones to take down in the sewer in order to boil them for a thin soup.
- They are homeless teenagers who have fled to our cities because of physical, sexual, or verbal abuse at home.
- They are mothers in Haiti who stand at the airport with their babies in their arms, begging departing passengers to take their children because they know they won't be able to feed and clothe them.
- They are people in Sudan and other regions of Africa who are starving.
- They are seven and eight-year-old African children who are the head of their families because their parents have died of AIDS.
- And surely they are all the victims of the latest tsunami disaster.

Teaching caring and compassion through service to others

Those who responded to our survey give us these suggestions for teaching children about justice and compassion.

My father's strong sense of justice – he always said, "Right is right for everybody." I just saw the difference he made for people. He cared and was an advocate and helped everyone.

Sharing the gifts church members have given us over the course of my wife's 13 years with breast cancer, making a banner with church members' names to string across the back patio when we had a "thank you" barbeque to thank the church. We think this [gratitude and service] mostly has to be learned with only occasionally naming it. Children can and should share gifts early on, however, whether in the nursing home or at church or in the neighborhood. We never leave the neighborhood out of our prayers.

I think always being in some form of Christian service is a great witness to children. My parents were always helping others through the church with their activities and financial gifts. I think involving children at a young age is also really important. Service becomes a fun family event - where everyone pitches in and helps others. If children learn this early on it is just a way of life and doesn't feel like an unbearable sacrifice.

I really believe that what parents model in their own lives will be emulated by their children, but only if it is explained and makes sense to the child. Children learn in so many different ways and justice has to be taught in a way that the child will understand its importance whether that be through experiential learning, research, or by watching a situation unfold. Because I saw my mom get satisfaction from helping others, I learned that service is positive. Because I experienced injustice in my own life and saw the injustice in others, I learned that service is necessary. And because I have seen the positive effects of service in the lives of others since childhood, it makes sense that I would want to make service a part of my adult life.

One thing my family did which helped me was to give up something (say instead of having a nice dinner, once a month to have rice for dinner) and use the money to help someone.

I remember walking with my mother from house to house in the neighborhood of the school (low-income where she worked) handing pamphlets to people. This was to encourage people to vote for a levy that would ensure a new school to be built. That was a valuable lesson in which education is a key element in striving towards justice.

Parents can show their children that helping others is important by making it a part of their family lifestyle and values. In my family growing up we did little things from volunteering at a soup kitchen to participating in the Angel Tree program at Christmas time.

Set an example. Teach them not to be afraid of people who are different or in need by helping or volunteering themselves. Show them that it is okay, and even good to share your time and wealth.

The important idea is for families not to adopt service activities in times of convenience, but to make them a priority. When children see their parents genuinely care and devote time and energy to a cause, they recognize the value of that cause.

One young woman shared a beautiful story that acknowledges the fear parents may have in sharing difficult stories with their children:

Parents shouldn't be afraid to talk to their kids about the hard things in life and allow them to interact with the bigger issues of injustice in the world. Charlie and Sonja Lowell are an incredible example of parents whom I think are helping their twin 5-year-old boys to learn about justice. Charlie is the keyboard player for Jars of Clay. He and Sonja have always been open with their boys and very honest. At night when they pray together, they remember the "sick people in Africa who don't have clean water like we do," they remember the "children in Africa who do not have a mommy or a daddy." It's a frequent conversation with the boys about Africa and about the need to be thankful for what we have, the need to pray for them and the need to support them. I sat down with the Lowell family last week after I had returned from a month in Africa. Asher, one of the boys, asked me, "Jena, did you have to drink dirty water?" I was blown away that Asher had an understanding of what was going on in Africa, and that he would actually ask me about it. We talked about how people get sick from the water, but how wells can bring clean water to the communities. We talked about how the boys and girls are able to go to school now that they don't have to walk to the river to get water. Asher jumped up from the table and ran to the refrigerator to pull off the picture of a Zambian boy they had been sponsoring through World Vision. "Do you think he has clean water?" Asher asked me.

Micah, the other boy, asked me, "Jena, did the armies use bows and arrows?" I was a little surprised at this question because I had the feeling he was asking me about being in the war-torn area of Northern Uganda. I looked uncomfortably at Sonja, wondering what I should say in response to this. She whispered to me, "Jena, answer as honestly as you would like and we'll intervene if we need to." So I did my best to answer the questions about the war, the soldiers, and people dying because of injustice.

I think it's important for parents to bring the world to the living room for children. I think it's important for parents to realize how powerful it is for young children to be thinking outside of themselves, to ask the uncomfortable questions that parents might be embarrassed to answer, to be willing to talk about hardships in the world. I wonder if parents feel as though they need to protect their children from the reality of the world. I don't think parents give their kids enough credit. I'm seeing more and more initiatives and change that is happening because young kids are learning about injustice and are finding ways to make a difference. We have an 11-year-old girl in Nashville who heard someone speak about the problems in Africa and wanted to do something about it. Her mother got behind her and got the church involved. They ended up putting together a fundraising fun-run to help support a school in Kenya. It was called "Ellie's Run for Africa." It brought in \$30,000 and is now an annual fundraiser for the school. It's letting children become aware of what's going on in the world and then giving them the support and the tools to get involved, in whatever way it is, that will forever impact that child. In regards to my parents – they just supported everything that I dreamed. They did everything they could to nurture my desire to help others. And they lived it out themselves.

In the survey to which the 2500 middle school students in Christian schools responded, they were asked, "Have you ever helped someone who was in need, outside of your own relatives? At least 60% said that they never did help others outside of their own families. Among the 40% who said they did, most answered that they had witnessed to someone else. They had confused witnessing with serving or helping in a physical way. Two Christian schools in the groups who took the survey had students actively involved in service projects. They were not just collecting money but actually serving someone else. Every student in those schools clearly knew what it was to serve someone else and they described the service in detail.

Parents might say that school is not the place where students should go out and serve members of the community. We would likely agree, if it were true that those students were learning to serve others as part of family projects. Teaching children to help those in need is part of good parenting, as the parents in our survey remind us.

Volunteering is important, but also financial support. Make sure that children see where charitable contributions from the household go and why that organization was chosen.

I remember one time as a family we served Thanksgiving meals for the homeless and it was a great time to talk about all that we have and what we could give back to the community. Parents need to model the ‘helpfulness’ and bring the children along as ‘apprentices.’ Look for opportunities to be helpful ... to one another, to grandma, to people at church, to people in the community, etc. Same for justice. Talk about it, practice it, read about just people, and involve yourself in just causes.

Model a giving spirit and stay informed and educated about these things that matter. Have open discussions about social issues and cover a broad scope of opinions. Include your kids in these conversations even when they are young. Expose them to cultural and community events and talk about their value and importance. Travel and expose them to cultures other than the one they live in.

Model helping others. Model the struggle for justice in our relationships, professions, work, church, community and greater family. Encourage generosity. Encourage moral courage.

Our daughters grew up seeing their parents help others. We would pick several people in the community and buy Christmas presents for them each year. The girls and I would make cookies for other families and I always made sure they delivered them with me. When someone was sick in our church, we would bring a meal to them. Many times they heard me say, it isn’t about us ... it’s about them. I grew up in Chicago and my parents were both very prejudiced. I would often talk to my children about how everyone is important and it doesn’t matter what color your skin is. Beauty comes from within. I really wanted my children not to worry so much about their appearance, but realize what was important was their actions. We loved it when missionaries came to our church and our children could hear how other people lived in the world and we would spend a lot of time talking about our cultural differences.

What kinds of service?

If at all possible, service to others should begin with the entire family being involved. How might that happen? The kinds of service you will find to do with your children will depend on the needs of people in the area in which you live. Have a family meeting to discuss the kinds of service you will do together either to help others or to help the environment. Here are some examples:

- Perhaps the city near you sponsors a program like one in Spokane, WA called Urban Plunge. Families take sleeping bags into the inner city and for one night sleep in the building where homeless people sleep. They eat the same food that is served to the homeless and spend time talking with them. In this way parents and children together gain some idea of the reasons why there is homelessness and what the lives of the homeless people are like. Knowing that many homeless people are just like we are, only less fortunate, makes a huge impact on children and encourages them to contribute shampoo, soap, toothpaste, and toys.
- Arrange with an urban tutoring program for you and your family to tutor on a regular basis, perhaps one late afternoon or evening each week. Even a first grader who has learned how to read can help another first grader study spelling words.
- Find out which residents in a nursing home fail to have visitors. Adopt that resident as your family’s extra grandparent and make visits that the resident can count on. Have your children share their homework with their new grandparent. Bring special treats or games to share with them. Discuss, as a family, what kinds of questions are appropriate to ask about his or her life.
- Plan together how you will recycle paper, bottles, and cans in your own home. When you eat at a fast food restaurant try to see if you can order items that use less paper and Styrofoam containers. Work together on recycling projects.
- If you know a family that has a special needs child, invite them for dinner. Plan with your children how they might play in ways appropriate for that child. Invite the child for a weekend, allowing the parents to have a free weekend. With your children talk to the parents to find out how to make the weekend a happy time for your visitor.

- Go for a family hike to pick up litter along a trail, roadway, or beach.

If we truly do love the Lord our God with all our hearts, we will work to find help and justice for those in need. And if we truly do love the Lord our God, then we will love God's creation. We will make the greatest effort we can, with our children, to care for God's creation. We will care for the environment. We do so out of our heartfelt gratitude to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But, what cultivates the desire to serve? Does requiring service result in a learned tendency or does it result in backlash? One parent said she didn't believe one can "shape" service in children. We turned to our surveys.

When asked whether they had ever done volunteer service during their school years, most of the young adults answered that they had and told what prompted that service. In middle school they mentioned hospital volunteer work and boy scout service.

High School: Boy scouts, hospital volunteer, law enforcement volunteer (Youth Explorers), youth soccer coach/referee. I think I did many of these activities because my parents kept me engaged in them – I don't think I even realized it was really an option NOT to do much of it until I was about 14 years old.

I volunteered a lot through Girl Scouts and Honor Society. A lot of what prompted me was, honestly, scholarships for college and badges and so forth. It didn't sink in as a way of life, really, until college.

My high school football team would go to the low-income projects and help clean up, paint, and so on every year.

In high school I worked with an agency that helped feed homeless people. Nothing too extensive though. Honestly I thought it would help my chance of getting into college.

I did most of my volunteering in the church nursery (mainly because I love kids and my folks encouraged me to follow my passion in serving Christ). As a sophomore and junior in high school I became very active in the Chrysalis movement. It is a Christian retreat designed for teens.

During high school, my brother's soccer team hosted a soccer team from Tblisi, Georgia (former Soviet Union). Seeing those kids, in particular, prompted a desire to foster international relations among kids...to get an early start on stamping out prejudices and hate. I see that I should mention here that another factor in my desire to help others probably stems from being adopted into a rather unique family. I was adopted internationally...born in Korea and adopted by my American parents. My dad comes from a somewhat newly immigrated Yugoslavian (Slovenia) family (his grandparents were the first generation to come to the US). My mom is half Filipino (her father having come to the US as a teen) and half mixed Caucasian. My brother is Japanese and American Indian. My sister is Irish & Italian. The youngest two are biological to my parents. My parents were always incredibly open about adoption (though it would have been difficult to hide) and raised us (well, at least me) to feel blessed to have been adopted and to see the positives in the entire situation rather than feel any sort of anger toward my birth parents or feel shorted in any way. So, simply being adopted and in a family that so openly embraced adoption creates an awareness of the world.

In high school, the last thing I did with my youth group was help collect video-taped messages from newly arrived Sudanese refugees (mostly Lost Boys) to their friends and family still stuck in a Kenyan refugee camp. A small group of my youth group—including myself—traveled to the UNHCR Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya to track down the friends and family to show them the tapes, then we video-taped messages back.

I will say though that opportunities to serve others from foreign countries, especially Africa and the Middle East always intrigued me. Call me morbid, but I have always been fascinated with the Holocaust, and more domestically, the Salem witch trials. I think it is because I have always been fascinated with how humans can possibly hate or be fearful enough of the unknown that they would be willing to kill and kill brutally for it. It isn't wonder then that I soon became very interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Africa in general. I think I also have a huge fascination in the unknown

or little known or acknowledged. This would include: Africa, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sudan, and the whole terrorist, Arab, Islam issue.

I did mission work with my youth group in Mexico and inner-city L.A. High school was the beginning of my walk with Christ, so I actively pursued trips, bible study, and any way I could to strengthen my faith.

I participated in mission trips, worked at soup kitchens, worked with low-income children, worked with the Red Cross, taught Vacation Bible School, volunteered with church events, volunteered at thrift shops, did a marketing research study for a recycling center that was the number one employer of disabled persons in the Upper Midwest. For me, seeing and hearing of the effect of volunteer work was the greatest reward I could imagine ... how something so little could touch a person or group so deeply or change their circumstances so drastically always sobered and amazed me.

I did a mission trip to the Dominican Republic for 2 weeks heading into my Senior year of high school. Truthfully, I signed up because everyone else in the youth group was going, but once I arrived, it was amazing to see the poverty as well as the luxuriousness in which the people lived. Next to 4 Star hotels and resorts were people in tiny boxes on the street. I wanted to go and see how other people lived and I wanted to serve others with part of my summer.

The most impacting was when I read the Bible to an elderly man who could no longer do it for himself. I don't remember why I did it. It was probably required for a high school class.

In my middle school years I raised money to buy shoes for people in Romania after hearing a missionary speak about his experiences ministering to those people. I realized that service is not a matter of merely "giving back" out of obligation or guilt, but helping to build a strong society and truly caring about the people who share my community. I realized that my community is not necessarily a geographic region, but that it reaches beyond my town, state and country. A healthy society cannot solely be built upon occasionally given resources, but

it also requires sincere relationships. I wanted to get to know my community and the real needs that it had, needs that were outside my personal experiences.

The service projects that I did in middle school were personally insignificant. I just did them because they were required or organized for me. Once a month in school we would take the afternoon to do service projects. My service project was at the Humane Society. So I walked dogs around a circle for hours at a time. My heart was certainly NOT engaged in something like that. I did some painting projects and yard work and occasional soup kitchen work for organizations through my youth group at church. Those, too, were pretty much "going through the motions" kind of experiences. I did it because I got to hang out with my friends.

As I entered high school, I got a little bit more engaged in community service. I remember spending a day with my friend's older sister and she was teaching piano lessons to the kids in the nursery at the local Red Cross homeless shelter – so I accompanied her one day. I fell in love with the place and wanted to help out there. After finishing my softball season, I called the Red Cross shelter to see if they needed any volunteers in the nursery. They said they didn't need any more people in the nursery, but needed help in the kitchen. I wasn't at all excited about scooping rice and beans onto people's plates, but I showed up anyway. On my first day, they put me in charge of the entire kitchen operation. I ended up becoming the kitchen facilitator for the shelter, coordinating all the dinners for 300 residents about 4 days a week for almost 2 years.

Survey question: Describe experiences you had during your college years that shaped your understanding of injustice and your desire to work for justice. The young adults responded:

After my junior year in college I went on a mission trip for the summer with PCUSA to Alaska. It was an eight-week mission in which I traveled to eight different native villages and taught vacation bible school with a partner. One week in each village was enough time to take me out of my upper middle class mind-set and see life through the eyes of a native child. I saw some intense poverty and a great deal of substance abuse and the effects of that abuse. It was a life changing experience for me.

My senior year I went to Central America on the study tour and was shocked even further. I can remember having a pivotal moment on the trip when I cried out to God “why me?” I was so furious with God for letting these beautiful people suffer in such heinous ways when my life was so easy and blessed. I was angry with God for overlooking them and blessing me beyond measure. During that same year I worked on an independent project with a professor. I investigated “The Two Worlds of Childhood.” It was a comparative study of my students in an elementary school to a group of students in a school in El Obraje, Honduras.

The summer after my sophomore year I interned at a domestic violence shelter. This was a very importance experience for me because it let me see a more personal side to the many statistics I had been reading about women and violence. Having the opportunity to help women through one of the most difficult experiences of their lives taught me many lessons. I learned patience, understanding, and that I would always be involved in helping women in some capacity. I think this experience is what led me to choose Women’s Studies for graduate work rather than my major of English.

A trip to Thailand through the Women’s Studies program also made me see what kind of work needed to be done internationally for women and what role I could play in that work. I learned more about the sex trade and industry in Asia than I ever wanted to know, but this also showed me that I have the skills to take in information, process that information, and figure out where I can disseminate that information for it to have the greatest impact. I learned that I have the strength to learn about atrocities and see them from an intellectual point of view. This trip also helped me to decide that I wanted to further study women’s issues and also that my greatest contribution to international, national, and community women’s issues may be academic.

Trips to and volunteer work in South Africa. Also volunteer work in downtown mission youth center. Both exposed me to poverty, disease, neglect, and abuse to an extent I had not seen before.

The president of Compassion International came and spoke to one of my education classes. This was defining moment for me when my desire to teach and my call to teach were solidified. I knew that I will serve justice by being a school teacher.

I was an intern in Congressman Nethercutt’s office in college. I worked on many cases where people needed medical help such as veterans and they had to wait months or years to get the help they deserved.

It was during my trip to South Africa that I realized that I could continue to feel ashamed about being born in a great nation and wonder why I was blessed and do nothing or take the opportunities I had been given and use them to bring justice to our world even if it through one person at a time.

Definitely my travel abroad programs and mostly South Africa. That trip changed my life forever. It was my first introduction to real poverty, injustice, and hopelessness. It caused me to want to really help – to get my hands dirty and try to change the world.

Travel to Israel (injustice of treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli government) and travel to Beijing (lives of Chinese people and communist government).

One experience that also changed my view of what my volunteer work should be was watching the example of several friends who grew up as active Presbyterians. While our focus in the Southern Baptist church was supporting missionaries around the world and participating in service activities at the church, they spoke of and lived out a commitment to community service activism. This activism showed itself through participating in ministry far outside the church walls and/or participating in “secular” service projects, bringing the fragrance of Christ with them. This is an area I never had modeled for me, but I think it is at least equally as valuable as my church-related service. It is an area I still struggle with implementing in my life.

In addition to the aforementioned academic activities, a great portion of my understanding of injustice has arisen from my relationships with peers. ..Their passion and experiences have

encouraged me to care more about justice, and their concerns have opened my eyes to issues of which I have previously been ignorant...My friends, who come from a variety of political positions, religions, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, have been an invaluable resource in my journey toward understanding what it means to care about injustice, and reinforced the belief that one person, no matter how young or seemingly insignificant, can make a difference.

Central America Study Tour – watching children pick through garbage on the street with the pigs and dogs for their breakfast showed me how much need there is to fight for those who have no voice in our world. I can't always go to far away places, so that I why I became a foster mom when I returned home.

I went to Guatemala (independently) and was disturbed by the poverty I saw as well as the discrimination against indigenous people. I was friends with someone from Palestine that I met through the international club that made me realize how ignorant I was. I tutored children in West Central and went to New Hope Baptist Church, both in poverty-stricken areas that opened my eyes. I read amazing books, including Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*, *Our America*, and *Lost Boys* by James Garbarino that had stunning statistics and true stories and raised my awareness as did many documentaries. Most important in shaping my awareness of and desire to work for social injustice was my job as a group counselor at a drug in-patient facility for juvenile boys. I learned more from their files, life stories, and behavior patterns than they learned from me. This job confirmed my passion and raised my awareness about social injustice in areas such as poverty, immigration, race, city structure, education and politics.

I became more interested in issues related to the poor after reading a quote by Anatole France: "The poor have to labour in the faith of the majestic equality of the law which forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the street, and to steal bread." On the first day of one of my law classes our professor put this on the board and asked us to really think about the disproportionate affect that the law has on poor people. I want to work to first make people aware of this disparity and make changes to them.

It's easy to look at injustice and suffering in the form of statistics. I began to be really good at spouting off the figures of people dying of AIDS, number of street kids in our city, the costs of providing food for a family, etc – but not until I stood face to face with a child who was HIV positive, not until I sat with those street kids at Cup of Cool Water, could I truly understand that injustice was real, and that it demanded my attention. You have to know someone. Put a face to the statistic. Deal with the personal discomfort of being wrecked by staring injustice in the face. It's when you're broken that you realize there is something deeply wrong with the world and that you are called to something deeper than just staying personally comfortable. The conversations that accompanied the experiences were so important. It was so powerful to be wrestling with hard questions about God, the world and myself as I was in the midst of these experiences.

I remember specifically being touched by Gary Haugen's Good News About Injustice and by discussions we had in class to follow. For the first time, I think I began to think about injustice and how much this world is hurting, and how through Christ we can bring about change, we can invite others to be a part of something more than this broken world and to grasp onto the hope that only God can offer. I also realized how fortunate and blessed I am for so many reasons, and I think I began to want to do something good with what I have been given, and somehow ease the suffering of others. I proposed to my fellow classmates in Faith and Politics that we collectively sponsor a child through World Vision. We began sponsoring a child named Christok from Indonesia, and today I am his sole sponsor. Serving in En Christo was another formative experience for me. I remember initially being pretty shocked at the poverty I witnessed right in downtown Spokane.

Another formative experience has been working in Service-Learning in college. I have learned a lot about numerous issues, from poverty to systemic inertia and lethargy to the host of solutions that have been proposed. This job has been extremely formative because I've been able to see first-hand what struggles our city has and meet the people working hard to bring about relief and change. And it is good to feel that I am a part of this

process, although a very small part, through service-learning. My goal is not only to understand more and help, but to enable students to travel a similar road to discovery that I have walked.

One of the parents who responded to our survey said the following:

It is very important for us to hear from our kids their thoughts about faith and generosity and values. But we have come to realize that part of their humility is not sharing or broadcasting their “good works” with us. Part of their integrity is not sharing a lot of thoughts that would make us feel good that they have carried on our values and our faith. So there are times we have wondered. But it leaks out, and others around them have shared things with us that make us realize how deep their faith and generosity and thoughtful care is for others. We have to leave the result up to them and God. Faith and values have to be so important to us that we follow them, no matter how our kids pick up on them. That heart-deep commitment is probably a prerequisite, from the human standpoint, of kids following in our footsteps.

Some argue that requiring service of children is a problem. Service should be done voluntarily from the heart. If this were a perfect world, we would agree. But, there are two things that argue in favor of requiring service in a fallen world. First, we are trying to build habits of the heart. We can see from our surveys that service done by young people for their résumés or for a class often changes the way they see the world. Second, we know from research that people who learn to serve others when they are young will often carry on this service as they age. For the vast majority of people, those who say “I’ll serve later when I have more time,” “later” never comes.

One final point about service is a cautionary one. More and more is written these days about the danger of short term mission projects. When we look at service as something we do for others because they need help, we might fail to see others as those made in the image of Christ. Short term mission projects can be designed in a way that uses others to make ourselves feel good. This fails to meet the Biblical standard of loving others. But, if we see others as image bearers of Christ, we know that we can learn from them. Service opportunities that allow real interaction with those in need help us to build relationships. It is in relationship that our love for all of God’s children can best be expressed.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe it is true that we emphasize the first part of the Great Commandment more than the second? Why might this be true?
2. Do you believe that families must be involved in service activities together if the children are to develop the tendency to serve?
3. What kinds of service activities might families or schools undertake in your community?

How Can I Help You? The Question That Builds Community

by Judith Palpant

“...if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends...Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”

– PHILIPPIANS 2:1-3 *The Message* –

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked blind Bartimaeus. Did the question startle the blind man? I’m always surprised and pleased when someone asks, “How can I help you?” It is an offer that holds hope for real help and relationship. Hearing the need in 1979 for a physician at a Quaker mission hospital in western Kenya, we wondered “How can we help?” A prayer quickly followed, “All for you dear Jesus,” one taught to Henri Nouwen, the French writer and priest, in childhood by his mother. Both the prayer and the question got buried under more pressing concerns once we accepted the position and started life in Kenya. We arrived during a famine and could not find milk for our children. Our destination changed once in the country under Kenyan authority. The distance from family and friends accentuated these disappointments.

Shortly after our arrival, the Peace Corp music teacher from the high school came by to report that she saw our five year-old son Ben throw a stick at our neighbor Florah Ashene, the home economics teacher and mother of six children. Dismayed, I found Ben and looked him in the eye: “Is it true that you threw a stick at our neighbor?” He nodded. “Whatever possessed you to do that?” I asked him. He shrugged, “I don’t know, Mom.” Taking him by the hand, I replied, “You know I haven’t even had a chance to meet her yet. But you must ask her forgiveness.” We walked through the high school gate and around to Florah’s home. My heavy heart thudded with trepidation. Nothing I read in mission manuals prepared me for this moment. I felt failure as a mother, embarrassment as an American, and needy as a Christian.

I knocked and Florah opened the door, standing there in her lavender caftan with a matching scarf wrapped around her head. She kindly greeted

us, “Yes? How may I help you?” I introduced ourselves and explained that my son had something to say to her. “Please forgive me for throwing a stick at you,” Ben said in a clear voice.

Florah called him by name. “Ben, it was wrong of you to do that,” she wisely acknowledged. “I forgive you and hope you will not throw a stick at anyone again.” She picked up a hand of small, sweet finger bananas. “These bananas are a token of my forgiveness,” she said with a smile. Walking home, I felt relieved and Ben practically skipped holding his bananas. I reflected back to our time in language school a month before when Mr. Gumba, the principal, said to us during a morning devotional: “Your love is insufficient, but the stretching extent of God’s love has no limit. Your love cannot stretch over the people around you, but when God pours it into your heart, then his love will stretch over them.” In our case, a Kenyan needed God’s love to stretch over us, her challenging American neighbors.

Over time, the Master of Surprise forged a strong friendship between our families, a kind of creative interdependence. Florah Ashene’s oldest sons David and Sam became some of Ben’s best friends. If Florah saw that we had company, she might slip through the open back door to deliver a head of cabbage or wash the dirty dishes. If I chided her, she replied, “Don’t rob me of the blessing.” They gave our children second breakfasts: cups of millet porridge with a squeeze of lime juice and a bit of sugar. Our family learned to harvest maize by helping the Ashenes pick their crop and store it.

Two years later, Florah asked me, “How can we help each other as mothers? Could we invite women from both the hospital and boarding school compounds to gather on Sunday afternoons to discuss the raising of children?”

Out of that question was born the Salty Hannahs, a gathering of women who met every Sunday. We called ourselves salty because salt preserves and flavors. We added the name Hannah because this mother in the Old Testament had only four years to nurture her son Samuel before taking him to the temple. Likewise, many African women sent their children at age 11 to boarding school and had to teach them how to wash and iron clothes, to cope on their own. The Salty Hannahs listened to tapes, rotated leadership, discussed and prayed. We discovered it did not matter the country of origin, the mother tongue, the color of skin, we all grappled with knowing how to understand and train our children.

We mobilized a Bible memory program. Our children all memorized the same Scripture each week and on Sunday afternoon they said the verse

and discussed its meaning with someone besides their parents, an assigned auntie or uncle. Swept into the circle of love and commitment, service and worship, the Salty Hannah children became part of the ministry team with their parents. We laughed. We grieved. We prayed. We hoped. We helped. Our neighbor Betsy, a Salty Hannah who worked as a nurse and was a single mom, invited our children Ben, Andrea, and Nathan into her life. They participated in doing chores with her and played with her young son Ivan. She often served them tea, civility and hospitality from a Ugandan refugee who loved Jesus. Tuned to my children's hearts, she would one day inform us that Ben, at age 10, was ready for baptism and Andrea, at age 3, decided to follow Jesus.

All along, the faith community grew, under-girded by the prayer, "All for you, dear Jesus," and guided by the questions, "How can I help you? How can we help each other? How can we help others?" Through mirroring and mentoring, we passed them on to our children. Johnson Ashene, Florah's husband recently observed, "In Lugulu we formed a team and God was our captain. There was teamwork to do. Any success was a score for everyone."

The Lugulu community is now dispersed in Europe, the USA, South Africa, and several other African countries but we remain bound together with common purposes: a passion for Christ, a desire to serve in his name, a love each other's children, and a desire to maintain the fabric of faithfulness.

Chapter 5

Gratitude and Happiness in the Fabric of Faithfulness

Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose. I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I found myself, my work, and my God.

– HELEN KELLER –

A joyful spirit is evidence of a grateful heart.

– MAYA ANGELO –

“He is such an unhappy child,” the young mother watched her little boy throwing small cars around the room. “He was very fussy as a baby and he seems to have no joy in him.” The boy in question is now thirty-five years old and very successful with his work. He still has a rather gloomy demeanor but he appears to find deep contentment in his work and in the few close relationships he has with others.

In North America it seems to be very important to be happy and to have other people notice that you are happy. Many people think of happiness as a gift that results from having good things happen or from having the most toys, whether they are for adults or children. Yet, we know that gratitude and subjective well being or happiness in adults is largely unrelated to income level, educational attainment, social status, or marital status.³⁷

As Maya Angelo and Helen Keller note above, happiness flows from acts of gratitude, and acts of gratitude are our thanksgiving for the gifts God has given us. These gifts are not only for our use and survival but also are for our sheer delight and joy.

It is right to want children to be happy and to grow up to be happy, contented adults. However, we all have to be sure that we examine what we mean by these terms.

Wolterstorff tells us that we stand at that point in the cosmos in which the sheer goodness of God is reflected in our acts of thankful love.

The underlying point is that we are to see the things of this world not only as the works of God for which we are to give God praise but also as the gifts of God for which we are to give God thanks—and then, gifts not only for utility but for delight.³⁸

The fundamental response on our part to God’s good gifts, gifts of God’s caring for us, of creation, of health, of friendship, of ability to do things, is gratitude. Gratitude is grounded in faith, itself. Gratitude lies at the foundation of every Christian’s existence. And if parents are to teach their children to live Christian lives, they must teach them gratitude.

G: How is that to be done? Many children, especially during adolescence, go through life in a bored, restless, disengaged manner. The last thing they seem to feel is gratitude.

J: If we allow them to continue to act that way they will not learn compassion, regard for human worth and dignity, tolerance, appreciation of human diversity, and a desire for social justice.

How can we teach gratitude? And if gratitude is expressed in compassion . . . if gratitude is expressed in a Christian life of seeking justice for those who need it . . . for the poor, the downtrodden, the needy . . . if gratitude is expressed in caring for the creation . . . how can we teach that?

Ethics and Values in Sports

Julia K. Stronks

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I have hated sports all my life. I'm uncoordinated; I struggle with my weight, and for me gym class was one big "please God, don't let the ball come my way" prayer. As an adult I've hated the tremendous waste of time and energy that a commitment to sports can take in American culture. It bothers me that people who play sports have unearned privilege with their sports-loving bosses, and it bothers me that in high school and college athletic achievement seems to trump academic achievement.

When my son was three, I confessed to my best friend that I would support him in all things that interested him, but I hoped he wouldn't be a jock. We laughed together at the notion that someone with my antipathy toward sports could ever give birth to a jock. My son would read books and would appreciate theatre. Together we would go to museums, travel through Europe and have discussions about justice, poverty, consumption of the world's resources, and international peace.

But, my son lives for basketball. And, in the span of three short years I realized just recently that not only do I love basketball but that I have taken this love one step way too far and become one of "those parents." This year I was a parent who yelled "call it both ways" to the refs and critiqued the coaching decisions on the drive home after the game. In twelve months I moved from being a mom who said "let all the kids play" to being a mom who mumbled "if you aren't going to help, you might as well go home" softly, under my breath (I hope.) And, today, at a Whitworth basketball camp game, I realized that I had gone from being a faculty member respected for my teaching to being an anonymous but annoying mom to the student refs who growled "settle down" to a group of rambunctious, cheering and ref-critiquing parents.

I didn't want to be that mom. When I read the series done by the SR on sports, coaching and parents, I was sure I didn't recognize myself in those pages. And now, I've made a commitment to go back to being a supportive but non-interfering parent of a basketball player.

But, along the way I've learned some really important things. 1.) Being a jock does not preclude the ability to care about poverty. In the months after deciding to leave college for professional basketball, Andrew Bogut, a recent NBA draft #1 pick, set up a foundation to care for poor children in four different cities. In fact, I've found that highlighting pro-basketball players who use their wealth to make the world a better place is quite a wonderful starting point for discussion with my son about the nature of obligation. 2.) Being a jock doesn't preclude the ability to appreciate other cultures. Again, I've found that the international emphasis on sports will mean that if my son continues in basketball he will have a number of chances to travel throughout the world. He will also be on teams with players from other countries, other cities in this country, and a wide variety of economic and ethnic groups. Films like *Coach Carter*, *Hoop Dreams* and *Drumline* have given my son and me the foundation of a number of good conversations. 3.) There are unearned privileges that come with being good at a sport, but there are also unearned privileges in having a high IQ, in being part of a dominant culture and in being born into wealth. How we handle unearned privilege is important and lessons can be learned all the time by watching the kindness, grace and generosity of the Ronny Turiafs of the world. (Turiaf was a local basketball player at Gonzaga University whose NBA career was temporarily postponed by need for heart surgery).

People around the country are responding with compassion to Ronny Turiaf's health struggle. Many of us were near tears ourselves as we watched him try to explain his feelings to reporters last week. A year ago at David's Pizza I watched Turiaf speak encouraging words to a small group of young AAU basketball players. I was amazed at his willingness to lean down and engage these kids in discussion and I was grateful that parents like me have help from sports playing community members like him and numerous other coaches I've watched over the years.

Raising kids does take a village and I'm glad that now my understanding of my village includes basketball.

Teaching gratitude and compassion through modeling

First of all, we teach it by modeling gratitude. Children need to have parents who model what it is to live as a grateful person. A grateful spirit does not mean that one is always giddy, or jubilant, or even happy. A grateful spirit means that we actively seek to practice joy. We practice the joy that comes from being saved; we practice the joy that comes from being loved.

It is a cliché, but a true one, that parents are their children's first teachers. Even before they can walk and talk children are watching us and at times imitating us.

Parents: Try to see beauty and justice together. We have two pairs of children, which means two first children and two second children. Our two first children seemed to have had a keen sense of justice early on that needed to be blunted a little, if anything. Our two second children seemed more interested, from birth, in having everyone get along. (We had to help them become more assertive.) None of the kids is a social activist, but we like their interests as adults working with children or students on campus or at our church. Sports can help with justice training, too, as long as the kids learn to appreciate the beauty of teamwork & its requirements. We also did a soup kitchen at church with them, had them play violin at a local nursing home, and tried to have them share in the activities of the household. They were blessed to have a strong youth group at church with great mentors.

Are you grateful for your children or your parents? Tell them that you are. Are you grateful for the things your spouse does? Say it. Are you grateful for the peace and comfort your walk with God gives you? Let it be seen on your face and in the way you walk and reach out to others. Let it be heard in your family prayers.

Celebrate your children's birthdays with gratitude for one more happy, healthy year together. Celebrate with gratitude each test they pass in school, especially if school is difficult for them. Celebrate with gratitude their running a race to the finish line, even when they come in last. And when a loved one dies, celebrate with gratitude the years you were on earth together.

Parents: Help them observe closely. Help them sense that there's always something new to anticipate and (later) that even anticipation itself is a gift from God. Language acquisition should include "please" and "thank you," not only for reasons of politeness. Parents need to be grateful and happy. They should get music, even if only listening, into their children's lives early enough that it can become an adult friend and comfort. Take "discovery" walks around the block or, earlier, in the backyard.

Many parents were raised in homes where the adults around them did not show they were grateful. Such parents have no models to remember and will have to make a special effort to stop the nagging, sarcasm, and teasing that are so very harmful to children. Those parents will have to learn to celebrate with gratitude.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
Colossians 3: 15,16

Teaching gratitude and compassion through conversations

Another way we teach compassion and gratitude is through the stories that are part of the Bible, of our heritage, and of our daily lives. Read the story of Joshua who, out of huge gratitude, announced, "As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh." When you read the story of Ruth recognize how grateful she was to have Naomi for a mother-in-law. Read about the joy and gratitude Hannah felt when her little boy, Samuel, was born and the joy and gratitude old Anna felt when she put her hand on the baby Jesus. Absorb how grateful Joseph's brothers were when they learned he was willing not only to forgive them but also to help them. Remember the good shepherd who was so grateful to have found his one lost sheep.

All of us need to be reminded to act with gratitude and compassion. In raising children, in talking with our neighbors, in teaching Adult Sunday School classes, reflect on the compassion and gratitude others show.

- Talk about the stories of people in history who, after encountering and coming through great difficulties or evil,

felt extremely grateful to God. Describe the dangers and difficulties the soldiers from different countries went through in World War II.

- Tell your children with passion of the needs of those who suffer.
- Ask your children about their classmates, whether every single one appears to have friends. If they tell you that some are being left out, talk about what you and they can do to help. Make certain that no child in your son or daughter's class is excluded from birthday parties. When your child goes to camp, try to find out whether any other child would like to go, also, but has parents who can't afford the fees. Do all that you can to make it possible for that child to attend the camp but do it in a way so that the child and his family are not embarrassed.
- Make certain that your children learn from you that Christians not only feel compassion for those who suffer but also do what they can to relieve that suffering.
- Help them understand that you believe that caring for people and creation and working out the justice that is part of that caring is the Christian's task on earth.

Are gratitude and happiness the same thing?

Is happiness the same thing as gratitude? Not exactly, but they are closely related. Joseph Addison says that the three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to live for, and something to hope for. We believe that if one has those three essentials in one's life, one would surely also feel grateful.

J: So, if one has all of these three things will one be happy and grateful?

G: Doesn't that depend on how one defines each of them? Remember Mahatma Ghandi's definition for happiness: "Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

J: The work I have is personally meaningful in that it is in accord with, and a way of working out my beliefs. One reason I want to remain on this earth is because of the loving relationships I have with others. And the hope I have is for the eternal life that my faith promises. If I have all of these things then yes, I suppose I am happy. Certainly

I am very grateful to God. And I am contented. But moments of happiness seem to be more fleeting than feelings of contentment.

G: Perhaps contentment is all that some people ever attain while others are able to experience the adrenaline rush and sheer glow that comes in wonderful moments now and then. There is a quotation from William Butler Yeats that I have always loved. "At certain moments, always unforeseen, I become happy. I look at the strangers near me as if I had known them all my life...everything fills me with affection...It may be an hour before the mood passes but lately I seem to understand that I enter upon it the moment I cease to hate." I believe moments like that come to us as a wonderful gift.

J: Well, this is interesting. Perhaps only some people have moments like that, even though they won't describe them as beautifully as Yeats did.

G: Does happiness, then, have genetic roots? Are some people predisposed to being happy in spite of serious difficulties and others to be generally unhappy in spite of a seemingly normal life? Are we simply stuck with the fact that we will either see the glass as half-full or half-empty?

J: And if we can answer those questions the important one that still remains is, "Is it possible to find ways to interact with our children and adolescents so that they will be and become happy and productive, learning to live with gratitude for the gifts God has given them?"

Happiness does have strong genetic roots. Teachers easily point out children and young adolescents who seem to have particularly "happy" or "unhappy" personalities. But psychologists who have carefully studied such matters tell us that healthy people can do a great deal to raise their own "set point" for happiness, and parents and teachers can do the same for children and adolescents. Psychologist David Lykken says this:

I believe it is possible to show that happiness is the natural condition of humankind, that indeed most people are happy most of the time, and that we are equipped with a remarkable capacity to tolerate the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to quickly recover from their effects. Some people are happier than others are, of course. Some have more of the inborn happiness talent, others have bad habits that prevent them from exploiting their happiness potential."³⁹

And in *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis went even further in explaining that we can train our emotions in positive ways. “Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism.”

G: I asked my internist why it is that some people go through their later years in life with joy and peace, eager to continue to do what they can for others while they still are able. They live that way while others, equally healthy, spend their later years seeming to care only for themselves. Her answer was that people form habits of the heart very early in life and those habits stay with them throughout their senior years.

J: A friend of mine who has been close to people as they died told me that some Christians face death with fear, while others may have fear but use the past practice of their faith to face death. She said, “That’s what we practice faith for all throughout our lives—so when we face difficulty we have it to rely on” I’ve thought about this almost daily since she said it to me. I think this kind of faith relates to happiness.

It will not surprise any parent that part of our children’s personalities are inherited in their DNA. Physical traits that are inherited are easily seen in a child’s eyes, hair coloring, and height. But, we often fail to understand that gratitude and happiness are characteristics or traits, just as aggressiveness, cleverness, impetuousness, and empathy are characteristics or traits. Personality traits are based on weakly inherited factors as can be seen in Figure 5-1. Learning and environment influence each of these traits. David Lykken’s research suggests that fifty percent of the difference among people’s happiness ratings is heritable. That would mean that the other fifty percent is a result of learning and experience. Fifty percent is a huge amount.

Figure 5-1

Personality Trait	Heritability Estimate	Childhood Experiences & Individual Free Will
General cognitive ability	50%	50%
Extroversion	54%	46%
Agreeableness	42%	58%
Conscientiousness	49%	51%
Neuroticism	48%	52%
Openness	57%	43%
Aggression	38%	62%
Traditionalism	54%	46%

Estimates of the percentage of various human personality traits that can be ascribed to heredity, from T.J. Bouchard and M. McGue, “Genetic and Environmental Influences on Human Psychological Differences,” *J. Neurobiol.* 54 (2003): 4-45. The third column is our own adaptation of a chart found in *The Language of God*, by Francis S. Collins, p. 258, New York: Free Press.

Geneticist Francis Collins explains that our own choices and experiences have a tremendous influence over our personalities.

There is an inescapable component of heritability to many human behavioral traits. For virtually none of them is heredity ever close to predictive. Environment, particularly childhood experiences, and the prominent role of individual free will choices have a profound effect on us.

It is true that illness or tragedy can make contentment more difficult for some people than for others. But, it is interesting that even people who have experienced terrible loss will often still describe themselves as grateful, content or happy. For those of us with more blessings than we can count, the choice to be grateful and happy seems to be mandated by God.

J: I can remember being depressed as a teen and you would tell me to just “fake a good mood.” That made me so mad, but it also worked.

For some time, now, psychologists have said that practicing smiling even when we don’t feel like it promotes positive physical and emotional changes. In an article written for the Internet, Psychologist Dan Johnson says:

Now you may say that you don’t have much to laugh about, and this may be true. It is hard to force yourself to laugh, especially, when you don’t feel like it. You can, however, make yourself smile. Forcing yourself to smile may work almost as well as laughing, at least, for changing your mood. Putting a big smile

on your face sends a message to your brain that things are -- okay. If you are smiling, your brain thinks, "I must be happy." You can fool yourself into feeling good by smiling. As your mood improves, you open yourself to new possibilities. Other people, noticing the change, respond differently to you, and soon you may be laughing as well as smiling. Life is getting better because you smiled.

Be sure you smile today. Smile on purpose, even if you don't feel like it. See if you can fool yourself into a good mood. As the saying goes, "Fake it until you make it." Intentionally, smile. Laugh, if you can. Humor is good for you. It improves your mood and health. Practice smiling and see if your life doesn't begin to go better.⁴⁰

What might parents do to help an unhappy child?

It is not always easy to recognize the symptoms of unhappiness in children and adolescents.

- An unhappy child may exhibit surliness, fear, or anxiety that is not easy to cope with.
- An unhappy child may become easily angered but the reason behind the anger may include feelings of weakness or fear.
- An unhappy child may withdraw from others.
- An unhappy child may act like a bully.
- An unhappy child may resort too aggressively to disappointment or conflict.
- An unhappy child may show an inability to focus or concentrate.

Sometimes these symptoms accompany such sad events as death, divorce or separation of parents, moving to a new school or community, or coping with bullying at school. Or perhaps the pace of days full of worthwhile activities such as piano practice, soccer, track, and homework may simply be too much for the child.

The problem is that each of these symptoms can have physical causes rather than emotional ones and so it is important to have an appropriate examination in order to rule out physical causes.

Parents who see the symptoms of unhappiness might be successful in determining the cause by coaching their son or daughter to articulate what is happening. Together, they can make lists of things that make him angry

and things that make him happy. Set the list aside and at the occurrence of the next symptom bring the list out and ask whether one of the items on the list is the culprit. If it is not there, add the new sad-making item to the list. By doing this your child will at least have the understanding that you are listening and taking his problems very seriously. He will eventually learn to communicate more easily about his day and about his life.

Some parents see a danger in this procedure. They fear they are encouraging their child to think too much about her sadness. However, the alternative, ignoring the child's unhappiness, is even more dangerous.

On the other hand, children and adults who exhibit positive emotions are more likely to elicit reactions from others that are positive and cheerful. Those who present a grouchy disposition will elicit a similar response.

G: You asked whether I believe young children notice the difference between a happy or grouchy demeanor in an adult. Of course they do. Do you remember that right after Matthew's second birthday he was watching a woman who was at least fifteen feet away and said, "Look at sad face! Face is so sad"?

J: Yes, and I like the way Gwen greets her two-year old son each morning with words such as, "Good morning, Jon. It is such a happy day today! We are going to have a wonderful day together, aren't we?" I've heard that in other cultures parents routinely teach their children to wake up being thankful for each new day.

G: A parent's nurturing behavior in the form of feeding, caring for, playing and talking with children is inherently enjoyable and encourages contentment and happy feelings on the part of both the parent and the child. Without even realizing it children then try to become like the parent they admire. In that way they are developing good self-esteem and contentment.

Helping school-age children learn to meet life in positive ways

Sometimes gratitude and happiness act like magnets in a person's life. Giving heartfelt thanks for the good things in our lives not only draws others to us, but also seems to attract other blessings. Very likely that is simply because a grateful heart recognizes more of the blessings of life.

The problem is that you can't make children be happy. You can only help them learn to handle the difficulties that are part of a normal child's life. While it is impossible to provide a list of actions or ways of thinking that will help a child meet all of life's struggles in positive ways, it is possible to provide some direction.

G: Parents should not work to protect their child from the disappointments that are part of life. That was difficult for me to remember because I wanted to make life perfect for my children in ways that it hadn't been perfect for me. And when life wasn't perfect for them I felt like a failure. I had to learn that overprotection encourages dependency and over-sensitivity. It is difficult to watch your own children suffer disappointments but that is how they learn to build the resiliency that helps them overcome obstacles.

J: It is important, I think, for parents to help children talk about the way they wish things would be and then discuss steps that might move them toward that goal. The discussion should include ways in which one might deal with the frustration and disappointment if the goal is not achieved. We need to teach children how to struggle because without an understanding of the struggles one encounters in achieving or failing to achieve goals, children cannot be truly happy.

G: Yes, that is better than saying, "fight your own battles." A girl in middle school who was being teased inappropriately once said to me, "I told my dad and he says boys tease girls because they like them but that's not what this is. And so I guess I'm left to face this by myself." While we want children to solve problems for themselves, some problems they encounter are simply too difficult for them. They may not be emotionally ready for that particular struggle or the situation may be out of their control. In such cases the parent must step in. A child needs to know that "if things are really bad I can count on my parent.

J: Still, learning to stand on your own feet is important. We can teach this, I think, by providing freedom, within certain boundaries, for children to make their own choices but they must also accept the responsibility of living with their choices. When children are given too many early choices they feel inappropriately empowered. They begin to resent rules and responsibilities and may become rude and obnoxious. The boundaries are needed in order to protect them or to keep others from being hurt by the effects of the choice. As they grow they should have more and more freedom to choose, accompanied by more responsibilities. Some college students continue to rely on their parents for decision-making in ways that seem inappropriate for adult life. One of the problems with cell phone use is that college students who haven't learned to make decisions have too easy access to their parents for advice when they haven't yet learned the skills of decision making. Asking one's parents for advice is appropriate even in adulthood but not for every or even most of one's decisions.

G: Another thing parents can do is to help the child learn to accept his or her mistakes. Although mistakes almost always have negative effects, mistakes are what help us learn. The child who needs constant reminding to have clothing and homework ready the evening before each school day will eventually need to face the consequences of entering a class, suddenly realizing she has left at home an important assignment which she has already completed. One such mistake is normal and can be remedied but continual mistakes of that kind must have consequences if the child is to learn self-reliance.

J: I also think parents should do all they can to help a child persevere in working toward a goal. When people persevere they develop a tolerance for being frustrated before success is reached. Perhaps a parent can do this by modeling his or her own struggles and showing that it takes many disappointments before one reaches a goal. I received a report that one of my college students was learning disabled and might need special arrangements in my class. I asked her about it and she said, "No, I have struggled very hard to achieve success in my classes without special arrangements. But thank you for asking." When I asked her about her struggle she said, "My father has the same disability and he is a successful pastor. He has serious reservations about using medication for his disability and now I feel the same way. I have watched him struggle and he and I have had many talks about our frustrations. He has been a wonderful model for me." That choice may not be the best choice for everyone, but in this case it was interesting to see how the daughter viewed her father.

Psychologists tell us there are other things important for encouraging contentment in children. For example, parents should praise children moderately, within reason. They should avoid "super-praise" that leads to too much pressure. Convey your values by using words such as, "hard worker," "good thinker," "kind," "strong," "dependable." Words that set unreachable expectations such as, "perfect," "gifted," "smartest," "brilliant," lead to children's having expectations for themselves that quickly feel like pressure to achieve unreasonable goals. Developing high self-esteem should always be within the framework of other people – learning to be considerate and to get along.

Kindness and generosity should be outgrowths of a happy, grateful life. This is how our respondents addressed the question, "What might parents do to help children learn kindness and generosity?"

When I do have children I plan on having real conversations with them about our duty to serve and to fulfill our part as the body of Christ. I found my dad was very focused on me making something out of myself, which is important. I feel citizens of the kingdom of God do need to be good citizens here on earth, but he didn't really push me to be the best Christian I could be, and I know I want that to be at the forefront of my children's minds – when they make a decision, if the actions that result are what Christ would do. I think if I can stress that point as well as include our family in acts of service this will be kind and generous.

Leading through example is so powerful. As parents demonstrate kindness and generosity, their children will see it. And the parents should explain what they are doing, why they are doing it, and give the children an opportunity to participate, as well.

One thing that I tried this week with 5 year old twins that I care for was this: They had a super hero party. Everyone dressed up as a super hero (with the popularity of Batman, Superman and the Incredibles), all 5-year-old kids are quite drawn to super heroes. I gave a card to each boy explaining that the best thing about super heroes is that they help other people. For their birthday, I gave them \$5 to spend on themselves and then I gave them super hero money, which was another \$5 to give to help someone else. Because their parents have been so open and encouraging about things like this, I think it was well-received and might make a difference for them as they have fun thinking of ways to help someone else.

J: As we write these words, having read the wonderful suggestions and ideas from hundreds of others, it depresses me to realize how much I have neglected to do as a parent.

It would be silly, unwise even, to believe that if parents do everything right their children will always be happy and filled with gratitude. That would not even be a very good goal. Because of biology, some people simply have an easier time of it than do others.

A far better goal is for parents to do all they can to help their children look on the bright side of things. Help them to achieve good social relationships and to use these relationships, along with a sense of humor, to get through more difficult times. Recognize that giving external rewards

will undermine their long-term happiness. Help them learn to be grateful for what they have, work at forgiving easily, become optimistic about possibilities and resilient when things go wrong.⁴¹

J: Helping children learn to be grateful for what they have seems like a tall order.

G: It is. But G.K. Chesterton said, "The test of all happiness is gratitude."

J: And for Christians, gratitude leads us to care for others.

Don't give children too much. Teach them the value of work (i.e.: allowance, paper route, etc.). Make them aware of children their age (in their city and across the globe) who are less fortunate than they. Take them to these places – slums, third world countries (if affordable), children's hospitals, shelters, etc. so they can meet these children, assimilate with them and understand the reality. Repeat this over and over.

The personality of an individual is undeniable. Over the years I noticed my core essence hasn't changed. If I ever reach old age I know I'll maintain my stronger personality traits. Yet, nurturing has also shaped my psyche, mostly on unconscious levels. Who knows who I would be with different parents.

I think it helped me to know that I couldn't have everything as a child. I definitely had everything I needed, and quite a bit that I wanted, but I didn't have all the latest high-tech gadgets. I remember how excited I was in the 7th grade to get a Seattle Mariners starter jacket for Christmas, mostly because I never expected it. If you have instant gratification on everything, you actually appreciate very little.

Gratefulness must be cultivated. The American tendency is always to want more or to focus on the negative. By exposing children to poverty, injustice, and the developing world, parents can increase the likelihood that children will be grateful for what they have. Probably even more important than experience is the attitude of the parents – a parent who is grateful and clearly conveys an appreciative spirit towards God's blessings communicates a strong message to her/his children. Practice what you preach.

I hope it is not simply a matter of personality – I think most of my friends that seem to be grateful and happy come from homes where the right priorities are genuinely practiced. I think lots of parents try to teach their kids values that they don't actually hold to.

The strongest way for parents to help their children learn to be grateful is through example. Parents can help their children to be grateful by working together on community service projects, adopting a child through a charity organization, and talking about world events together. Gratefulness is best learned when it is a lifestyle, when a child is brought up not only to be grateful for what he/she has, but also learns that his/her abilities and interests are also gifts that can be used for helping people.

Survey question: What might parents do to help their children learn the tendency to be grateful and happy? Or is that simply a matter of personality?

I believe that appreciation for what one has is a learned behavior. If the parents seem disappointed in their place in life, the children will likely model that behavior, as well.

Even though my parents were divorced my mother never let me feel sorry for myself. Her greatest gift to me was that she taught me that we can always be thankful for something, no matter how bad our circumstances might be.

I shudder a little at joining the word “simply” with anything as complex as personality and tend not to believe that anything is simply a matter of a personality created at birth. So many external, uncontrollable, even unconscious influences help to shape the growing personality, that I am a little leery of that phrase “simply a matter of personality.”

At any rate, the matter of being grateful was not a problem for us. For my wife and me the boys were always our number one priority and they knew that. For example, their teeth were always checked regularly by the dentist even if my wife and I could not afford to be so regular. And if ever there was a shortage of some particular food, my wife was always quick to convince everyone that she was not hungry or did not want any of that particular food. Somehow through things like that I think the boys learned to be grateful and reasonably happy with what they had. It is of interest to me

that, although my wife was strictly a “meat and potatoes” kind of cook, now that the boys can afford it, they all have developed strong interests in and appetites for gourmet food. Does that reflect dissatisfaction with their not plush childhood?

Modeling the gratefulness at every opportunity, big and small, seems more effective than just telling children how to be.

When my husband was in his 20s he learned a lesson that I think helped to shape our family's outlook. (Note: We join the story at the point the writer's husband has just come home from a hard day of logging to find the heat had gone out, the pipes had frozen, his wife, pregnant with #3 had orders to stay in Spokane to be near the hospital – she had taken the kids with her – he had to fix the situation). After a cold and miserable task was completed, Steve built up a fire, fixed himself a humble dinner and turned on the television. He was feeling pretty low; life was hard and it didn't seem fair that he had so many trials to endure. When he was quite absorbed in self-pity he saw a news story about starving children in a far away land. He told me about it later, and has referred to it many times since. As he sat staring at those haunting images: little children with eyes peering out from emaciated faces, bony extremities, bulging stomachs, he was overcome with a sense of gratitude for his bounty and humbled by his recognition that he was no more deserving of the blessings of daily bread than the children he saw in the news story. He couldn't eat another bite.

Each day starts as an unwritten paragraph about you. Your values, beliefs and standards can stand firm to help you through that day. How you handled it can help you to know fulfillment and happiness – maybe not just then – but later.

They need to be taught to express thanks as young children and ungrateful talk and behavior needs to be pointed out to them. Exposing them to other groups and nations who are not materially wealthy but are still happy and content helps too.

Discussion Questions

1. Are happiness and gratitude the same thing or do they differ in some ways?
2. Is it possible to find ways to interact with our children and adolescents so that they will be happy and productive, learning to live with gratitude for the gifts God has given them? What are some ways we might do this?
3. Can one parent teach gratitude and compassion if the other parent refuses to do so?
4. Have you ever tried smiling and acting happy even though you really are not? What effect did that have on others? On you?
5. What can we say to our children to help them understand the difference between tattling and telling about a problem that is important? How can a parent know when to step in to help in appropriate ways?

The Art of Asking Questions: How History Comes Alive

by Judith Palpant

“We need intimate knowledge of the past.”

— C.S. LEWIS IN *Weight of Glory*. “LEARNING IN WAR-TIME” (1939) —

Being the oldest of four children, I eavesdropped on adult conversations from an early age. In the 1950’s, my family lived in Elbert, a small town in eastern Colorado, where most summer evenings we gravitated to the front porch of our neighbors, Ed and Grace Orin. Tales from the Depression, the Flood of ’35, and WWII piled up like the billowy clouds we watched being illuminated by the setting sun. As I recall, the topic of the Dust Bowl sent grit into every chink of my six year old imagination.

“Thank God,” my father said, remembering one dust storm, “when I was completely disoriented and could no longer see, I had the good sense to let the reins go. My horse Sorry took me home, just like she did once in a blizzard.”

Both of my parents, in their twenties at the time, taught history so they plied our neighbors Ed and Grace with questions to flesh out the facts. Ed talked and hand watered the flower beds while Grace sat in a wicker rocker quilting and putting in her two cents. Cataracts prevented her from seeing the eye of the needle so I sat on a stool at her feet and kept her needles threaded. In this warm and natural setting I absorbed my first history lessons.

Over the years such leisurely evening conversations on porches have become less common with urbanization separating families and the generations. The art of asking a good question, however, can still be modeled and practiced by families around the dinner table. In our family, my husband and I instituted something called “Family Time” where we lingered together after supper and did a variety of things: played a game, sang songs, or prayed for someone. If we had guests, we often did Dialogue Drawings in which my husband posed a question like: Who do you want to remember out of your past? What is a favorite place you’ll never forget? What special gift have you received in your life? Then we all drew the answer on paper with crayons, shared the drawings and compiled them in a notebook. We learned personal and familial history in this way because the questions primed the pump. As our children grew, we encouraged them to ask questions of our guests.

I’ll never forget one such incident in Kenya, where we lived and served as medical missionaries for six years. One afternoon an unexpected guest named Livingstone arrived from Uganda. I headed to the kitchen to

make tea and eight year-old Ben followed me.

“Please go in the sitting room and keep Livingstone company, Ben,” I said. “Ask him about his trip across the border.” Off he went, reluctant, but obedient. Before long he returned.

“Now what do I ask, Mom?” he pleaded.

“What would you like to know about Livingstone?” I asked, stirring milk into the tea. He pondered my question. Around our dining room table, he heard many Ugandan refugees recount their stories of escape under Idi Amin. Ben knew that some of his playmates rode on their parents’ backs in the dead of night as they crossed through the deep river running between Uganda and Kenya. The volatile political situation in Uganda, both past and present, frequently came up in adult conversations and prayer times. Here was a man who stuck it out and didn’t leave Uganda. “Mom, do you think Livingstone has ever been afraid?” he asked. “Why don’t you go ask him?” I replied. Back he went. I heard the give and take of real conversation by the time I carried the tray into the sitting room and poured chai. Ben asked questions, listened to the answers and in turn, he heard a perspective on Ugandan history from a man on the inside who testified to God’s faithfulness in difficult times.

History comes alive when young and old sit together and talk. The impersonal becomes personalized. The facts are parceled out in amounts easily digested as we hang historical facts on the hooks of real names of real people living in real places. Head knowledge turns into true learning that impacts a child’s life. A repeated theme in Deuteronomy is: “Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years.”(Deuteronomy 8:2 NIV) The Psalmists inject history into their songs and declare, “We will tell the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord to the next generation, his power and the wonders he has done.” (Psalm 78: 4 NIV) When Mary and Joseph lost Jesus at the age of 12, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Children serve the older generation by listening to their stories, by giving them the chance to witness to God’s faithfulness over time, and plying them with important and inquisitive questions.

Parents who want to raise children with a sense of history will teach them this art. They can prayerfully and intentionally work toward intergenerational exchange, opportunities for their children to serve and interact with older people. These are the kinds of children who will grow up knowing that their lives are not being played out on an empty stage but one full of people and places and events that have gone before them. They will grow as Jesus did, in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40 KJV).

Chapter 6

Intelligence in the Fabric of Faithfulness

*I do not feel obliged to believe that that same
God who has endowed us with sense, reason
and intellect has intended us to forego their use.*

—GALILEO GALILEI—

*True intelligence very readily conceives of an
intelligence superior to it's own; and this is why
truly intelligent people are modest.*

—ANDRE GIDE—

What is it to be intelligent? Last year a participant in the television show Jeopardy appeared to be unstoppable in his ability to rapidly retrieve knowledge in a vast number of areas. Is that intelligence?

Former President Clinton, when asked about his own intelligence, said, "I know I am not the most intelligent person on earth. But I do have an ability to look at seemingly dissimilar events or ideas and to recognize ways in which they connect or influence each other." It has been said of President George W. Bush that he is intelligent, with an awesome memory, great management skill and a tremendous emotional I.Q. If both of those presidents can be said to be intelligent, they surely are intelligent in different ways.

In the beginning chapter of *The Covenant*, James Michener describes Kharu, a woman who has an uncanny ability to know under which tendril or reed water might be found. That is an important skill in a land where few lakes or springs exist and her people valued the skill so much that she became the spiritual leader, in turn teaching the skill to a young boy who seemed to learn it with unusual ease. Is a woman such as Kharu intelligent?

When we call a person "a real brain" we usually mean he or she knows a great many facts and has excellent academic skills. We also recognize that some people have a great deal of folk wisdom for solving daily problems. That implies that they have many different insights and strategies that serve for different tasks. And we speak of some older people who have "the wisdom of years," implying that they have had a great deal of life experience.

There are people who appear to have strong intelligence for one specific skill, even though that isn't necessarily true of their other mental skills. The chess master who stands in the middle of a tent surrounded by individuals each playing a game of chess, can keep twenty-five chess

games going at the same time. Such a master sees a layout of chess pieces and recognizes patterns that the rest of us would not see. The person who can hear a complicated piece of music and immediately sit down and play it although he cannot read or write, is amazingly intelligent about musical sounds and performance in spite of the fact that other mental areas are weak.

Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner says that there are many forms of human intelligence, each focused on a particular area.⁴² He describes at least eight distinct ways of being intelligent. People who have *Linguistic intelligence* love words, whether in the form of word games such as Scrabble, tongue twisters, nonsense rhymes, or puns. They enjoy reading and writing and do well in classes such as literature, social studies, and history. People who have *Logical-Mathematical intelligence* easily compute numbers in their heads and enjoy solving brainteasers that require logical thinking. Their minds search for patterns and logical sequences in things and they do well in mathematics and science.

People with *Visual-spatial intelligence* easily see visual images from different perspectives, such as a bird's eye view or the view of an insect. They often love to draw and doodle, can easily find their way when driving in unfamiliar territory, and enjoy visual puzzles. Those with *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence* enjoy participating in sports, dancing, or physical activities. They love to work with their hands at concrete activities, and need to touch things in order to learn about them rather than reading or watching a video. They may find it difficult to sit still for long periods of time and often get their best ideas while being engaged in a physical activity. People with *Musical intelligence* can quickly tell when a musical note is off-key and after hearing a musical selection can sing or hum it quite accurately. While they work, study, or learn something new they often have a melody inside their heads and find themselves tapping or humming that melody.

Those with *Interpersonal intelligence* have excellent social skills, feel comfortable in a crowd, are often looked to as leaders, and like to be involved in social activities connected with work or church. When they encounter a problem they try to seek advice from another person rather than reading about it or attempting to solve it on their own. Those with *Intrapersonal intelligence* enjoy thinking about their own thinking and about life's problems. They often keep journals to record their thoughts and the events they encounter. They have a realistic idea of

their own strengths and weaknesses and would rather vacation at a quiet spot rather than having a lot of people around. People with *Naturalist intelligence* have an ability to see and understand distinctions in the natural world and the environment. They love to identify and classify birds, plants, animals, and stars.

Gardner says that a child especially gifted in any one area will be helped to develop the skills of that area if three aspects are present. The child shows innate ability for those skills, the surrounding society values those skills, and a mentor is present to help the child develop the skills. Tiger Woods' father and the father of Venus and Serena Williams might have given their children exactly the same instruction that they did. But if the children had not had an innate ability to develop in those areas and if society did not value the skills of playing golf and tennis, the instruction would have come to a less successful end. Kharu in the Michener novel was considered extremely intelligent because her gift was highly valued in her community of people. However, someone with the same gift living today might not be valued at all. In fact, such a gift would likely remain unrecognized in the present-day western world.

Most people have a constellation of intelligences made up of several different ones. They usually are stronger in one or two areas and have weaker abilities in the others. Some very fortunate people are blessed with strengths in many areas of intelligence.

Children usually display their intelligences in specific activities rather than in all activities related to areas in which they are strong. While it is true that parents should help their children develop their specific strengths, that always needs to be balanced with opportunities to develop all the skills they need in order to succeed in school, a place that ordinarily requires the skills of linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence more than others.

G: So, when children have been identified as being particularly strong in one or two areas of intelligence, can we expect teachers to teach in a variety of ways that will make it possible for all children to learn?

J: I believe that is exactly what we must expect. No teacher can teach every subject in eight or nine different ways. But knowing about the different combinations of intelligences children have will help teachers understand the importance of doing exactly what you suggest. Fortunately, there are graduate courses and seminars that will help teachers learn how to do so.

G: Surely every child deserves to have the sense of self-worth that derives from knowing that he or she can gain knowledge and use it well, even if the ability to read and to do mathematics remains difficult.

How important is IQ?

A high IQ does not mean that a person will be happy or successful in life. It does not even mean that one will do well in school. A lower IQ does not mean that one will be unsuccessful financially or socially. In fact, the same IQ score can mean something quite different if it is achieved by a child living in an inner city environment that provides poor schooling or a child who has well-educated parents and attends an excellent school. The inner city child has achieved that knowledge and ability against all odds, which is extremely difficult. For the other child the higher IQ may be the result of living in an enriched environment.

Parents, on seeing a high IQ score or high scores on achievement tests, sometimes speak of their child as being "gifted." Often when they do so they seem to assume that the giftedness is something innate and refers to all abilities. When children are strong in linguistic and logico-mathematic intelligences and weaker in the interpersonal intelligence they sometimes are seen by their classmates as "too nerdy," or "too bossy," and become targets of teasing and bullying. This becomes even more of a problem if the child has been told he or she is gifted and proceeds to tell classmates that important fact.

When it comes to relationships with classmates, gifted children seem to fall into one of two groups. Some gifted children interact with remarkable ease with children as well as adults. These children are often the ones that classmates like most to be with. Other gifted children, unfortunately, face the opposite extreme. They are aware that they haven't many friends but they don't understand why that is true.

Psychologists Freedman and Jensen say the following:

Perhaps caused by the isolation and accentuated by zealous adult attention, gifted children often develop a near blindness to "reading" social cues. It may be also that since their intellectual capacities are so strong, they have less need to develop their emotional intelligences. In any case, a major pitfall for some gifted children is a lower level of empathy and an inaccurate perception of their communications with others.⁴³

Such children can be helped if the parent explains to them that people like you better if you are interested in them, ask them questions about their interests and then really listen to their answers. They can be shown how to continue the conversation rather than immediately responding with something they, themselves have done or can do.

Rather than telling such a child, “You are gifted,” parents would be much wiser to say, “Yes, school learning seems to be very easy for you. We will want to help you become even better at the things you do so well. However, whenever God gives us strengths in any area, God expects us to use those strengths to help others who are weaker in that area. Just as others will help you in areas in which you aren’t so strong.”

When an adult is considered “gifted,” that label usually includes achievement as well as intelligence. Will a gifted child become a gifted adult? Not necessarily. Parents should exercise great caution when using labels. In our individualistic society telling children they are “gifted” sometimes makes them become arrogant and hold themselves in such high regard that they separate from other children⁴⁴. It would be better to say, “Yes, learning is easy for you and that is wonderful. But when something is easy for you, it is your responsibility to help others for whom it is not so easy.”

Survey question: What did you do to help your children grow and become critical thinkers? Parents’ answers:

Lego, books, paintings & books we did together when they were quite young (pre-K to elementary), summer programs, our confidence in their abilities, one two-week, at home Great Books experiment, music lessons, occasional math and grammar games (at table), a stretch where we did 9 p.m. tea times. Enjoying their interests in fire, water, soil. Travel. A pretty good sense of anticipation most of the time.

As a family one of our guiding principles was “one for all and all for one.” The result of this principle was that we all learned together and we all discussed and solved problems together.

Reading. We read to him while he was in the womb and daily until he was interested and able to read on his own. We share stories, articles of interest to each other, even now. We also had a world or USA maps on our kitchen table under glass when he was growing up.

Family time – we did a variety of things after dinner: political debates, prayer, walks, games. We read every night as a family. Exposed them to all sorts of people. My husband is one who asks questions, so their questions were encouraged.

My wife as a “news junkie” who is constantly bringing things that she has heard or read into the dinnertime conversation.

I am pretty embarrassed to admit this, but I think my children actually developed intellectually and as critical thinkers, at least in part, through media exposure. My children grew up in a very rapidly paced world; they learned to glean information through snippets and bits that I can’t possibly keep up with. My own views, especially opinions on issues I feel very passionate about, have been altered completely through discussions with my children.

We often played word games at the supper table. One of my favorites was ‘categories.’ “Which of these words does not belong in this category?” An excellent way to instill logic and also learn about the world. As a family we loved playing games, whether traveling or at home.

We have always played many board games as a family growing up. During those games, we would stop and spend time talking about aspects of the game. Chess and checkers were favorites when they were young and then we moved into Risk and Acquire, as they got older. These board games require critical thinking and planning. It became ingrained into them when they were young and as they got older, it was a natural process.

Learning and the Brain

We live in a time when researchers know more about the human brain and how people learn than ever before. The following findings of brain research are helpful for parents to know.

- People of any age learn by creating patterns in the mind. The more parents can help children see the connections between what they already know and the new thing they are learning, the easier it will be for them to create the new categories necessary for learning.

- There is always something conscious and something unconscious about learning anything new. Sometimes children will not understand a new concept at the time they are told about it. It may take a few weeks or even months for them to make the right connections.
- Different parts of the brain must work together in order for someone to learn. Sometimes a person's brain works very well except for one module. This may result in a very intelligent student having one particular learning difficulty.
- Between ages 10 and 20 the brain develops in such a way as to allow the person to more easily make decisions and solve complex problems. Family games of brain-twisters, *Clue*, or mental puzzles help these skills to develop.
- People of all ages learn better when they are challenged without the use of sarcasm, bullying, or threatening comments. A healthy emotional environment is critical to learning.
- People's brains are organized in unique ways. No parent can understand the brain organization of a son or daughter. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to know whether the child has truly learned something or has only memorized it.⁴⁵

While parents value insights such as these they should be aware that often those who apply research findings to education in the form of special programs or materials have vested interests and blind spots. It is better for parents to simply keep this information in mind when talking with their children rather than buying materials to help them.

Helping children grow in intelligence

Whether your child is gifted in certain areas of intelligence or has a normal ability in any of the intelligences, there are some things parents can do to help children succeed in school. As teachers, we have both seen the tremendous impact that this sort of parental involvement can have on children's intellect.

- Notice what each of your children is interested in doing and appreciate their strengths. Tell them how glad you are that they are strong in those areas. Talk with them about their weak areas and teach them skills to deal with those weaknesses.

- Observe the ways each of your children seems to learn. Some children would rather do their homework at the dining room table with the family around them. Others would rather be in their room, alone. Nevertheless, sit with them while you do your own work and check now and then to make certain they are not wasting their time.
- When your child has difficulty with an assignment, help with one or two examples. Then try to leave your child to work out the rest. Checking that kind of homework when it is completed will help both you and your child to have easier minds about it.
- Make certain the area around the child is uncluttered. Some children's desktops are taken up with a computer and all sorts of other things. The study space should be neat. That is why the kitchen table might be a better place to study than the child's bedroom desk.
- Help your children make lists of the order in which they plan to do their study activities.
- No matter how easy school seems for your child, it is important that he or she has good study skills. The time will come when a particular required learning does not come so easily and that is when the study skills come into play.
- Don't be too disturbed when your child complains, "School is so boring." Most children make that complaint at times because school requires them to do specific activities rather than what they want to do. Finding learning activities "boring" should not excuse a child from doing his or her best with that activity.
- Do not accept "school is boring" as a reason for your child's inappropriate behavior or language in school. Every student must speak respectfully to teachers and other adults and must obey school rules.
- If your children receive phone calls during the study time, write down the caller's number and say that the call will be returned. Give phone messages to your children during study breaks rather than immediately after the call.
- When the homework has been completed, help your children pack up the school supplies that will have to be taken with

them in the morning. Next, help them plan what they will wear and have them set those clothes aside.

- Play games with your children to stimulate their thinking. The game of *Chess* helps them to think in patterns and to plan ahead, as do *Cathedral* and *Risk*. Games like *Clue* help them in the beginning stages of logical thinking.
 - Recognize that school isn't the only place of learning for your children. Plan family visits to museums and zoos. Be with them during the visit and talk about the exhibits. Go to the Imax movies about the human body, Lewis and Clark's expedition, or other such topics. If your children object, make agreements with them that you will attend and be interested in their choices of places to visit if they will do the same with yours.
 - If it is at all possible, plan family trips to museums such as those on the mall in Washington D.C., the Science and Industry Museum in Chicago, or local places of historical interest in your area.
 - Consider a camping trip to Mount Rushmore, the South Dakota Badlands, and other places of historical interest. When your children are between the ages of ten and fifteen, plan a camping trip through Europe to show them the famous historical sights.
 - Choose at least one night a week when there will be no television or electronic games and videos and spend time playing games, working brain puzzles, and reading together. Select well-written books that the family will enjoy but that your children might not select on their own. Suggestions are: *The Narnia series*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Little Women*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Animal Farm*.
- J. What do you think about bribing? My 16 year old son wants text messaging on his cell phone. I flat out bribed him, agreeing to text messaging as long as he read four books from a list we create together.

Survey Question: What helped you grow intellectually and become a critical thinker? (Answers from young adults)

I came from a family of very intellectual thinkers. My dad was a sociologist and always answered every question with a question to make you find your answers.

Study abroad between high school and college REALLY opened my eyes and helped me see that there were multiple ways to view any given issue, among many other things. Also, discussions in small groups and one-on-one with faculty who were engaged and interested in my success.

Finally surrendering my pride and asking God what I can do with my gifts to serve others, regardless if I think they deserve it – understanding the servitude of Christ.

I would have to say that my college courses, mission trips, and trip to Central America helped me I think my college courses helped me grow intellectually, spiritually, and during my high school years when I was struggling with what I believed and why. No question was too tough for him! He even provided me with a copy of the Koran and other books to help explore the topic of other religions and world-views.

My mother had "summer school" on our back porch. She read books like *Beowulf* to us. We complained, but other kids in the neighborhood would come hang out and listen.

It wasn't until my sophomore year when I was an exchange student in France that I mark my faith as becoming truly my own, and not my parents', not my professors', not what I thought I believed - but what I knew. It was a challenging time intellectually and spiritually; I came away from that time on my own with a new faith and ability to critically think for myself.

Contrary to what many assume, attending an actively Christian college also helped me become a critical thinker. There was a freedom in all my classes to discuss anything and everything.

I still make time in my life to study the Bible for myself. One professor's everlasting question often sounds in my head, "What is the point?" forcing me to critically think through

passages, how they affect my world-view and apply to my life.

One is the environment that my parents brought me up in was that in which ideas and thoughts were important. In fact, they being rebel-rousers themselves encouraged me to think outside of the box and of all sides of an argument whether I believed it or not. Two, the eclectic group of people in my life, especially my youth group leaders in high school, my parents, and my profs and other adults I've met through college. Three, the extensive travel I have done, both for cultural experience and for academic reasons.

When my parents divorced, I learned that not everything I am told is true, even when I trust the source. This was the beginning of my critical thinking. It was after this point that I decided to go to Bolivia and also that I decided to graduate early from high school because I didn't like the experience I was having. My mom always supported these independent choices. Once I started college, I began to grow intellectually by leaps and bounds. I am very comfortable in the classroom and have always found my education to be integral to my happiness. Through different classes, professors and myself, I always found a way to be challenged that helped to hone my critical thinking skills. I think what helped the most was how my professors challenged but supported me at the same time.

Education definitely! That helped me learn about a lot of issues I probably wouldn't have explored myself. Thankfully I was taught growing up to search for my own answers and not accept things without doing the research.

Becoming a critical thinker, for me, meant not to just know the knowledge, but to analyze it as well. I became tired of being spoon-fed meaningless facts and statistics, so I started questioning everything that was presented to me. This gave me the confidence to form and value my opinions as well as better understanding the ideas of others.

Listening to and being aware of the experiences of others. There are things I will never experience in this world but I grow from the experiences of others. My own life experiences have challenged me to grow also.

My poly-sci classes in college! Classroom discussions and reading the Christian Science Monitor, I continue to read the CSM and belong to a number of organizations that have great discussions.

My family always valued logic and reasoning. My dad loves math, math games, riddles, and logic games. My mom loves reading, and she is at her best when she is problem solving. We used to play this game called "what would you do if ..." She would fill in the blank with different ideas, like: if you were given a million dollars, if you were shipwrecked on a desert island, if you found out a friend had a big problem. Then we would brainstorm ideas together and discuss their pros and cons. Also, one of my favorite summer memories is my mom reading from children's classic literature to my brother and me. We would read a chapter or two a day. Then, discussing the characters, the adventures, and what might happen next were topics of conversation at the dinner table. And, we frequently played the "put yourself in someone else's shoes" game, which was great for learning empathy and considering new perspectives.

My times of greatest intellectual growth came through challenges, through failure. These times came through taking risks and learning to accept failure as a learning experience. I was an extremely ambitious and perfectionist child; some of those drives threatened to tear me apart inside and controlled almost every aspect of my life. My parents played an important role in my learning experience because while they encouraged me in pursuing excellence and celebrated with me when I succeeded, they always made sure I knew that it was all right if I did not quite succeed. They helped me to realize that God's plan takes into account the flaws of humanity and uses us for good, despite our failings. They emphasized the importance of trying hard, but also the value of moderation, of devoting time to the family and the church as well as academic activities.

Reading good books in high school and college; classes and teachers/professors who demanded critical thinking and writing (and who critiqued my thinking and writing – failing to criticize, correct, and instruct is a disservice to students even though it might boost their self-esteem in the short run).

I learned to read when I was about 3 years old and read constantly throughout my childhood. I learned how to spell and how to think and understand much through what I read. My parents encouraged me by allowing me to spend \$200 a summer on books for several years. They also humored me as I asked why about everything. We watched the nightly news together as a family every night and I was able to listen to my parents discuss what was happening on the news and how it related to us. I was involved in music from the time I was young as well. Music develops critical thinking because it requires an analytical process to be able to learn a musical piece thoroughly.

In my family one of the things we like to do is discuss current issues. Sometimes, these discussions turn into heated debates where you have to back up every statement you make with a fact or proof.

In terms of intellectual growth, I think I've gained it all through the classroom. I've always been a hard-working student with an enthusiasm to learn. I soaked up everything I possibly could in my classes from junior high all the way through college. One thing that I wish I had done more of, however, is read. Reading never came easy for me. It was hard to focus and it took me (still does) a long time to read. I've often felt insecure about my ability to be a critical thinker. It's not something that has come easy for me. I can memorize the answers to something, but I often struggled trying to think out of the box. My experiences outside of the classroom are the ones that have helped me grow as a critical thinker. It's happened mostly when I have been placed in situations where I have had to think on my feet. Experiences like traveling, volunteering, leading groups of people, organizing and coordinating activities and doing tasks for which I am unqualified are when my critical thinking has been developed.

I think I have always been a critical thinker. I think the realization that people with the best intentions in the world can still get it wrong was the biggest step in my intellectual growth on this subject.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the suggestions that were made for raising a child's intelligence helpful or realistic? What other suggestions do you have?
2. Can you think of examples when your child said something that showed he or she did not fully understand a concept?
3. What positive effect might playing a great many video games have on a person's ability to think? Are there negative effects?

Chapter 7
Emotional Intelligence in the
Fabric of Faithfulness

Generally, psychologists believe that a person's IQ accounts for only about 20% of his or her success and happiness in life. Another factor, one's emotional intelligence accounts for at least some of the rest. Daniel Goleman described emotional intelligence as "a different way of being smart" in his book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*.⁴⁶

G: Beth was a college senior and, in spite of her 4.0 average, I suggested that it might be better if she would not complete her student teaching experience. Throughout her college years she had had difficulty with roommates and with others on campus. The same characteristics that made classmates avoid her were now appearing in her relationship with the fourth graders in her classroom.

J: That is so unfortunate. Didn't anyone ever suggest counseling?

G: Yes, but for one to be willing to go through counseling suggests that there might be something about one's self that should change. That was extremely difficult for Beth to face and therefore she never lasted in counseling for more than one session. I sensed a kind of anger in Beth but didn't know the actual source.

J: Perhaps the source was fear. Many people are conscious of experiencing an emotion but have great difficulty thinking about that emotion.

When people first hear the term "emotional intelligence" they have a sense that they know exactly what it means. After all, they know what emotions are and they know what it is to be intelligent. Therefore, they assume that if one has emotional intelligence, one is intelligent about one's emotions. And they are not far off.

One reason that Goleman's book caused such a stir is that his book raised the awareness that if one has high scores on different kinds of tests, one might still not be too bright in some other areas. Also disturbing was his implication that having a high EQ rather than a high IQ might lead not only to greater academic achievement but also to greater success in one's job and one's life.

Goleman's definition of the dimensions of emotions describes both adults and children. For our purposes, we have developed a chart that is a simplified version of these aspects as they concern children and have categorized them in figure 7-1.

Figure 7-1

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Awareness of one's own emotions	<i>The child acts out feelings without being aware of the causes for such actions.</i>	<i>The child is aware of the emotions as they begin to occur but doesn't always understand the reasons for them.</i>	<i>The child is able to recognize emotions and moods in self and others and can talk about the causes for them.</i>
Self-control	<i>The child lashes out in anger or fear without understanding the cause.</i>	<i>The child is aware of emotions that lead to actions and can exercise some control.</i>	<i>The child is aware of causes of emotions and can use a variety of ways to control the situation.</i>
Motivating one's self	<i>The child behaves impulsively and feels depressed without awareness of cause.</i>	<i>The child behaves less impulsively and can focus on the task at hand.</i>	<i>The child can behave responsibly and can talk his or her way through the task to bring it to completion.</i>
Knowing the emotions of others	<i>The child is not aware of the feelings of others.</i>	<i>The child recognizes the feelings of others if they are expressed.</i>	<i>The child recognizes the feelings and moods of others even when unexpressed. Is able to listen skillfully to others.</i>
Relationship skills	<i>The child doesn't understand others well enough to maintain good relationships.</i>	<i>The child can resolve some conflicts sufficiently to maintain relationships.</i>	<i>The child is outgoing, friendly, concerned for others, and is considered, to some extent, a leader.</i>

Parents might wish to use this chart in order to understand the order in which one's emotional life can grow and change. If you can determine the box that describes how your child seems to be acting, try to act toward your child as though he is in the following box. For example, if your child acts out feelings without being aware of the causes for such actions, explain the reasons behind the feelings rather than accepting or punishing the actions. If your child doesn't understand others well enough to maintain good relationships ask how she imagines the other child feels. Do all that you can to lead your child forward to the next level.

To what extent are these dimensions innate and to what extent can they be changed?

People have always had emotions. Happiness, love, anger, fear, delight, excitement are only a few of the emotions that we recognize. Our emotions move us to actions such as crying, running away, protecting, helping flight, helping, or protecting.

We are born with the ability to have positive emotions that will help us along the way. However, events in our lives encourage or thwart the development of positive emotions. Because those events begin immediately after birth, no one knows how much of our emotional intelligence is innate. However, psychologists who study emotional intelligence assure us that we can learn to increase our emotional intelligence no matter how old we are.

Are women more emotionally intelligent than men? Goleman doesn't think so. It is true that society expects women to be more compassionate and better able to pick up body signals than men. And, of course, men are expected to control their emotions better than women. However, these are only the results of societal expectations and one can find any number of women and men who differ from these societal norms.

Goleman describes high IQ and EQ men and women in the following way:

The high-IQ male is typified by a wide range of intellectual interests and abilities. He is ambitious and productive, predictable and dogged, and untroubled by concerns about himself. He also tends to be critical and condescending, fastidious and inhibited, uneasy with sexuality and sensual experience, unexpressive and detached, and emotionally bland and cold.

By contrast, men who are high in emotional intelligence are socially poised, outgoing and cheerful, not prone to fearless

or worried rumination. They have a noticeable capacity for commitment to people or causes, for taking responsibility, and for having an ethical outlook; they are sympathetic and caring in their relationships. Their emotional life is rich, but appropriate; they are comfortable with themselves, others, and the social universe they live in.

Purely high-IQ women have the expected intellectual confidence, are fluent in expressing their thoughts, value intellectual matters, and have a wide range of intellectual and aesthetic interests. They also tend to be introspective, prone to anxiety, rumination, and guilt, and hesitate to express their anger openly (though they do so indirectly).

Emotionally intelligent women . . . tend to be assertive and express their feelings directly, and to feel positive about themselves; life holds meaning for them. Like the men, they are outgoing and gregarious, and express their feelings appropriately (rather than, say, in outbursts they later regret); they adapt well to stress. Their social poise lets them easily reach out to new people; they are comfortable enough with themselves to be playful, spontaneous, and open to sensual experience. Unlike the women purely high in IQ, they rarely feel anxious or guilty, or sink into rumination.⁴⁷

We can see how similar men and women are in these respects.

Why is it important for parents to consider these aspects of emotional intelligence?

Raising children in the fabric of faithfulness means that we want to teach our children to empathize with others in need, to help others to recognize and empathize with those needs, and to find ways to encourage and lead others to help in responding to those needs. The danger is that when we consider only a child's IQ, we are considering only part of the person. IQ tells us, only to some extent, what a person is capable of doing. A child's EQ allows us to understand how it is all played out in real life.

Some parents have a tendency to separate thinking and feeling. When a child with a high IQ has difficulty in relationships with other people parents sometimes excuse it with, "He has such a high intelligence that it is difficult for him to relate to more normal children." That sounds very nice but such an attitude really doesn't help the child get along with others. And getting along with others is essential in life.

We want to lead our children into an emotional intelligence that is positive and truthful. Garber describes the shaping of a person for a successful life of character and virtue in this way:

Skills, images, stories—the shaping of life. This is the ethic of character, and vision and virtue are at its heart, because they address both seeing the world as it truthfully is and shaping one's life in relation to that truthful account of the world. But implicit in that vision of life and the world is a belief that it is possible to see truthfully. This not only has consequences for the possibility of avoiding self-deception—which is not a small thing—but it also has consequences for the recovery of a meaning system that provides coherence to the whole of one's existence. Simply said, truthfulness provides that possibility.⁴⁸

Awareness of the causes for one's own feelings and the feelings of others, even when they are not expressed, is essential for developing and maintaining good relationships. The ability to control one's own emotions and to motivate one's self and others to do a task well are just as essential. The adolescent who can say, "I know my teachers like me. They talk with me and we joke around. Teachers have feelings just like we have and it is better to avoid making them embarrassed or mad," is far more likely to be successful in school than another student who does not understand such things.

J: I often tell college students to find a reason to make an appointment with each professor at some time toward the beginning of a course. In that way the student is becoming an individual person in the eyes of the professor, rather than just another face in the crowd. Students come back and tell me that was the most important thing they could have done.

A low EQ causes difficulty throughout life. The CEO who is unable to control her own emotions and to take the perspective of the people at other levels in the organization will be less than successful. The pastor or counselor who has a limited ability to empathize with those who find life difficult will be unable to help or comfort them. The doctor who has a wonderful knowledge of the human body and a limited understanding of the fears and concerns of the patient will be much less effective in caring for the patient. When parents understand how to help children integrate thinking and feeling, they are helping them to make good decisions and to get along in life.

There are children who have, on their own, developed a high EQ. However, that EQ can easily be damaged if it is invalidated. We invalidate another's emotional intelligence when we ignore, tease, or diminish their feelings. When a child with a high EQ is constantly invalidated he begins to distrust his own emotions and is likely to suffer from emotional needs at later periods in life.

What form does invalidation take? Over the course of the last several months we have heard parents say these sorts of things to children.

- Don't be such a baby. (It would be better to say, "I know you are disappointed and feel very bad about what happened. Let's talk about it and see what we might do to understand what happened.")
- Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about. (This language only intimidates and frightens a child. Instead say, "I know that you feel very sad. When you are able to talk about what is troubling you, let's try to do so. Perhaps together we can find a way to help.")
- You've got to stop feeling that way. (Feelings don't go away just because we say they must. It would be better to say, "What are the things that make you feel that way? I wonder how the other person felt. Can we try to figure this out?")
- You are always too sensitive and too dramatic. (Say, "I can see that you are very hurt. It feels just terrible right now, doesn't it? I wonder what we can do to help you feel better.")

When we invalidate we imply that the child's feelings are not only disapproved of but are really strange. We are attacking the child at the very deepest level and implying that such feelings are weird. Telling a child she shouldn't feel the way she does might force her to stop crying or to be silent. But in no way does it help the child.

Then why do we do it? Likely because that is the language used with us when we were growing up. It is far better to first recognize and validate the feelings that the child has. After that the two of you can address the problem that led to those feelings.

Helping your child develop a strong, positive emotional intelligence is one of the most important things a parent can do to help that child take her place in a world that can be filled with hurts.

Discussion Questions

1. If a test were available to determine your child's intellectual strengths and weakness, as described in the section on multiple intelligences, would it be wise to have your child tested? Why or why not?
2. What might one expect to see in a child who has a high IQ and a low EQ? In a child with a low IQ and a high EQ?
3. Do you know people with high EQ that have made a difference in the world?

Chapter 8

Critical Thinking in the Fabric of Faithfulness

J: When I was thirteen, I remember wondering where your thinking left off and my own began. I wanted very much to think for myself but I knew I was influenced by your thinking.

G: The hardest part about helping children learn to think for themselves is that then the parent must live with children who think for themselves. These children have developed a way of thinking through issues and decisions and their way may clash with that of the parent. I'm certain that life was easier for parents of earlier generations who parented with a "Do as you are told and don't ask questions!" attitude.

J: Even today there are parents who are uncomfortable when their children challenge their rules or ideas and use sound reasoning to do so. But if we want our children to be and become all that God made it possible for them to be they must learn to be self-directed, to be internally rather than externally directed. We must help them learn to think about all the possible consequences of a decision or a way of thinking. Our hope is that eventually they will develop the tendency to have this internal dialogue on their own.

Our world today is a place where many people value others based on external things. Judgments are made about us based on our jobs, the positions we hold, the degrees we have achieved, the people we know, the houses we live in, and the things we have. All of these things give us *extrinsic* worth; a way of valuing ourselves based on the judgments of others.

People who have only extrinsic worth are incapable of thinking for themselves. They can evaluate ideas and make decisions only in light of what others think or how others will see them. At times they seem to be thoughtful and intelligent but such intelligence is really only *shrewdness* because it enables them to make decisions and take actions that will benefit themselves and make themselves look better.

There are also people who have a strong sense of their own *intrinsic* worth. Such people are self-directed, able to make decisions and come to conclusions based on their own power of reason combined with their deep understanding of which things truly matter.

Raising our children in the fabric of faithfulness means that we must do all we can to encourage their sense of intrinsic worth. That involves, first of all, helping them understand which things really do matter. This would seem on the surface to be an easy matter for Christian parents to achieve. Christians, more than anyone else, have intrinsic worth because we know that we are not our own but belong to our faithful Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ. We are the daughters and sons of the Almighty God and for that reason alone we have value and worth.

However, we cannot extricate ourselves from our culture. We cannot get away from the fact that every one of us is strongly influenced by the standards or mores of the society in which we live. Christians even fall into the trap of using particular religious language or words in order to show others just how truly devout they are. But if we are to be truly Christ-like, we must constantly examine our own hearts. To what extent are we talking about our close relationship with Jesus Christ for the purpose of impressing others about just how religious we are? To what extent do we judge others because they do or do not use such language?

What qualities are necessary in order for children to become self-directed?

Dr. Elisa Medhus says that we must help children develop an internal dialogue that allows them to direct themselves from within. That inner dialogue will allow them to develop "a strong sense of self and a strong desire to be a vital and meaningful part of the group." The inner dialogue Medhus describes is a way of helping children know their intrinsic worth. She lists five qualities that will spring from this development.⁴⁹

1. High self-esteem/self confidence - When children are raised in an environment of unconditional acceptance and love they learn to honestly assess their own strengths and weaknesses. They are not protected from failure or defeat but refrain from taking it personally because their lives are filled with love and approval. They can pick themselves up and start again. The middle school or high school girl or boy who has performed more poorly than expected in a basketball game does not need parents to point out lack of self-discipline and practice in the sport. That is the coach's job. The parent's role is to ask, "Is there anything we can do to help you live up to your own performance expectations in this sport?"

Unconditional love does not mean that wrong actions are made to seem right but rather that love will always be there no matter what happens. Parents can model their own need for unconditional love and acceptance by saying, "I had a rough time today and I realize now that it was my own fault." They then go on to explain the mistakes that were made along with sharing how they will remedy what happened. When the other parent shows recognition and understanding of the pain and offers love and acceptance instead of criticism, children are more able to share their own rough times and ways they can remedy their own mistakes.

2. Competence - When children are raised in an environment free from ridicule, criticism, or blame for failure they can explore their abilities. They are not rescued from the results of their mistakes but rather are encouraged to learn from them. They never hear their parent say, "Well, it was your own fault!" Rather the parent will ask, "What do you think you might want to do differently next time?" The child's response might be a sullen, "How should I know?" The conversation does not have to continue about this matter because the child's internal dialogue *will* continue. A day or even a week later that child will explain steps that could be taken to lead to a different outcome.

Because the adults around them do not view failure as something that diminishes them, these children feel comfortable taking the appropriate risks that allow them to learn new skills and explore their intellectual and physical strengths. As they develop potential in different areas their self-confidence grows as well as their self-esteem.

3. Independence - As children develop competence and self-esteem, they become increasingly independent in their thinking and problem solving. Because of that they do not have to rely on external influences such as the judgment of others in making decisions or choices. In fact, their self-confidence allows them to gradually learn to resist the persuasiveness of external influences.

Many of us remember our own parents asking, "Well, if your friends go jump in the lake in the middle of winter, are you going to follow them?" We smile at those memories. However, in learning independence in thinking and problem solving, children are helped if they hear their parents discuss the steps *they* went through in arriving at their own decisions. These decisions might be as simple as deciding which movie to see or as life-changing as deciding to go back to school. Some parents keep their family budget, gifts to Kingdom causes, and financial planning for the future rather private. But they miss a wonderful opportunity to help their children understand that all of life's decisions must be made in ways that glorify God.

Our young adult respondents said that conversations like these helped them become independent thinkers. One young man put it this way:

Being self-directed and independent. Being allowed to question my parents' judgment and authority, although I think I was sometimes bratty in this way. I'm grateful though, that I was allowed to disagree and form my own opinions. My parents and I have really different opinions still on most topics but we still respect each other and love each other. Having to overcome a

big personal crisis/ break out of a seriously abusive relationship as a young adult helped me to learn to trust myself and God and to see the strength that is somewhere inside – for all the confidence and thinking skills that relationship crushed, a different kind of perspective and confidence was gained by eventually stopping the cycle, if that makes any sense.

4. High moral character - Children need to hear and participate in family discussions about morals and ethics, those of a personal nature as well as those of national concern. When Christians think of morality they often think of sexual matters and one's sexual thoughts and deeds are certainly part of a moral life. However, morality and ethics go far beyond that. Chapter nine deals with this topic in greater depth. What we want to say here is that raising children in the fabric of faithfulness means helping them develop an inner dialogue about moral principles and values, allowing them to have a high level of self-discipline and integrity.

5. Being an asset within the group - We are social people and all of us live more happily if we are part of a group that accepts us as we are. Medhus describes how externally directed children chose to belong.

Some children chose to belong by doing and believing whatever the group dictates. They choose to beg for the pack's acceptance by selecting conformity over contribution. Such children are externally directed motivated by their need to gain the pack's approval. They choose to sacrifice their own identity and replace it with one fashioned by outside influences in hopes that it will be more acceptable to others. . .⁵⁰

Other children choose to belong by finding their own role or contribution within the pack--one that's meaningful to the child, and decided upon by her rather than by the group. They chose to earn rather than beg for the pack's acceptance. These children are self-directed. They don't have to blindly obey, conform, or withdraw. And because of their high level of competence, they can use any or all of their many skills to find a way to contribute and be an asset to their group. By helping the group, they feel a sense of belonging, which, in turn, strengthens their self-confidence, their sense of self, and their independence.

Parents often find it much easier to demand firm obedience rather than talking through issues with their children. Such children appear to be much more obedient and easier to manage than children who participate in challenging discussions about behavior and attitudes. However, we parent for the long run and guiding them into self-direction involves

discussing issues and conflicts.

That does not mean that we should tolerate rudeness and insolent behavior from our children. Dialogue means discussion with respect on both sides. That kind of dialogue is more difficult for children than for parents because the parent always has the final control, a matter that has frustrated children from the beginning of time. Discussion that deteriorates into shouting or abuse on either side must be stopped until a point at which there is sufficient self-control for it to continue.

J. I don't mean to be disrespectful but when I was fourteen and you and I were having a disagreement you never shouted. However, your voice could sometimes sound so patronizing.

G. I'm sure that is true and I'm really sorry. It is almost as difficult to be the parent of a fourteen-year-old as it is to be fourteen, yourself.

J. I have already discovered that.

Young adult: I think the fact that my parents were non-judgmental made it possible for me to grow intellectually. I didn't close myself off to new ideas out of fear, or worry about what Mom would think of me if I came home with a radical thought. My parents loved me enough to accept me for everything I was, regardless of where the journey took me. Several outstanding teachers also took an interest in me, both in high school and college, and rewarded me for new ideas and critical thinking.

Why are ages eight through twelve so important in children's learning to think?

During their early years most children are fairly self-confident. They do not question their parents' actions and influence and, if the family is reasonably warm and accepting, they flourish. They learn early steps in making decisions when they are given choices within limits. "Which of these two outfits would you like to wear today?" "For your snack would you rather have an apple, a banana, or an orange?" Young children learn to make choices in the safety of their home.

By about age eight or nine, however, children begin to change. They mature physically earlier than any other generation has. Girls now begin to show signs of puberty as early as age eight and boys follow about two years later. This physical maturity can lead to behavioral and emotional

problems in grades five and six that in the past were not seen until grades seven and eight. Eight-year-olds are more socially self-conscious than their parents were when they were children. These children are mature enough to be aware of the rebellion that often is part of adolescence. Yet, they are still young enough to be influenced by their parents and ready for their guidance.

About age eight is when children begin to compare their own appearance, clothes, toys, and abilities with that of their classmates. They also begin to notice whether or not other people like to be with them and where they stand in the pecking order of the class. That kind of comparison quickly leads to uncertainty and judgment, either about themselves or others.

Children handle these uncertainties in different ways, depending on their personalities. These ten-year-olds are an example. Joe is outgoing and sure of himself and easily bluffs his way through uncertainties so that he hardly realizes they are there. Jennie faces uncertainties by asserting her verbal ability when things don't go her way. Nancy is very bright and would like to be part of the group. No one dislikes her but she is quiet and is often ignored and then her feelings are hurt. George isn't very smart and covers his insecurities by making jokes, often at the expense of others. Is it possible for parents to help children like this develop an inner dialogue that will lead to more positive relationships with others?

Some parents try to help their children by making suggestions for ways they could act or things they could say to help them get along better with others. "Why don't you invite Susan to come and play? That way you will get to know each other better." The problem with this approach is that parents are doing the thinking for their children. As the child demonstrates why each suggestion won't work, the parent runs out of ideas and becomes frustrated.

Other parents try to help their children by using "I messages," to explain why they were having trouble with their friends.

"If I were Sarah, I wouldn't be able to understand that you want to be part of the group unless you told me."

"If I were in your class and you said something like that about me, I would feel terrible."

"If you spoke like that to a group I was part of, I would think you were too bossy."

"I messages" can be helpful but the parent is still doing the thinking for the situation.

In helping children learn to think through problems with friends it is better to ask questions that will help them solve their own problems.

To Joe: “When you arrange a game like that is there ever anyone who is left out?” “How could you find out whether someone else has an idea for a better way of doing things?”

To Jennie: “How would you feel if someone else said that to your group?” “How might you get your ideas across differently so that they will be accepted by others?”

To Nancy: “Can you think of a way to let the others know that you would like to play?” “What might you do to become better friends individually with the other girls in ways that are easier for you?”

To George: “How do you think Jim felt when you said that?” “What else might you say or do when you feel uncomfortable?”

In developing a problem-solving approach to relationships scholar Myrna Shure says there are four important skills children must learn. These skills are:

- Sensitivity to one’s own feelings;
- Sensitivity to others’ feelings;
- Awareness of consequences of behavior;
- Recognition of possible *alternative solutions* to a problem.⁵¹

These four skills can be learned best through the questions the parents ask. It takes time and thoughtfulness for parents to keep asking questions that focus on these four skills. However, in the long run helping these questions become part of the child’s inner dialogue makes future parent-child interactions easier.

During the teenage years is when the family discussions that lead to the inner dialogue become increasingly important. When parents and children both internalize these questions discussions will no longer deteriorate into preaching or shouting matches. “Preaching” on the part of parents leads only to an inner disdain on the part of the child.

True discussion is exactly that—a dialogue. And it is the family dialogue that leads to the child’s developing an inner dialogue.

G: When you faced a rough time I would try to comfort you by saying, “You are really a strong, good person and I think you are pretty wonderful.” Your answer would be, “Yes, but you have to say that because you’re my mother.”

J: There surely was truth to that, wasn’t there?

G: Yes, of course there was. My point is that smart, insightful children are not always easy to comfort. It also wasn’t helpful that you would read my books on parenting, such as Haim Ginott’s “Between Parent and Child,” and explain to your little brother what I was trying to achieve with my language and actions.

J: And I have been rewarded with a smart, insightful son who is at times just as much of a pain as I was. When I ask good parenting questions he rolls his eyes and says “don’t practice on me, Mom.”

When asked whether there are things they wish they might have done differently in raising their children, some of the parents answered this way.

- More justice education, whether through church or other means.
- More openness about our problems and theirs.
- Should have memorized some songs, especially of the Psalms.
- More fishing and camping.
- More city and cultural events for the 2nd set of kids.
- A little less faith that most of what’s important will somehow get done through osmosis—but still more faith in osmosis than in verbal direction.
- Less TV.
- I would have spent more time with her, should have forsaken small, pointless worries.
- Perhaps we should have been more demanding regarding the kids’ contributions around the house (household chores). We placed a strong emphasis on participation in sports, and perhaps should have focused more of their energies in other areas – such as youth group participation, community involvement – and reading.

- I sometimes think that I should have spent more individual time with my daughters. Now that my older daughters are married and I have the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with my youngest daughter, I wonder whether the older daughters missed out because we generally did most things as a family. Or was it I that missed out?
- I didn't know my marriage was in trouble until my husband told me he wanted a divorce. I would've liked to have shown them that people work out their problems or at least try to. That wasn't an option for us. That whole situation was such a shock to me and the girls that I would've done that differently had I known it was coming. I never thought my children would have to go through such a horrible time. In retrospect we have all changed and become stronger individuals.
- Fortunately my work enabled me to spend a good deal of time with my boys but if I had to do it over I would spend even more time with them, getting to know them even more intimately and letting them know me more fully. One son has sometimes suggested that we did not prepare them as fully for the real, harsh, cruel, selfish world as we might have. I wish we had done a better job of not letting another son feel that establishing his own identity necessitated his being as different as he seemed to feel it had to be.
- Thousands of things. I would have lived more simply, given them less things, emphasized relationships more. This would have been easier if I had a more perfect environment growing up, but I'm not blaming anyone! I would have been more strict with discipline, more consistent and prayed even more.
- Be a little less reactive. Stop and listen more. Be in the moment more.
- Have more guts with our youngest child, perhaps go to counseling together.
- Be a better leader by example. Be a better listener, a better advocate for their plans, hopes and dreams.

- I wish my wife could have pursued her own career interests more but I don't see how we could have managed that at the time and have one of us at home with our children which was important to us. I would have been more intentional about letting my daughters discover how things work; for example, instead of going immediately to the instruction manual of a new toy, encourage them to figure it out for themselves, instilling greater self-confidence in all things mechanical.
- Cut back on TV and computer chat lines. Had them share bedrooms rather than each having their own.
- Listen more. Be more involved in activities to help others.
- I think I would have requested my husband play a more active role in the day-to-day upbringing of our children.
- Played hard more often. More explicit teaching of round-the-house basic skills. Traveled more together, especially abroad. Exposed kids to more Godly adults in various circumstances. Arranged for our home to be a gathering place more often for kids' friends.
- I wish I had traveled more with my children to other countries and done more service projects with them. I wish we had had more missionaries in our home as visitors.
- I think that I would have been more consistent in some of the little things. The only other thing that I think my wife and I would have liked to change is making sure that we always had a united front in the areas of discipline and direction. I mentioned being consistent, and what I really mean is being consistent parents with the same message in all areas. It is easy to fail in this area.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is helping children learn to think for themselves an important goal for Christian parents to have? To what extent is thinking for yourself part of a Christian life?
2. Is it possible for a parent who is uncertain of his or her own thinking ability to help a child develop a thoughtful inner dialogue?
3. Could asking the questions that lead to a thoughtful inner dialogue help parents with their own relationships?
4. What are some examples of insolent or rude language and behavior from our children that we should not tolerate? If a three-year-old cries, "I hate you," how should we react? If a twelve-year-old says the same thing, what should our reaction be? What about an eighteen-year-old?
5. Do you know of families where firm obedience was demanded all through childhood and the children became independent problem-solvers as adults? Do you know of families where firm obedience was demanded and it had the opposite effect on adulthood?

Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: Helping Kids Practice Observation through Service

by Judith Palpant

“The opportunity which God sends does not wake up him who is sleeping.”

– SENEGALESE PROVERB –

Children are natural hunters and gatherers. They explore life with their five senses and insatiable curiosity, collecting treasures of the mind and heart. Parents protect them in the process, but they also watch for new avenues of discovery, helping them graduate from “I Spy” games to seeing how they can help others. One untapped opportunity is taking children along on the adventure of adopting a widow or widower, an experience which can broaden their world and expand their powers of observation.

When we returned to the USA from six years as medical missionaries in Kenya, I home schooled our two youngest children. I asked the deacons in our church to match us up with an elderly widow who would welcome the three of us on a weekly visit. They suggested Irene, a woman with cancer, who lived in a small house near our church.

On our first visit, I introduced my children. Sizing up my curly headed seven year-old daughter, Irene exclaimed, “Andrea! When I was seven, my mother died. I took a long train ride to live with my grandmother. Things should have been difficult, but Jesus gave me a Cinderella life.” Andrea’s eyes widened with interest as Irene described a loving grandmother who read stories to her.

Nathan, age six, followed his sister, carrying an old one-eared stuffed monkey. “Hello, Nathan! You have a fine monkey there,” she said, “but he is missing an ear. Do you remember the story of Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane? Simon Peter drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear. Dr. Luke says Jesus touched the man’s ear and healed him. Your monkey needs a miracle like that.”

Irene welcomed us into her living room. All eyes and ears, Andrea and Nathan watched her step to the front window where a red and white peppermint wreath hung. Taking hold of the small silver scissors hanging by a red ribbon, she snipped three peppermints and handed one to each of us. This turned into a tradition she repeated on each visit.

Over the next five months, my children and I observed changes in Irene’s world. Her health declined until she spent most days on the couch.

One week she rallied and invited us to lunch. She met us at the door wearing her Sunday best protected by a white bib apron. “How glad I am to see you,” Irene said. “Make yourselves at home.” We peeled off our coats and followed her past the beautifully prepared dining room table to the kitchen. The aroma of hot macaroni and cheese mingled with the odor of fresh paint. Several soft plastic bags from the cleaners covered the floor. A gallon can of paint sat in the corner.

“I’m finally painting my kitchen yellow!” she told us proudly, pointing to one sunny wall. Just then the timer went off. “Oh, the macaroni is ready.” Irene walked across the plastic surface to the oven, took two pot holders and bent down, opening the oven door. Stepping back, she grasped the bubbling casserole, stood upright and tried to step forward. Soft plastic wrapped around one of her heels. My mind fast-forwarded to a potential broken hip. How could I warn her without making her feel childish?

Nathan and Andrea moved straight past my hesitancy. “Irene!” Andrea said anxiously, “Your heel is caught in the plastic!” Together, she and Nathan knelt down and disentangled her heel without a hint of condescension. They maintained Irene’s dignity in an undignified moment. Relieved, we savored the tasty lunch and time together. On the way home I affirmed Andrea and Nathan for being attentive: seeing the problem, naming it, and solving it so deftly. They were awake to Irene, attending to details in her life.

Over the next month, Irene coped with depression by driving to a department store to buy perfume with money she didn’t have. And there was no accounting for her sweet tooth--she lived on candy stashed away. When her son drove her to a nursing home, she stubbornly refused to leave the car, so he took her back home and hired a care-giver.

The kids and I missed a couple weeks so by the time we returned to Irene’s home, circumstances had significantly changed. The live-in care giver ushered us into the bedroom saying, “She refuses to eat. She only wants candy, but I’ve thrown out all of it.” We stepped gingerly into the bedroom. “Oh, Mom!” Andrea gasped when she saw pale Irene’s head on the bed pillow. “I want something sweet, anything sweet, please!” Irene begged.

The caregiver and I stepped out into the hallway. Should we change the subject? Talk her out of it? Did it really matter? Meanwhile, Nathan left the room and returned with a twinkle in his eye. “Look what I found!” he said holding up a wrapped peppermint candy. He remembered

the wreath in the living room window which escaped the candy purge. “Here, Irene,” Nathan said, removing the wrapper and handing it to her. “Thanks, Nathan, I knew I could count on you,” she said smiling as she sucked on the peppermint. Nathan could not solve Irene’s nutritional issues, but he could meet a small need. His gesture was symbolic of our visits with her. I was the one who took my kids every week to see her, but most of the time it was *they* who infused kindness into the last months of her life.

Irene died two weeks later. The children and I attended her funeral. During the service, I reflected on the fact that just five months earlier, we were new in town, new to the church. She could have readily declined the Deacons who approached her with my request. Instead, she consented and generously shared with us her last spurts of energy, her last inspirations for small homemade gifts, a last hot macaroni luncheon, the last snipped peppermints. With ease she witnessed to Jesus who gave her a Cinderella life and worked a miracle. She folded us into the fabric of her life, and in the natural course of events, gave my children opportunities to assess her needy situation and assist her.

Over those months our Irene-encounters surprised and heartened me. As a mother, I made the commitment to the Deacons and took the risk of introducing my children to a stranger and widow. Time and again Andrea and Nathan rose to the occasion and served Irene in ways I, as a parent, never would have envisioned. They could not articulate the treasures hunted and found on these ventures, but I saw the light in their eyes as evidence of the Light of Christ at work in their hearts. These are the joys of parents who, along with their children, choose to befriend a widow and enter into her world. The adventure builds intergenerational community and fosters in kids a way of seeing and hearing, of thinking critically, that compels action. Such service is soul shaping and memory making for children.

Chapter 9

Developing Character and Morals in the Fabric of Faithfulness

Eighth grade student: Why do you get so annoyed when you watch this presidential candidate's television commercials?

Parent: Because his commercials have so many lies.

Student: But the other side says your candidate has lies in his commercials.

Parent: They are wrong, of course.

There are few things so difficult to teach our children and so important for them to learn as the integrity that is part of the fabric of faithfulness making up the Christian life. Our children listen to what we say and watch what we do. If our walk doesn't match our talk we will hear about it. We live in a world that seems to promote manipulation, or even lies, and when we teach our children to cope with that world we sometimes fall into the same false trap.

It's difficult. We teach our children to respect those in authority and yet we must teach them to critically analyze each political candidate for ways he or she might shade the truth. Is shading the truth simply a form of lying? We need to think through what we mean by a lie and discuss with our children how a lie is different from a mistake.

We teach our children to avoid blasphemy and foul language in their own speech. Yet they hear government officials use foul language and laugh about it saying, "I felt good after I said that." We need to publicly protest such language on the part of anyone who has a position of authority so that our children will have better models for their own language.

We teach our children to trust others. Yet we must also teach them to carefully analyze advertisements because those who promote the merchandise may not be truthful. "Let the buyer beware," is the motto they learn.

We teach our children to avoid spreading gossip or saying things that will hurt others. Yet endless accusations fly back and forth on 24-hour news channels. And at times children even hear that kind of talk from us, their Christian parents.

Parents cannot be perfect people but part of being a parent is to at least try to live up to the standards of the Christian walk. Writer Alice Miller gives us encouragement, however.

People whose integrity has not been damaged in childhood, who were protected, respected, and treated with honesty by

their parents, will be—both in their youth and in adulthood—intelligent, responsive, empathic, and highly sensitive. They will take pleasure in life and will not feel any need to kill or even hurt others or themselves. They will use their power to defend themselves, not to attack others. They will not be able to do otherwise than respect and protect those weaker than themselves, including their children, because this is what they have learned from their own experience.⁵²

We sometimes say to children, "Let your conscience be your guide." That assumes that children are born with a conscience, which will tell them what is right, and what is wrong. Most children are born with the ability to develop a conscience just as most children are born with the ability to develop intelligence. By watching their parents model moral or immoral behavior, children begin to develop an inner voice that tells them which things are accepted as right or wrong in their family. The way a child's parents speak and act go a long way toward forming moral or immoral attitudes.

Here are some suggestions from our respondents concerning teaching children about moral attitudes.

I don't specifically remember my parents training me to be concerned about justice, but I know their influence definitely played a major role in shaping who I am today and what I care about. For instance, I remember reading the Bible together as a family in the evening, and other books (mostly novels) that promoted good character, virtue, love, and justice. We would often have informal conversations about what my father would read to us. Although I did not realize it at the time, these times helped instill in me a sense of right and wrong, a sense of the world and what life is about, and a commitment to God and others. As a family we would also discuss issues in the news around the dinner table, and pray for major events that were taking place or something that had just happened.

My dad hired and helped people of different races to work in our church before it was even considered Christian. He helped anyone in need. Both my parents cared for anyone who came to them. They had a huge Christian mission heart. I was raised with an awareness of the needs of the world, as a result, and a deep desire to be a missionary myself. We lived in a rather run down part of Denver, and grew up with different races as

well as economic and family expectations of those around us. Yet Mom and Dad held us to high standards of behavior. The one negative comment I overheard Mom and Dad make, which made me think more deeply of racial equality, was when one of them wondered if the church (we lived in a manse) would sell the house to a black family – if the neighbors would be unhappy. I wondered why that would make a difference.

I moved around a lot growing up and so I had the opportunity to see many groups of people and lifestyles and appreciate each of those for their similarities and differences. My parents helped me to be accepting and open-minded in these situations. They and others showed me that we are to care for and about all people.

My father was an advocate for the German community in our city – anyone with problems relating to city government and political issues came to him – we had political meetings in our home. I grew up with a strong sense of efficacy because I saw my dad's influence bring about change.

We said in chapter one that children learn tendencies by:

- a) listening to and watching the people they admire,
- b) having the reasons behind those words and actions explained to them,
- c) imitating the language and actions of those people, and
- d) being in an environment that nurtures the development of such language and actions.

The tendencies children develop can be positive or negative but they normally appear to be related to what they hear and see in other people. The same is true of the development of conscience.

It is the task of Christian parents and teachers to help children learn to develop mature consciences, based on Biblical teachings. In doing so, it is first necessary that they understand what we mean by the different aspects of consciences. James Fowler named the kinds of conscience that learners need to form and we have described each of them in language we might use.⁵³

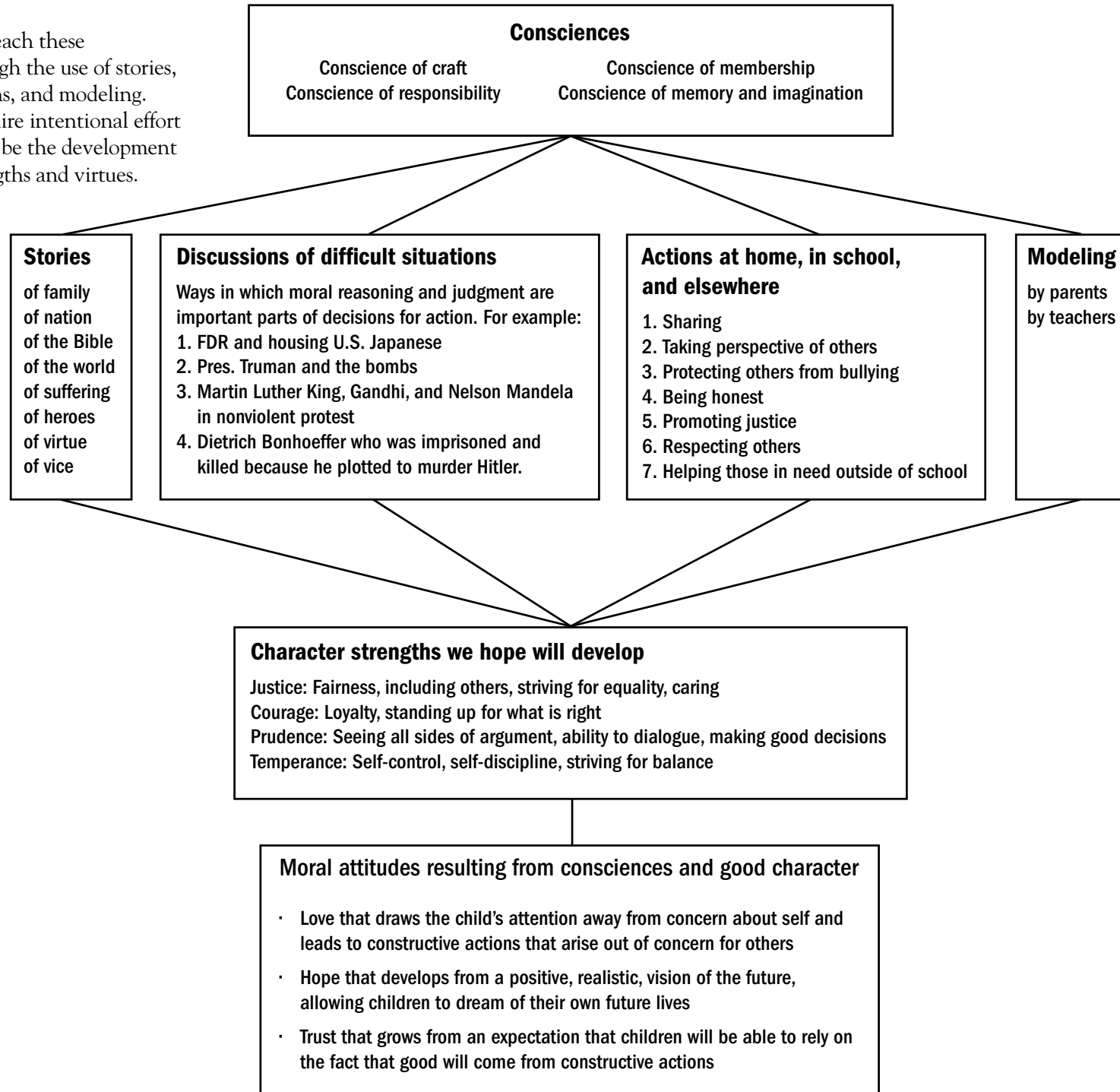
1. *Conscience of craft.* “I make a habit of doing tasks thoroughly and well. I take pride in the fact that people can count on me to complete a task.”
2. *Conscience of membership.* “I do not pretend to be something that I am not. The person who others see when they look at me is the person that I really am, even when I am alone.”
3. *Conscience of responsibility.* “If I give my word I will keep my word. If you ask me not to tell what you have told me I will keep your confidence, unless doing so will cause painful or sinful actions to be repeated.”
4. *Conscience of memory and conscience of imagination.* “When I think of the strength, courage, weaknesses, and suffering of those who have gone before me, it helps me understand what it takes to live as God wants me to live. I hope to be a person of courage and justice and will commit myself to helping others who are poor, afflicted, or oppressed.”

When children learn from their parents to take pride in doing tasks thoroughly and well they are taking responsibility for themselves and respecting themselves. When they watch their parents present themselves honestly and without pretensions children learn to display regard for their own worth and that of others. When they remember heroes of the past it helps them to think about possibilities for their own lives. The development of these consciences will encourage children to hope, trust, and love.

The design in figure 9-1, which incorporates many of Fowler's terms, shows that these different elements can lead children to develop the strengths of character and moral attitudes that are part of the fabric of faithfulness.

Figure 9-1

Parents can teach these consciences through the use of stories, discussions, actions, and modeling. Doing so will require intentional effort but the result will be the development of character strengths and virtues.



Stories

The stories parents can tell and read are true stories of people who have lived and died for just causes. These include stories from their own family, from the people of their nation as well as other nations, from the Bible, and from history. Children must come to know about these heroes, even though every one of them had feet of clay. Parents should not rely on the school to tell these stories, although the school will help. Rather, parents should show their admiration for the people who have suffered for just causes, their empathy for those who suffered and died because of injustice, and their compassion for those who acted without a clear understanding of what was right or wrong.

Discussions

Parents should talk with their children about the difficult decisions leaders and others have had to make throughout history. For example, President Roosevelt made the decision to house U.S. citizens of Japanese descent in camps during WWII. The discussion should not first ask for an opinion as to whether that decision was right or wrong. Rather it might begin with questions such as:

- What did President Roosevelt believe it means to be human, whether one is American or Japanese? What information was he given about the effect such a decision would have on those citizens? What information did he have about the world situation at that time?
- A discussion of President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs on the Japanese cities should begin with the same questions.
- Tell your children about the decision Dietrich Bonhoeffer made to plot with others to murder Hitler during WWII and the sacrifice Bonhoeffer had to make. What did he believe it was to be human? Is every human being a child of God even if they don't know it? Are there circumstances under which a human being may take the life of another?
- Tell your children about Mahatma Gandhi's life and his decision to lead his people into nonviolent protests for their independence. What did he believe it means to be human?
- Tell them about Dr. Martin Luther King who followed Gandhi's leading for the Civil Rights protests in the United States.

- Tell them about apartheid in South Africa and about Nelson Mandela's decision to follow the pattern of nonviolent protest for his people and what he had to sacrifice for it. Keep asking the same questions over and over.

Perhaps you are thinking that these are matters for the schools to be teaching and that parents shouldn't have to bother. At the time we are writing this a recent survey showed that fifty percent of the young people in the United States do not know who the Western allies were and who they fought against in WWII. Students may be taught this history in school and pass tests on these facts without really coming to know about these events and the way they shaped the world. Parents must play their role in leading and continuing school discussions at home, particularly if parents care about having a part in shaping their child's attitudes and values.

Actions

Through personal interactions in the family and elsewhere, children learn a sense of duty and obligation toward others. When parents invite to dinner families new to the community they can explain to their children how it feels to be a stranger and to know no one. When parents and children bring food to those who are sick, tutor inner city children and help in their summer camps, it becomes easier to talk with them about the things we do because we are so grateful to God for our salvation.

Children should not just hear about Jesus' command to care for the sick, feed the hungry, clothe those who are in need and visit people in prison. Children should see their parents actually do those or similar acts and should be involved with their parents in such acts when it is possible and appropriate.

When children live in an environment that teaches that all must take responsibility for the learning and welfare of those around them, they will from their earliest years participate in actions of service. Schools often have students listen to younger children practice oral reading, help those who have difficulty with math problems or with studying, and participate in service activities outside the school. In this way children learn that daily life consists of actions of duty and obligation.

Modeling

More than anything else, parents must realize that raising a child is a sacred task. Children will be far more affected by the ways they see parents and teachers act and the things they say than by anything they are told to do.

The intention of all of parenting and teaching in the way the chart displays is so that children will develop the conscience that is part of the fabric of faithfulness. They will develop a sense of personal standards and an understanding of pride in a task well done. They will understand that the personal integrity in their private lives should be just like the personal integrity in their lives as leaders or members of groups. They will develop a sense of responsibility to others that leads them to keep promises and confidences. And they will come to understand how their hopes and dreams for the future, while faithful to those who have gone before, allow them to engage their imaginations critically and transformatively.⁵⁴

Striving to have these consciences will encourage children to develop hope, which is a positive, realistic vision of the future that allows them to dream and to take positive steps toward that dream. They will be encouraged to develop love that draws their focus away from themselves and leads them into actions of care for others. And knowing that God holds the future, children will be encouraged to believe in a reliable future that allows constructive actions to go forward.

Once a month plan a special family dinner honoring people you admire. Each family member must come to the dinner prepared to tell about a person, living or dead, who they admire and must explain why they admire that person. One month the person, who might be a child or an adult, might be a character from the Bible. Another month it might be a colleague or classmate, someone from history, someone in your church, someone in your community, or someone who stuck their neck out to help someone else even though they, themselves, might be hurt in the process. This dinner might end in a family prayer, each thanking God for the person they admire.

Children and their bodies

Communication about character and morals also involves decisions about our bodies. Much has been written about Christian parents and their perspectives on children's sexuality. But, we have found that the emphasis Christians put on abortion, homosexuality and sex before

marriage sometimes obscures very real issues that their children deal with on a day to day basis.

We live in unusual times. Both girls and boys enter puberty earlier than ever before. It is not unusual to see the signs of beginning puberty in children as early as seven or eight. No one knows just why this is true. Some pediatricians think that early onset of puberty is related to obesity while others say it is more likely caused by environmental factors. However, BBC News on June 28, 2005 reported that Professor Roberto Salti's group in Florence, Italy, showed that children denied access to television viewing for just one week had a 30% increase in melatonin, a hormone thought to prevent early onset of puberty. "Our hypothesis is that the light and radiation coming from exposure to television screens, and computer screens, disturbs this production of the hormone," said Salti. Salti believes that frequent television viewing is only one of many factors causing early onset of puberty.

Early entry into puberty also means early awareness of sexual desires. Add to that the sexual content and violence of many television shows and movies and we cannot help but understand that many children are growing up in a difficult, if not unhealthy, environment.

Society adds its own pressures. There is pressure for girls to be extremely thin, in spite of the fact that there is a great deal of information about the dangers of anorexia and bulimia. In addition to the normal stress of growing up, through television shows such as *Extreme Makeover* and magazines of all kinds our young adolescents are bombarded with the idea that they should do all they can to make themselves as physically beautiful as possible, according to present-day societal norms. Teenage girls are having plastic surgery to reshape their faces and enlarge their breasts, even before they have completed their growth.

There is pressure on adolescent boys who are athletic to build muscle very early, sometimes inappropriately so. Boys are hurting their bodies more seriously than in the past because they play the same sports continuously and play them year-round, allowing themselves no time to recover. Sports doctors now are seeing injuries in young adolescents that they used to see only in older players.

"Not my children"

It is very easy for Christian parents to believe that while other young adolescents are troubled by sexual questions and might even be involved in sexual activity, that would not be true of their own children. A recent survey of 2510 seventh and eighth grade students in Christian schools

across North America asked the students what questions they had that they didn't dare to ask any adult. Some of their responses concerned sexual matters.

- Do girls think about guys every second like guys do?
- Do girls think about the same things we do when they see us?
- Do you think it is good to have a girlfriend in middle school?
- How do you tell a boy, “no”?
- Can you lose your virginity by oral sex and other things?
- Did Jesus ever get an erection; wet dreams?
- Does God make people gay? If so, why?
- God says not to have sex before marriage, does that include all the things leading to it too?
- How far is too far to go with a guy?
- Is fingering a girl a sin? Is masturbating a sin? Is kissing a sin? Is hugging a sin?
- Is it right for girls and boys to be kissing at the age?
- Is oral sex before marriage ok? I mean it's not sex.
- Should teenagers be able to kiss each other or should we wait?
- Why do some people choose to have pre-marital sex?
- Why is sex bad before marriage?
- Why is sex before marriage so forbidden by God?
- Would God accept me in heaven if I have sex before marriage?
- How can I judge my friends not so I'm sinning but so I know if they are Christian or not?
- How old do you think a good age is to get married when you are a Christian?
- Should we date in 8th grade?
- When is the right age for Christian teenagers to start dating?
- Why are there groups that people exclude you from?
- Why did God give me such a broken family?

- Why do girls normally hold grudges for little things when a guy will just brush it off?
- Why do people care so much about looks and popularity?
- Why do some people in my Christian school think I'm “gay” Just because I'm new?
- Would you tell on your friend who's doing something bad, and get them in big trouble?
- If you're raped and become pregnant, should you carry on with the [pregnancy] because abortion is wrong?
- Is there any hope left in this world and why does God put up with us?
- Is there hope when you have done something you aren't proud of? Where can I find it?

Clearly young adolescents raised in Christian families are little different in their questions and concerns from other young people.

Our young people really do want answers. Who should provide them? When asked whether parents or teachers should address these questions with young people, most Christian parents say it is their own task and they want to do it. Even having said that, however, it is surprising how many parents fail to discuss these matters with their son or daughter. It seems to be an extremely embarrassing topic.

Parents sometimes ask us to recommend a good book on human sexuality that will answer their child's questions. It is difficult for us to do so because every book and every internet site with this kind of information is written from a particular view concerning human sexuality. *The Good Sex* curriculum is a Christian approach by Jim Hancock and Kara Powell. It is a book and video series that is often used with youth groups, published by Zondervan. In addition, the following books might be considered:

For parents:

- *How to Talk to Your Kids About Really Important Things: For Children Four to Twelve* by Charles Schaefer, and Theresa DiGeronimo. This book is intended to help parents organize their thoughts about how to talk with their children about tough issues. Topics include divorce, violence, drug abuse, AIDS, homosexuality, prejudice, puberty, sex, and death. Charles Schaefer is also the author of *How to Talk to Teens About Really Important Things: Specific Questions and Answers and Useful Things to Say*.

- *How to Talk With Teens About Love, Relationships and Sex* by Amy and Charles Miron. This is a delightful book full of practical advice concerning ways to discuss topics that might be embarrassing to both parents and their children. The authors write openly and comfortably as they share their expertise so that you can be the expert your young adolescents come to for answers.

For Pre-teens and Teenagers:

- *The teen body book: A guide to your changing body* by Judie Lewellen. This book provides teens with a great deal of information about the way the body functions, nutrition, exercise, and sexual matters. The author refrains from passing moral judgments and considers that the task of parents and teachers.
- *What's Happening to My Body? A growing up guide for parents and daughters* and *What's Happening to My Body? A growing up guide for parents and sons* by Lynda Madaras, and Area Madaras – These are two excellent books for young adolescents. The authors clearly know the questions and concerns of that age group and are sensitive to the fact that parents have differing opinions concerning what is right or wrong concerning masturbation and other sexual practices.
- *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* by Ruth Bell – This book was written by the authors of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. The authors interviewed many teenagers and their responses appear in the book. The book contains a great deal of information about all aspects of sexuality, including sexual technique, STDs, sexual identity, and the danger of promiscuous sex. Some parents may be offended by the frank discussions and will disagree with the author's position.

Of course parents will want to read these recommended books first to make certain that the books reflect the values that they are teaching at home.

Discussion Questions

1. How was your own conscience developed?
2. Do you agree with the parents who said that it is the task of the parents to explain human sexuality to their children?
3. If parents feel shy or ill-equipped to explain such matters to their children, where might they get help?
4. Is it ever the task of teachers to explain human sexuality to students?
5. What are some of the dangers in letting children get their information about sexuality from books and from friends?

Ripening towards Contentment: Growing Gratitude

by Judith Palpant

“Gratitude is the mother of all virtues.”

– G.K. CHESTERTON –

As the old saying goes: “When mama ain’t happy, nobody’s happy.” Well, I wasn’t happy. The year was 1980 and we had moved half way around the world to serve as medical missionaries with the Quakers in western Kenya. Upon arriving at our destination, we learned that they changed our assigned post to a more rural mission hospital. My husband Sam felt overwhelmed as the only doctor without proper equipment or colleagues to consult, and I struggled to meet the needs of my family in the style of my grandmothers—without refrigerator, hot water, washing machine, reliable plumbing or electricity. We felt like we’d ventured far, very far, out on a limb for God and He cut it off, letting us free fall through the air with three small children in tow.

Early one morning, during our first week there, I spent some time with my Bible and journal. I looked out the window at the small guava tree next to the porch. Our six year-old son Ben and three year-old daughter Andrea liked climbing its branches with the neighbor children, picking guavas and calling out their first Bukusu words. One lady asked, “Do you know what your children are shouting?” “No,” I replied. She tactfully informed me, “They are swearing in Bukusu!” They were obviously picking up more than the odd guava to eat.

Despite this kind of frustrating incident with our kids, they ended up saving us from self-pity and depression. On one occasion when my husband Sam cried, prone on the floor, his three munchkins crawled over him totally oblivious to the confusion and frustration their dad felt at the time. They lived eagerly and slept peacefully unlike their parents who greeted both morning and evening with dread. I moved from diaper to diaper even as Sam moved from patient to patient.

That morning, as I reflected on the state of our family, I paged through my journal. My eye fell on this Scripture: “He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.” (Psalm 50:23 NIV) Yes. I could choose to thank God despite everything. I would bake a cake for my family. I searched through the well worn *Jungle Cook Book* given to me by a retired missionary from South America. Opening it, my eye fell on a quote from George Washington: “Actions, not words, are the true characteristic mark of the

attachment of friends.” What actions would make friends here? I pondered as I stirred an egg into the batter.

That evening I presented my trophy to the family. Void of frosting, this simple cake celebrated our safe arrival. Before serving it, I suggested we sing the song “O Thank You Lord,” and fill in the blank with our own thanksgiving. “My first trip to the market,” I said. “Seeing the Milky Way and Southern Cross,” added Sam. “My bed!” chimed Ben when his turn came. My heart ached remembering the sturdy bunk bed his dad built him in Tucson. How could he be thankful for a hospital mattress on the floor?

One week later a barefoot boy turned up on our doorstep. In broken English, he introduced himself as Juma. He handed a small parcel to Ben who removed the brown paper and uncovered four blackened sweet potatoes, freshly dug from hot coals. The giver peeled off the skins and ate the white potato meat with his fingers. He motioned for us to join him in the feast. Health hazards flashed briefly across my mind as I instructed my children to imitate him. We savored the warm, unsalted, unbuttered, un-sugared sweet potatoes. Then off Juma ran. We never saw him again. Perhaps this raggedy, barefoot angel-unawares delivered a simple, sacrificial gift to awaken me from my cramped survival mode. I lifted my eyes, so riveted on our problems up until now, to see the picturesque valley with sugar cane fields stretching to the horizon and luminous sunsets silhouetting acacia trees.

Over time our routine life and sense of community rooted us in western Kenya. We grew to appreciate the people and the place. During the mornings I home-schooled the children and in the afternoons we spent an hour with patients, taking them reading material and conversing with them. Hospital visitation became a kind of curriculum of service for the kids and part of our integration into the community. They liked seeing their dad in action and the patients enjoyed seeing children. On the wards we often ran into Henry Munika, a volunteer chaplain and widower. His lung disease left him perpetually breathless, forcing him to walk laboriously, leaning on his cane for support. In spite of his severe disease, he often brought his contagious joy into our home while sipping a cup of tea after making hospital rounds.

One Saturday we drove to his home. Willowy eucalyptus trees brushed our little Ford Escort as its tires crawled up and over boulders and along the rutted cow path. At the sound of our car, Henry stepped out of his small cement block house and greeted us, exuding hospitality despite his deep loneliness as a widower with children grown and gone. We walked past his wife's grave as we entered his home. A black and white kitten mewed in the corner.

While the children petted the kitten, Henry found makeshift places for us to sit. He hacked a stalk of sugar cane into three portions and served it up to the kids, much to their delight. Ben, Andrea and Nathan presented Henry with drawings they made earlier that day especially for him. I gave him the loaf of bread we baked together along with some tea leaves and sugar.

That night, while I tucked Ben into bed, we talked about our time with Henry. "Mom, I wish I could give Henry everything I have," said Ben. "I wish we could keep him company." I assured him, "Henry owns little but is rich spiritually. God will never leave or forsake him." Ben prayed earnestly for Chaplain Henry who so generously gave of his time and energy to serve the patients. Then Ben added thanksgiving for his sister and brother, mother and father, for his bed, toys and books. I kissed him good night.

Leaving the bedroom, my mother heart thanked God for the opportunities afforded my children in Lugulu, Kenya: giving and receiving, living and loving. Clearly, the people we came to serve gifted us with perspective and understanding. Time and again, interacting with them helped us take less for granted. We always received more than we gave and in the process, we ripened towards a spiritual contentment we never expected during those early difficult days. East Africa provided fertile ground for growing gratitude, the fountainhead of virtues.

Chapter 10

Lifelong Learning in the Fabric of Faithfulness

G: Julia, when you were six years old I was watching you sitting in the bathtub with bubbles up to your neck. You were staring into space. I said, “What are you doing?” You answered, “I’m thinking. I’m thinking about my thinking. Isn’t that funny?” I said, “What is it like to think about your thinking?” You answered, “I can’t tell you but I can show you.”

You jumped out of the tub, dried off, and put on your pajamas. Then you ran to the refrigerator and took out a box of Velveeta processed cheese. It had a picture of a native American girl holding a cheese box with a picture of a girl holding a cheese box, and so on. You said, “That’s what it’s like. You don’t know how far in it goes.”

One of the greatest gifts God has given to humankind is the gift of curiosity. God has made us to be very curious because the more we wonder about ourselves, about our thinking, and about this great creation around us, the more we will want to study and learn. We come to know God, in part, by learning about ourselves and about the world God gave us for our home. The more we know about ourselves and our world the greater will be our desire to care for our own bodies and for our world, which is something God has commanded us to do.

We make a mistake if we ever imply to our children that learning begins and ends in school. All of life is learning, at every age, whether or not we are in school. If we humans are to be all that God created us to be, then surely we will want to continue learning throughout our lives.

Lifelong learning often means changing our minds

Learning to think is not the greatest difficulty in becoming lifelong learners. Our greatest difficulty comes, rather, from giving up our old ways of thinking.

Throughout childhood and into adulthood we are constantly trying to make sense of the world. Unfortunately, making sense is not the same thing as being correct. In *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People’s*, Gardner describes the kinds of theories that children and young people develop on their own.

- Intuitive theories of matter: Heavier objects fall to the ground more rapidly than lighter objects.
- Intuitive theories of life: If it is moving, it is alive. If it is still, it is dead. If it eats, it is an animal.

- Intuitive theories of mind: All organisms have minds. The more that they resemble us in outward appearance, the more their minds are like ours. When you talk to a monkey or dog, that animal is far more likely to understand you than a fish or snake would be able to.
- Intuitive theories of human relations: Individuals who are big are powerful. It is desirable to be on their side. If you can’t seize power yourself, align yourself with those who wield power.⁵⁵

We learn to correct some of our own theories very easily. Young children are convinced that tall people or fat people are older than short or thin people, and easily correct that theory themselves.

G: When missionary speakers came to speak at our rural church in Emden, Minnesota my parents often invited them to our farm home for dinner. I remember one particular woman who was quite heavy-set. Driving back to church after dinner, she and my parents were in the front seat of the car and all of us five children were in the back. My mother and the missionary were discussing their ages when suddenly, from the back seat, I said, “Mom, how can you be older than she is? She is so much fatter than you.” My ribs were black and blue for days resulting from my older sister’s fierce poke.

Other theories children make for themselves have a certain plausibility and it is very difficult to help them understand the truth. Remember when you thought that lightning caused thunder? Lightning is often followed by thunder and certainly seems, on logical grounds, to cause it. Even though you now understand the relationship between lightning and thunder, you still might flinch when you hear thunder’s loud crack.

As adults, the theories we make for ourselves are extremely difficult to change, in part because they are usually closely tied to our emotions. They are even more difficult to change if we have made a public commitment to them. People with more authoritarian personalities, with a more absolutist approach to life, are even more likely to cling to the theories they have made for themselves. But if we are to continue learning throughout our lives, we must be willing to correct our theories and ways of thinking as we gain additional information.

What are the characteristics of people who continue learning throughout their lives?

There has been a great deal written about adults who continue to learn well on into their later years. Some people believe that being interested in learning throughout life is a characteristic with which one is born. Others say a zest for lifelong learning develops because of events that happen in one's family, community or school experiences and therefore can, to some extent, be learned. Both are, to some extent, correct. It surely is easier to become a lifelong learner if one is born with a particular proclivity for doing so. And it also is easier to become a lifelong learner if one is raised in an environment in which people express their own curiosity about things.

When they studied 1500 learners for the purpose of discovering characteristics of effective lifelong learners, Ruth Deakin-Crick and others identified the following

1. Effective learners know that through practice their minds can get stronger, just as their bodies can. They gain pleasure and self-esteem from knowing things.
2. Effective learners love to see connections between what they are learning and what they already know.
3. Effective learners love to challenge what they are being told and ask questions because they are curious.
4. Effective learners admit when they don't know something and like a challenge. They know that learning is sometimes difficult and can readily recover from the frustration of making mistakes.
5. Effective learners like playing with ideas and using their imagination.
6. Effective learners like to share their difficulties in learning with others so that they can learn from them.
7. Effective learners know that there are other people around them in the wider community who can help them learn.

Deakin-Crick and her colleagues found the following in less effective learners:

1. Less effective learners tend to think that people are either smart or dumb and there isn't much one can do about it. They don't like to admit their confusion or mistakes. They don't value

challenging situations as opportunities to learn more.

2. Less effective learners depend on other people for their sense of self as a learner. They prefer specific rules or assignments that tell them exactly what to do.
3. Less effective learners give up easily.
4. Less effective learners often do not have strong learning homes, families, and communities to support their learning.⁵⁶

We must not confuse becoming an effective lifelong learner or thinker with becoming an avid reader. Among the many famous people who have had serious difficulty with reading are: Winston Churchill, David Boies, Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, Anthony Hopkins, John Irving, and Agatha Christie. There are people who speak of the "gift of dyslexia" because it allowed and forced them to think in new and creative ways. Certainly these people can be characterized as lifelong learners in spite of their reading or spelling difficulties.

Even young adolescents who read well may find learning from other sources easier than learning from reading. We live in such a fast-paced world and are constantly bombarded with newly discovered information. In such a world, children need to come to understand the important place learning must have throughout their lives. The ability to learn how to learn is one of the most important ways we have of coping with this world. Children who develop skills for life-long learning will carry with them the resilience, creativity, critical curiosity, learning awareness, and interdependence they will need in order to continue to grow in knowledge about this world God has given us.

How can parents encourage their children to become effective lifelong learners?

Think back to what was said about tendencies. A tendency is something that one does without thinking. A tendency begins with a commitment that arises from a worldview. The tendency is a response to that commitment, practiced over and over, until it becomes part of one's self. It is a commitment to a particular action that is practiced so often it becomes as natural as breathing.

There are especially wise teachers who understand that the way they ask questions on a test can lead students into lifelong learning. Here are two examples of such questions.

Think of yourself as one of the following:

- a) A parent 25 years from now (with school-age children wanting to watch T.V, go to movies, and listen to music) deciding what your little ones should or shouldn't be exposed to; or
- b) A university/college student living on your own having to decide on what TV, which movies, and which music is appropriate for you as a disciple of Christ.

Develop a statement and/or method by which you can ensure that all involved can live in obedience, and participate in the world without being worldly. What will be called appropriate, and what is inappropriate? (Stephen Janssen, grade 7-8 teacher, Knox Christian School, Bowmanville, ON)

At the end of the second semester in grade eight, we give our students this assignment. "Plan and develop a project that will integrate your Christian faith with what you have learned in all of your subjects during the past year." Then for three days they are in the auditorium with glue guns, paper, and all kinds of materials. The project must be completed in school to make certain that it is the student's own work. At the end of the three days the student must present the project to teachers and parents, describing the integration that it represents. (Jim Vos, Sylvan Christian School, Grand Rapids, MI)

Thinking about how lifelong learning tendencies develop, we suggest the following ways of encouraging lifelong learners.

- Show that you value learning by saying, "Do you know what I learned today?" After telling about what you have learned explain why you thought it was so interesting. If possible, describe how learning that new information changed, to some extent, your earlier thinking.
- Encourage your children to think about their own thinking by asking questions such as:
Did you always think that was true?
What made you change your mind?
If such-and-such happened, what would you think then?

Consider having a practice that on two evenings a week each child will come to the dinner table ready to tell about an event they read about in a newsmagazine or in the newspaper. Follow that up with questions such as, "Why do you think that happened? What do you think might happen next?" Avoid giving a lecture about the topic even though you know much more about it than your child does. Especially avoid having the dinner conversation turn into a political argument. This is a time for conversation during which you respect each other's information and points of view.

- Talk with admiration about an adult who is always curious and eager to know more. Make sure it is someone your children know.
- Read the questions on your children's test papers to see whether teachers expect the class to do only short-term thinking leading the student to ask, "How much do I have to memorize for this test?" Check to see whether teachers encourage long-term thinking by asking questions that are open-ended. "Pretend that you are an advisor to President Truman during the last days of WWII. The president is trying to decide whether or not to use the atomic bomb on Japan. What information will you give the president to help him decide what to do?" If your child's school does not do this, avoid criticizing but encourage this kind of questioning on your own.
- Talk with your children's teachers to learn what they are doing to encourage thinking and lifelong learning. Ask whether they have ideas that will help you toward the same goal at home.
- When your child comes up with misinformation or information that is not complete, rather than explaining why it is incorrect, ask questions. On what did they base that information? Why is that a competent source? Can you think of another side to the question?

Learning from others

As college professors one of the great delights we experience is learning new things from our students. The following is a Baccalaureate address that Julia gave at Whitworth University at the close of the Lives

of Commitment grant. We end the project with this piece because it expresses what we hope will be true for all of us. Living in the fabric of God's faithfulness is a challenge and a blessing. We do not always see clearly what God has in store for us, but we live in the promise of God's love and grace.

Baccalaureate Address, Whitworth University, 2006

I've been thinking about this homily for a long time—considering all the different Biblical texts we might reflect on—considering parables and different commandments, and finally, the end result, is both the most simple and most profound commands:

Love God
Love your neighbor
Do justice
Love God, love your neighbor, do justice

This is our task and I don't have much to add—so I'm going to share with you three things that God has taught me about these commands. And they are interesting because God used these students to teach me these simple, yet profound, lessons.

First—all of us are called to love our neighbor and to do justice. Our love for the weak, the poor, the hungry is the evidence that we belong to Christ. In a busy life we can get quite caught up in paying mortgages, raising children, paying back student loans—but we may never lose sight of the fact that loving God and loving our neighbor is our greatest task.

Trevor Osborne is a student I've gotten to know just over this past year. He's a business major and a soccer player—two things that would normally put him outside of my direct orbit. But, we've been talking this year about faith. Trevor is a new Christian and I've been interested in how an adult with a critical, challenging intellect makes a decision to leap into faith. Trevor told me that he read the Bible. I, wanting to be sure he read the right parts, asked "What did you read?"

"Well" he said "I read the whole thing."

"So," I asked, "what did you think?"

We agreed that there was a lot of violence and sex and judgment in the Scriptures. But, said Trevor, the main thing, when you read all the way through, the main thing is love.

Trevor reads the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats: Matthew 25

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

As I've listened to you students, over the years, it's been interesting to hear how you will use your different talents to respond to God's command in this parable.

Some will start businesses that hire people on the margins or that support the work of justice groups in your community.

Some will use physics to develop infrastructure so that poor communities are less devastated by natural disasters.

Some will develop skills in plastic surgery or dentistry to fix the mouths of children without insurance.

Some will use political or legal skills to work on behalf of those who suffer.

Some will use art to inspire, to heal or to provoke us into thinking about our calling.

Some will be coaches to kids without resources; some will be good neighbors to kids down the block without loving parents.

You've taught me that all are called; and you've taught me that all can respond in different ways.

The second thing I've learned from you is that experience changes us. God calls us to serve the poor because they suffer but God also calls us to stand with the weak, to learn from them. And, we cannot empathize or learn from others until we walk with them in the world.

Last January I studied urban poverty with a group of students. We started in Spokane and then went to Chicago. In Chicago we stayed in this awful place—it was a rehabbed SRO or single-residence-occupancy. Some students had dirty sheets; we were on the 8th floor, and there were holes in the walls of my room. I stared up at the holes, worrying about mice dropping down on my head. I called my brother to ask “can mice climb to the 8th floor of a building?” He said, “There are no mice in Chicago—the rats ate them all.” I spent that whole night planning ways to get the students and myself back to Spokane early.

The next morning I met the students in the hallway and they were downright chipper. I was amazed. Crissy Greenberg was there and she said to me “we were all miserable last night, but we talked and we decided that we are here to study poverty, so we will be grateful for a roof over our heads. We have it better than a lot of people we will be meeting.” And another student said “I talked to my mom and she said to suck it up.” So, I sucked it up too, and we were all better for it.

Experience can also teach us about God. A few years ago we started the Whitworth Street Kid project, partnering with Cup of Cool Water, started by Whitworth alum Mark Terrell. There are hundreds and hundreds of teenagers living on the streets of Spokane, and Whitworth students work to bring them food and build relationships with them, demonstrating the love of Christ.

Katie Stephens has worked with the project for four years. She wrote this poem about her experiences with poor children in both Spokane and Central America.

“Mama for a Day”

We arrived and they came running
Clinging to our arms

Trying to feel another person's loving touch
A touch that wouldn't abuse them

15,13,11 and 7 years of age
so tough, yet so vulnerable
eyes questioning and full of pain

They smoke glue to try and forget their living conditions,
But that doesn't put food in their hungry stomachs

Alone, destitute, the street are all they know
Shining shoes or asking for money
Selling souvenirs and gum
Begging has become their profession

They ask me what the U.S. is like
And want my watch for a gift
One little boy asks me for water,
Even though right now it's in abundance

Many have families,
But were still on the street
I wonder what will happen when they leave
And what they will call home

Then I see one little boy and he points at me and says,
“She's my sister”

I smile and then he pauses and says,
“No ella, ella es mi mama”

I will proudly wear that title
For they long to belong
To be loved and cherished
Part of a community where they are taken care of
They are the lost, ignored, abandoned children
Smelly, unkept, misbehaved
He is their Heavenly Father
Who loves and cherishes His Creation

Who will we be to them?

– by Katie Stephens, 2006

Finally, the third lesson I have learned, is that we do not have to achieve a just world. We only have to be obedient. Our world is broken, but redeemed—so we live in hope that God will use our work to achieve results that God ordains. God fixes the world; we are hands and feet.

We can know this, but we need to be reminded.

This past February I was sad and depressed about my work. It seemed that nothing I was doing was working out very well. We were running out of money for the Street Kid Program and it felt like nothing we did seemed to make a difference. Then, one day I was in my office and I received a phone call from the vice-president of the senior class. He told me that the seniors this year had decided to give their senior gift of several thousand dollars to the Street Kid Program. Suddenly, we were back in business and it felt like God has spoken to us with encouragement.

That same week, Crissy came to see me and we talked about frustrations of trying to follow God's call in life when the pathway doesn't always seem to be very clear. Later that day, she sent me a passage from Archbishop Oscar Romero, an El Salvador priest who had been assassinated after years of working on behalf of his country's poor. This passage had been sent to her by our chaplains Terry McGonigal and Andy Saccoccio on a day when she had been discouraged about her work. Crissy and I decided it was nice symmetry that the chaplains would send it to her, she would send it to me and I'd share it with you.

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a small fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about: We plant the seeds that will one day grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it well. It may be incomplete but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

— ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO OF EL SALVADOR (1917-1980) —

Discussion Questions

1. How do you demonstrate to your children that you value a curious mind and learning new things?
2. Can you think of something that you used to think and now know is incorrect? What happened to make you change your mind?
3. What are ways in which you work for justice in the world? What are the frustrations you face?

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