

Matthew 19: 13-15 The little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.



Parents have the amazing opportunity to bring their children close to Jesus so that they can learn who he is and connect with him. Jesus wants us to do this.

Ask yourself: how am I bringing my children close to Jesus so they can see him, hear him, feel him and come to know him?

Judges 13: 8, 12 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: " O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born...So Manoah asked him," When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?"

Ask yourself: am I praying to understand how to parent my child(ren)? Am I asking advice of experienced, spiritual people around me?

Deuteronomy 6: 5-9 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Ask yourself: am I loving God with all of me? How much am I bringing God and his Word into our daily lives? What kind of impression is being made on the children?

We hope to bring helpful encouragement weekly to parents as you strive to do these things in 2020. Let us know if there are particular things you would like reflections about! We also plan to supply some ideas for family devotionals.

Love,
Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

Mark 10: 13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.



Jesus wants to bless and encourage children. He also wants to encourage parents! So many forces can push against your efforts to have a spiritual home and to influence your child toward God. Jesus is cheering for you and is indignant when you are being hindered. None of us can do this role of being a parent without Jesus' help every step of the way.

This week's reflection question: How do we help our children see, hear, and get to know Jesus better?

Let's start with Jesus' example here:

Jesus focused on each individual child. You can picture Jesus taking each of them into his arms, one by one, and talking with them. This indicates that Jesus took into consideration the developmental stage of a child.

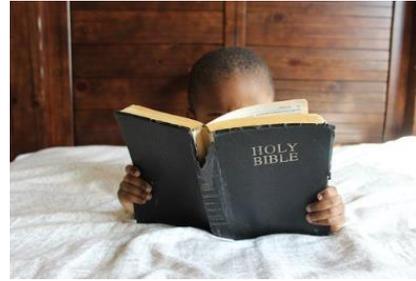
Below are three developmental stages to consider when helping our children get to know Jesus better.

- When our children are young, this is easier to do. They demand attention as babies and toddlers nearly constantly. You can get physically exhausted at this stage and need to pray for the endurance to continue to be grateful and attentive. But they clearly are looking for you and drinking in your attention. This bonding is vital to prepare the child's ability to bond to God one day.
- As they get into grade school years, it is easier to miss that individual time with them. They are more independent (and need to learn to be) so it may seem that your attention isn't as crucial, but it is. Key moments of the day that are opportune times for that one on one, even for just 5-10 minutes are: before leaving for school, returning from school, dinnertime, and bedtime. Getting additional one on one is worth aiming for on a weekly basis. Going for an ice cream, taking a walk, shooting hoops... the possibilities are endless and ideally tailored to what they like to do. The talking comes easier if this is the habit in your relationship.
- As they get into middle school/ high school, your earlier efforts will pay off because you will have established how much you treasure the relationship. Their schedules often become dominated by friends, schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and jobs. This is when you will really need to deny yourself and make the time to drive them, encourage them to have friends over, and make real efforts to carve out weekly time. The more regular one on one the better. And bedtime can still be an intimate time to give that individual "emotional and relationship" check-in daily.

Don't get caught up in what you didn't do in a particular day or week but focus on what you can do going forward. Jesus supports you.

Love,
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“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” -Jesus



Obedience is a learned trait. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child. If our children do not learn obedience to authority as a child, they will pay dearly as a young adult. Parents will as well. And even more so it will be difficult for children not taught obedience to obey God’s Word later in life.

Therefore, where do we start? As parents we must start with our own obedience to the Word!

Ephesians 6:4 teaches that it is a dad’s responsibility to bring up the children in the training and instruction of the Lord. The Greek here is *paideia* from the Greek *paideuo* (where Star Wars got its “*paduon*” term?).

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

An important note is that dads are not to exasperate their children in that training. This can be a challenge since many dads have not seen this in their home as they were growing up.

- Maybe your dad was absent or was harsh or unapproachable.
- Perhaps they did not teach or believe in God.

This is where God’s family or church can help! Finding a mentor that can help teach a dad how to obey Ephesians 6:4 is very valuable.

For the moms, you may have times where dad is absent, and you will feel the need to step into that role. You are not alone. The church is here to support you and mentor you. ***Please ask for the help.***

As a dad, what do I do?

- ❖ First, pray and even fast to embrace this role in your life. Ask, seek, and knock for the right attitude (Matt 7:7).
- ❖ Secondly, pray with your wife and talk over how you can develop a unified approach to teaching, training and instructing the kids. Ask advice from others that have done this.
- ❖ Thirdly, be willing to carve out the time daily to train and instruct in the Lord. Try to get the children to talk daily. This is a real challenge but the investment in one on one and family time makes this possible.
- ❖ Lastly, here are some ideas for time: drive them to school and pick them up, have family devos, tuck into bed at night with pillow talk and prayer, father/daughter dates, father/son camping or projects, mom/daughter shopping or coffee, mom/son special time, read books together, support their adventures in school/sports/activities, host friends coming over, host church preteen or teen events, meet their friends and their families. Ask about highs/lows of the day. Be open about your life in an age appropriate way.

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

“Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”
II Timothy 1:4-5



Paul opens his second letter to Timothy expressing the strong emotional connection they shared. How wonderful that Paul knew Timothy enough to know how his faith had been cultivated by his mother and grandmother! As we were reminded in our last letter to you, fathers have been given the charge to make sure that the children are brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

This goal is fully accomplished by the participation and spiritual effort of the mothers. Clearly these women were the nurturers that helped Timothy come to faith. Every mother today has that same opportunity: to teach their sons and daughters about God.

This passage even implies that Timothy may not have had a believing father, but that didn't keep him from finding the faith. This is important encouragement since fathers may struggle in their faith. Mothers need to feel the support from God that they can and should continue to teach and influence their children. They will be able to see, hear, feel, and come to understand who God is through all who are faithful in their lives, whether father or mother.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” II Timothy 3:14-15

The scriptures must be shown to our children for them to have a chance at faith.

Isn't it interesting to hear Paul mention how Timothy had "from infancy known the holy Scriptures"? Why does the Bible appeal to children?

- ✚ The Bible is full of amazing stories about people and events that capture the imagination of children of very young age. There are heroes and villains and struggles with good and evil.
- ✚ The Bible is filled with love stories, great adventures and big blunders.
- ✚ The Bible has so much to share about creation and the miracles of God.

There is so much wonder to share about our God! Don't let your children miss out on awe of God and appreciation of those who follow Him. They will feel your childlike fascination as you get into it together.

This amazing Bible about an amazing God then can become our children's counselor as they explore as an older child, preteen, and teen the various truths about themselves as people. It can become their guide to life and relationship. The scriptures can be equally powerful to stoke that inner imagination of who they want to become. Ultimately the scriptures can make them "wise for salvation" in Christ.

This week's reflection question: How much do you yourself share time together in the Bible with your children?

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

Romans 8:26

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”



Having children is one of the greatest joys we can experience. God himself sings for joy over his children throughout the scriptures! As a parent, you also know that your children are so precious to you that little else will evoke fear, pain, even panic more than your children and concerns over them.

When Kelly was a new father, he had a lunch with another minister and took our daughter, Audrey, when she was still a small baby in the car seat. He carefully put her in the back seat, buckled her in and then forgot her as a new father when they entered the restaurant. After some time, he suddenly realized his error and ran to the car AND AUDREY WAS GONE. Kelly never before had feelings like that moment! God mercifully had allowed a nearby shopper notice our daughter crying in the car and had taken her to protect her. She wagged her finger at my poor husband and called the police! He felt the back seat of the car for years following that event. *The fear of danger to our children is powerful.*

This concern is a God-given gift to us as parents. It helps us pay attention to where our child is, who is around them, what influences vie for their attention and a myriad of other things that impact their wellbeing.

For example, our children, when they got old enough, wanted to have sleep overs with friends. We sought advice from wise and experienced parents around us. The message was clear that even something as innocuous as a sleepover party can have serious ramifications if the wrong people were present. So, we adopted the attitude that we said yes to such invitations only with the strictest care. This would frustrate our kids at times but we balanced that against the troubles that could happen without that vigilance. Our encouragement is that you think carefully too.

Our theme scripture, Romans 8:26, is one that we feel sums up the prayer life of a parent.

How we need the Spirit to help us in our weakness! We need God's wisdom to know what is important in our children's lives.

- ✚ We can sense things about our children but feel clueless as to what they specifically need.
- ✚ We wonder what they are feeling and how to help them feel the love of God.
- ✚ We want to train them but are not sure where to start. We can dream for their future but then see they are struggling now.

God hears our prayers. He hears the prayers in your quiet time AND the ones lifted to him in your distress. Our challenge to you this week: Turn your worry into prayer. The Spirit will carry those concerns to God's very heart.

Love,
Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”

Deuteronomy 4:9



In Deuteronomy 4, God (through Moses his servant) is speaking to Israel as they are coming to the completion of their wilderness journey. Only two of all those who came out of Egypt remain, Joshua and Caleb, while the rest of the people are buried in the wilderness. All the others, aged 40 and younger, are now poised to enter the Promised Land. Moses is summing up for them the plan God has for them: don't forget what you know and have lived AND teach it to your children. This is the same plan that he has for us!

Consider his first instruction to not forget what they had seen. Let's think about what they had seen if you were them.

- ❖ Perhaps you were old enough to remember being very thirsty because the water was bitter at Marah and the whole community was wailing. But then Moses cried out to God who let him heal the water with the piece of wood.
- ❖ You may remember the manna that came every morning that tasted like honey and how every seventh day the manna from the day before lasted just as God said it would.
- ❖ You may remember the angry complaining adults who attacked Moses about meat until the community was buried in quail.
- ❖ There was the ever-present cloud of smoke or pillar of fire.
- ❖ There were military victories.
- ❖ For certain, if old enough you would remember Mount Sinai and the Moses bringing the 10 commandments.
- ❖ Then followed the golden calf, the death of thousands, the sending of the 12 spies and the awful, wasteful rebellion of the leaders who wouldn't go into the promised land. And just as God had promised, not one remained but Joshua and Caleb. Now here you are after all those years ready to start anew.

We all have had our journey to experience God's faithfulness and to see the sad fruit of rebellion. We have so much to remember and to ponder in our hearts. God wants you to do that! *Ponder it, savor it, pray about the lessons from that experience to teach your heart to always be faithful to God, his word and his people no matter what life brings.*

Conviction that swells your heart can't help but be felt by your children. The second part of the plan, to teach your children, will be a compulsion for you rather than an afterthought. You will want them to hear stories about how God has been faithful to you and others you know. The things you share can be big (how you prayed and God sent someone to you to teach you about him for example) or seemingly small (like how you finally prayed to find the key and then you did). The point is that you are sharing a **LIVING** faith. God has been active in your life and he is active in theirs. You will teach faith because you have lived and are living faith.

Our thought for you is: Ponder in your heart the faith journey God has you on and share a living faith story with your children this week (and from here on).

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:3-4



These words from the letter to the church in Colossae are profound and glorious. A disciple's life is not the focus anymore. In fact, it is hidden away and not even considered until that day when Jesus appears. The minute by minute decisions of life are anchored by this attitude.

It is far easier to have Jesus a **“part of my life”** than **“my life”** in this world.

We are always being tested. Some of these tests come due to being a parent. As parents, we feel a pressure frequently to “do like everybody else” and some of the people who put the most pressure will be our kids.

The Twilight series was coming out just as our children were entering puberty. After a bit of investigation, we felt the stories were too sensual for their ages. That was a tough stand since so many mothers were reading the books and letting their children read them. There was whining about **“how come everybody else gets to”**. We had to resist caving or simply resorting to **“because I said so”**. It was important to do our best to speak to them about the books, why it was attractive to them and why we said no. We know that they likely went behind our backs and read some.

But that wasn't as important as the conversations we had to train them about the **“whys”** of our instruction:

- ✦ the nature of temptation
- ✦ the sinful nature we have
- ✦ the fight to not be drawn into patterns of sin
- ✦ and the beauty of sexual purity

The words were not flowery but honest. We had to share mistakes from our lives.

Sometimes, as parents we can want something so badly for our children that we think is important for them in the world, we can compromise on spiritual things like seeking the kingdom. Our son was in baseball through middle school and it was extremely competitive. He was selected for the all-star team of our town. The church summer camp fell right when a string of practices was scheduled to get ready for a game. We discussed this with him, and he was willing to miss the practices to be at camp. Kelly advised the coaches and then they approached him about how that would then cause our son to be kicked off the team. My husband (with our son's backing) said that was fine. But then an amazing thing happened: the coaches argued among themselves and invited him to stay on the team! This built our son's faith that if something is supposed to be, God will make it happen, but don't compromise on seeking the kingdom.

Our reflection question for you:

Are there worldly things that you are tempted to compromise over in your child's life?

If you want them to learn that Jesus is your life and what that means practically, you will need to resist that temptation. Take a step now to surrender whatever that is to God.

Parenting Reflections 8

February 23, 2020

“Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.”

Proverbs 13: 24



There was a study performed in a school yard where children played in a fenced playground with great joy and freedom. The fence was removed overnight. The next day when the children came out to play, the change in behavior was dramatic. They stayed quiet and huddled in the middle of the playground. The fence was restored overnight and the children, as you might have guessed, went back to the normal happy and free behavior.

Children want to know their boundaries. Though they will challenge the boundaries set for them, they really do want you to enforce them. Discipline is an expression of concern and love.

Effective discipline involves some key ingredients:

- ❖ The boundaries must be clear and taught. Discipline isn't based on feelings but principle.
- ❖ The boundaries must be consistent. No double standards (parents that includes you).
- ❖ The boundaries must be enforced consistently.
- ❖ Enforcement can look many ways, but the message must be clear that the boundary must be respected and obeyed. Parents must be unified.

What are some important boundaries? In our family, when the children were young, we had five things that were clearly outlined repeatedly and enforced regularly: no “fits”, no disobey, no hitting/kicking/biting/etc., no lying, and no disrespect.

Family devotional was the setting our children were taught these boundaries. We would pick a scripture to use to set the boundary we were teaching. We'd teach what it meant at the children's level. We would do “right way, wrong way” demonstrating the boundary and what it looked like to obey it. Family devotional accomplished A LOT quickly: everybody was hearing the boundary and questions were addressed about what it meant in a peaceful, non-confrontational atmosphere. “...**gracious words promote instruction (Prov 16:23)**”.

Consistent reminder of the boundary then was crucial. We would refer to the family devotional lesson frequently to do that. It was amazing to watch the change of attitude as the memory of the devotional appeared on their face. The family norm was reinforced regularly too by mom or dad applying the scripture to their life in full view of the kids. For example, mom could not “have a fit”, but would quote the scripture (Phil 2:14-15) out loud to herself in the hearing of the children. That consistency of application TO OURSELVES was very well received by our children and built respect for God's boundaries.

Our question for you this week: are you teaching the children the boundaries in a consistent way?

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd. University Church of Eugene

“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.”

Hebrews 12:10



Last letter, we explored how godly training and discipline of our children arises out of love and is directed by principle. Discipline of children has the goal of helping them learn God’s righteousness. By becoming parents, we’ve heard it said, God gives us the children we need for our personal growth.

As parents, we need to deal with our characters to be able to train our children.

Discipline is never rooted in the frustration or emotion of the parent. This understanding is crucial. Discipline is based on principle and is not a tool to act out in frustration toward our child because we are irritated. We must calm down and be in the right frame of mind before addressing our children to discipline them.

- ✓ **Discipline FOLLOWS teaching.** Teaching our children before any correcting safeguards them from feeling frustrated. Training our kids needs to be a high priority in our life. We need to discipline ourselves to think about what they need to be taught and then to plan the family devotionals they need.
- ✓ **Discipline should be timely.** Often children need disciplining at some of the most inconvenient times. We remember plenty of times where we were trying to finish some task, but the children needed to be addressed. Your children need you to discipline them even when it is inconvenient. It sends a clear message that they are important to you and so is their character. Dinner will get done; don’t miss the teachable moment.
- ✓ **Discipline needs to be consistent.** Don’t let laziness or favoritism corrupt your effort to discipline your children. You don’t want to become the issue for your kids. “How come sometimes you punish me but other times you don’t” or “You let my sister get away with that but not me.” As we pointed out earlier, God’s commands about character and relationships apply to everybody in the family.
- ✓ **Discipline should fit the principle that was breached.** One way to think about this is that the “punishment should fit the crime”. There will be certain things that merit a spanking in your family. But other things that withdrawal of a privilege is more appropriate. We made efforts to spell things out to our children, so they knew the boundaries and what to expect if broken.
- ✓ **Discipline is a process.** Don’t lose heart that it can seem that you are disciplining your children for the same thing repeatedly. Every parent will feel this at times. Don’t grow weary or lose heart! Consistent teaching and discipline are a long-term process. You won’t see fruit of your labor until oftentimes much later.

For reflection this week: what in your character needs to grow to train and discipline your children in a godly way?

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.”

Proverbs 22: 15.



We have three grown children. Sometimes together there is laughter when reminiscing about growing up in our home. Believe it or not, it is recounting stories about some of the times when they had to be disciplined that can lead to the belly laughing to the point of tears! And we aren't always the ones retelling the event; they often will remind each other!

Children really do have folly in their heart and they need loving, firm discipline. Our last couple of letters dealt with our hearts toward discipline. It is our responsibility. Our attitudes should be pure, not driven by emotion but principle, coming from a healthy awareness of God's wise commands and the need to train our children in a loving family environment. With this in place, we need to take on the mantle and act.

As mentioned earlier, we used “the rod”. We chose a wooden spoon and deliberately not our own hand. We outlined in family devotionals and the course of life the five things that could lead to spankings: “fits” (tantrums), disobeying, hitting/biting/etc., lying, and disrespect. The rod seemed appropriate for those offenses. We started spankings about 14 months or so and ended by age 8-9. These parameters were decided on with advice of other godly parents. You need to decide for your family and be united as parents.

A spanking was a sacred event and performed in a ritualistic way. All activities stopped and we did the following:

- ✚ The child was told that they had continued to ____ after being warned about their attitude or behavior.
- ✚ They were taken to a private place where they sat on our lap and we told them that they were going to get a spanking for ____.
- ✚ Usually there were tears and various forms of resistance right here, but we proceeded: diaper/panty off and 1-2 licks on each cheek with the “spanky spoon” were delivered with a measured cadence.
- ✚ Then the child was embraced, and we let them cry for a bit. Once calmed, we got to look them in the eyes and tell them that they were spanked because of ____.
- ✚ We would talk about stopping _____. We'd talk about how we love them, and God loves them and wants to help them. We'd remind them of a scripture related to _____.

By the end of the spanking there were mushy hugs and even sweet kisses.

There is much more to say about discipline besides spankings. But spankings are a godly part of the tools for training our children.

This week we leave you to ponder the thoughts from Proverbs 23:13-14 below.

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die. Punish them with the rod and save them from death.”

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.” Colossians 3: 23-24b



God has promised rewards to those who love and serve Him. This Colossians passage is just one of several examples. For inspirational fun in one of your Quiet Times look up the word “reward” and see what we mean. God has supplied plenty of incentive to persevere through the difficulties we face as we go about being disciples of Jesus.

Rewarding is part of God’s training program. We made efforts to tap into this tool in our family. When our children were in preschool and elementary school, we made “reward charts” where we listed their name and then their responsibilities for the next week. It could be: make bed, brush teeth, keep toys off floor, etc. Each day we reviewed and wrote a star by each task that was done. At the end of the week, if they had a certain number of stars for the week then there was a reward. It was effective for those kinds of things until they internalized the value of the action.

Honestly, we probably don’t think enough about God’s rewards. In our culture, instant gratification is the rule rather than patient perseverance. Since living the Christian life requires delayed gratification how can we train our children for the more difficult perseverance they will face?

A study was conducted in which a researcher had 4-year-old children sit alone in front of a chocolate chip cookie or a marshmallow. They were told that if they waited to eat the treat until the researcher came back, then they could have two of them. The cohort of children were followed over time and the ones who could resist had higher SAT scores, healthier body mass index, and lower risk of substance abuse in later life.

What does this mean for parenting? *We can set an example of patience in everyday interactions where we model the ability to wait.*

For example, how we treat each other at the dinner table while waiting to eat until all are served and have prayed together. Or demonstrating the patience to take the last turn in a game the family is playing. When our children see us be unselfish and patient, it sets a great example for them to follow.

What researchers also found was that the children who could resist did so by talking to imaginary friends, by singing to themselves, by playing with something else, or by sitting on their hands and looking away. They learned to distract themselves until it was time to receive the prize.

Ask yourself, until Jesus comes back, what do your children see in your home? Is there selfishness and lust for worldly comforts or is there a joy in being together, a focus on helping others, an effort to seek and save the lost, and a zeal to build up the church? The world is less tempting when a full life is lived by the family.

We leave you to reflect on the questions: How much delayed gratification do I live? Am I getting bitter about it? How can our family live that full life now as we wait for God’s rewards?

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17: 23b



Commercials on TV for ancestry information have statements like “*I want my kids to know they came from adventurous people.*” How about you? How would you complete the statement “*I want my kids to know ...*”? As we pondered this question, the answer we came up with was “*we want them to know God loves them so that they would love Him back!*”

This passage in John we usually associate with the lost world all around us. We think of how people in our community will see us love each other as Christians and come to faith in Jesus by seeing that love.

As they see us love each other, Jesus literally says that people in the world can believe in the Father’s love.

Do you realize that this scripture is true for our children too? **Our relationship with those in the church can help our children believe in God!** Please think about this for a moment. The way our children experience God’s love is partly through the unity that they experience with the family of disciples. When we understand this, our relationships with each other take on even greater import.

So how deep are your relationships with the other disciples? How intimately involved with other Christians are you and your family? As our children were growing up, we lived out our lives with other disciples. There was a rhythm of interaction that involved several days of the week. Sunday morning and lunch after church. Wednesday was midweek. Thursday was a family dinner followed by a Bible study with a non-Christian couple and other couples in the church joining in. There was some hang out time then on the weekend often with other families with children. We went through difficult times together and celebrated each other’s victories. There was middle of the night comforting of one another at the news of a parent’s death. Family vacations included time with other families.

There was a lot of being together. These same relationships continue to this day. While writing this I (Cheryl) just got a text from the group of disciples in Temecula, the last place we lived prior to moving to Oregon. We operated as each other’s extended family and these relationships have continued for us and our children to this day.

If we live as true family, our children taste a connectedness that surpasses what they see around them at school.

They open up to other adults and other kids in the church. Isolation is much less than the average experience of other’s their age. They learn that you can trust disciples. Ultimately, that trust translates to God.

We can destroy that trust as well. As parents, if we allow ourselves to sin toward others in the church rather than fight for the relationship with one another, our children get hurt. A lukewarm approach to the church will produce a cold attitude in our children. As the saying goes, “you sow the wind and reap the whirlwind”. In Hebrews, God speaks of “let no bitter root grow up to cause trouble and defile many.” The ones contaminated can be our beloved children!

Our thought for reflection is this: How unified are you with the other disciples? Are you building family in God’s family?

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”*

Proverbs 17:22



We are living in some stressful times. In case this is read some time in a distant future, this is the year of COVID-19, the worst pestilence seen on the planet in 100 years. Earlier this week, my sister arranged a ZOOM meeting with us, all our children, and their spouses. Twelve people together through the magic of electrons! Just seeing each other's face was great. The real magic though was the temporary transportation to lightheartedness. Our daughter bought a new car and was talking about how her 300,000-mile Saturn loan afforded \$0 trade in value. This led to the telling of Cheryl's first car buy story (and what an incredible "mark" she was—14% interest on the loan! Her father didn't forgive her for a while). Laughter all around. The time flew. No COVID-19 for a bit.

God made humor to be a refreshing drink we can all share.

How much laughter do you get to share in your family? Some of us can be naturally funny. You are blessed people. Neither of us was you. But we believe all of us have an inborn sense of humor that is God-given and is meant to refresh us and our children.

Here are some ways to share some family lightheartedness:

- ✚ **Do silly things** like spinning in circles and getting dizzy.
- ✚ **Tell** each other "knock, knock" jokes.
- ✚ **Go somewhere** to watch animals together. A favorite animal our family had fun watching was monkeys. Their behavior looks so human that you can't help but enjoy them, especially all their grooming activity.
- ✚ **Read together** children's books that have a sense of humor to them. When our son was about 3 or 4 years old, he loved one of Richard Scarry's books. A train carrying oranges runs off its tracks in the story. Austin would make himself crack up by saying that it made "milk" instead of orange juice. You see, humor is in the eyes of the beholder! You can share special inside jokes.
- ✚ **Play** those talking/clapping games that you receive and pass the turn to another person in the circle. It gets everybody humble and laughing.
- ✚ **Tell stories** about your blunders that will lighten the mood for your kids when their heart is heavy over a mistake they made. Showing them how mistakes don't need to be considered fatal can really encourage their spirit. Cheryl would frequently quote Miss Frizzle from the Magic School Bus, "Take chances, get messy, make mistakes."
- ✚ **Watch a fun TV program** or movie together. Some of our favorites were Sponge Bob (his early stuff not later), What About Bob and the Incredibles.

This week we hope you will enjoy some cheerfulness with your children.

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene

“Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
Deuteronomy 11: 19



Teaching our children is something that we do every day in the classroom of life. In the course of a day, we found it difficult to get deep enough into the subjects that came up in our lives. Emotions, crazy schedules, happy distractions and our own human frailties all limited effective instruction. We were so grateful for parents that helped us understand the value of family devotionals to address more thoroughly needs in our family. We hope we will help you to understand! Family devotional can come in many forms and frequency. We found that we wanted a weekly time, usually Sunday evening right after dinner, which tended to be the most relaxed protected time.

When we speak of a family devotional, we mean a prescheduled and preplanned time where the whole family gets together and has spiritual instruction.

There can be other bells and whistles added like family activities, games, songs, skits, role-playing, right way/wrong way, crafts, videos—the sky is the limit!

Family devotional planning starts with observation of your family.

- ✚ What kinds of behaviors do you see? How about attitudes? Body language? Tone?
- ✚ What problems keep coming up?
- ✚ What boundaries need to be taught?

To prepare, we pursued wisdom from God through prayer. Many times, we prayed together that God would show us what we needed to see and make us understand. Through the week we developed some ideas about what needs we saw. Partnering like this helped us avoid pitfalls like over-reacting, under-reacting, harshness, and discouragement.

The secret sauce of family devotional is **pleasant instruction**. It isn't a time to scold the family or individual chastening. Not at all! It should have the feeling of sitting around a campfire telling great stories and looking at the milky way. You want to promote positive emotion. We enjoyed singing, good news sharing, saying something encouraging to someone else in the family and the like. Some things were good to do every week, but variety was also a good thing. *Praying together is a staple.*

The Bible then needs to be opened. When the children were young, we read one verse and then camped out on explaining what it meant and giving examples of how it applied to everyday life. A staple of our early family devotionals was “**right way, wrong way.**” Kids love you to be the one to role-play doing the wrong way and tend to get scared trying to do the wrong way themselves. For example, if talking about obedience, you will play the role of the child who disobeys. The whole family then “boos”. Then you get to do the right way. The kids usually love to do that role so you can let them demonstrate the right way. The whole family then “cheers”. You can do several variations using common family scenarios. As the children get older, you can tap into their growing understanding by asking them to read the verses and begin the discussion about what it means. We typically ended with prayer and some family fun or cuddling.

Over the next number of letters, we'd like to share ideas for family devotionals. We will focus on Galatians 5:22-23 to begin. **The thought for reflection: How can we have devoted family time for spiritual instruction?** Make a plan for your family to start this good work.

Love, Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love...”

Galatians 5:22-23



Welcome to family devotional! The devotional we will outline today is the first of a series centered on the Galatians 5 passage about fruit of the Spirit. There are nine qualities that the passage mentions. Kids experience all their senses more than we tend to do as adults and this series lets them have the opportunity. You can embellish ideas we present and make it all your own. And of course, you will adjust to make it work for your children’s age group.

To set this up, it is good to invest in about 4 pieces of poster board (taped together on the wrong side to make a big area for your picture on the right side) or a roll of paper. On it you will draw a tree with a trunk and branches. Don’t worry about your drawing abilities! This is a template for the kid’s having the chance to “beautify” it with their own “fruit.” For this reason, it is good to make it fairly large, especially if you have a few children. You will hang the tree in an accessible spot where you can walk up to the tree and tape items on it. Your kids might want to color it.

You will also need to have some construction paper, scissors, tape, crayons and pencils or markers on hand along with a bowl of fruit for the devotional. Once you get all the family together, have some singing. Ask someone to pray. You or one of the children then can read Galatians 5:23-24.

Some ideas for discussion: What is your favorite fruit in the bowl? Why do you love it? Where does that fruit come from? God wants to help us through his Spirit to have beautiful fruit. *(At this point you can take a piece of fruit from the bowl and make it look like it is popping out from your head).* Would you like some good fruit popping out of you? (tickles work at this point with little ones).

The first fruit that we can think about tonight is **LOVE**. Can you think of how mommy was loving this week? Daddy? How about you? (ask each of the kids a question or two). When we love, we are listening to God! God is loving. God loves each of us.

Then let each of the children make a picture of a fruit out of colored construction paper and write “love” on it. Then they get to tape it to the tree. You will leave the tree up through all the sessions.

For older children, discussion can go deeper. For example, you can read I Co 13: 4-8 and spend time on a particular aspect of love that the family should think about.

After discussion is ended, then eat some favorite fruit! Maybe there is a little ice cream too? If there is a favorite family activity then hang out and enjoy.

The key is making it fun and full of the truth. Happy Easter!

Love,

Kelly and Cheryl Boyd

University Church of Eugene

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy...” Galatians 5:22



This week’s family devotional continues the study of the fruit of the Spirit. Preparing for this devotional can be a bit more challenging. We say that because adults live in a world of responsibility that can hinder this fruit in our own lives. Family devotionals aren’t just for our children. They are also for us. It says in Philemon 6 “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

As we teach our children about our faithful loving Father and His Son, we remember him ourselves and joy grows in our own heart.

Before leading this lesson, have some time with God thinking about how he has blessed you in your life. Go ahead and write it down. Think about the ways God has directed your life and helped you find faith, your job, your spouse. Remember the day each of your children were born. Think about the range of emotions when you first met each child. As you reflect, let joy bubble up into your conscious heart. Out of this overflow you can prepare your lesson.

We suggest you again have a bowl of favorite family fruits that they can enjoy at the end of the lesson. Have the construction paper, scissors, and tape so the kids can make their fruit at the end of the lesson and put it on the tree. As always, make this whole devo all your own.

- ✚ Perhaps **start with some music** and dancing in this devotional. Pick one of those songs that get everybody moving. Then get in a circle holding hands and let somebody pray for the devotional. Have a seat.
- ✚ **Read Galatians 5:22.** Mom and dad can tell the children about the days they were born and the joy that they felt.
- ✚ **Give the children some details** about what happened leading up to the day and afterward. Share the joy you felt. Your children will LOVE hearing these things.
- ✚ **Let them know that God has this kind of joy because of us.** He sees each of us as one of a kind and is so happy to be with us. Ask the children about who they love to be with. The joy they feel is from God.
- ✚ Have each child (and parent too if desired) make a piece of fruit out of the construction paper and write JOY on it. Tape it to the tree.
- ✚ **Wrap up the devotional** with planning some special time later that week together. Maybe a favorite dinner or visit to a park. Think of something that they will be joyful about while looking forward to it. Let one of the children close out the devotional with a prayer. Then share the fruit!

With love,

Kelly and Cheryl Boyd

University Church of Eugene

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” Galatians 5:22



The Spirit wants to bring peace to us and our relationships. As a child, the concept of internal peace is hard to understand. Inner awareness grows with time, but it is rare to talk on the level of inner peace in our youth.

What children of all ages can relate to is the idea of learning to be thankful and obedient rather than complaining and arguing. They can also relate to learning to deal with anger. You may see some other expressions of lack of peace that you can study with your family. This devotional can be tailored to the needs you see in your children. **Training of the heart takes time and will need to be revisited again and again.**

A couple of scriptures that we have used to help our children with recognizing the need for peace from God:

- ✚ Philippians 2: 14 Do everything without complaining or arguing...
- ✚ Ephesians 4: 26-27 “In your anger do not sin”. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Get that bowl of fruit out again? Up to you. Have some construction paper, scissors, markers and tape ready to make your fruit toward the end of the devotional to add to your tree.

Using either Philippians 2:14 or Ephesians 4:26-27, have someone read the scripture and take a little time explaining the meaning.

Then have some scenarios that you do as wrong way/right way. For example:

- ✚ Dad says it is time to turn off the game and get ready for bed. Kids start complaining and arguing with him.
- ✚ Mom sets dinner on the table and kids start complaining about the meal.
- ✚ Child asks to go over friend’s house, but mother says that it is getting too close to dinner and child gets angry.
- ✚ Dad asks child at bedtime to put the phone away and child gets angry.
- ✚ Younger brother/sister starts to “bug” older brother/sister by touching their stuff and older sibling is getting angry.

After demonstrating wrong way in any of these scenarios, reread the scripture and ask the children what would be the right way in this situation? How could you have thankfulness? How could you not sin in anger and bring about peace?

Then repeat the scenario showing the peaceful attitude. Do a few to get the visual across.

Finish by rereading the Galatians 5 verse and praying together for God to teach you how to have peace. Make your fruit for taping to the tree with the word “Peace” on it. Eat a piece of fruit together.

Enjoy,
Kelly and Cheryl Boyd
University Church of Eugene

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience...” Galatians 5:22



Cheryl remembers one day when she was able to be a stay-at-home mother and was needing to run errands. Kelly was out of the house so it was necessary to take the three children with her. When piling the kids into the car, she was brusque and short-tempered. She kept pushing the children physically and verbally to “hurry it up!” After getting into the car, the youngest said to her in a quiet voice (she was about 4 years old), “Mommy all you had to do was ask us.” That correction pierced her heart! She responded to her with an admission of how right she was and that mommy was very sorry. That event changed her parenting.

Patience is an expression of the Spirit that truly builds up the folks we love.

This family devotional explores patience. Again, have some fruit to share, construction paper, scissors, markers and tape on hand for the end. Have some dirt, some seeds (maybe have some basil seeds or tomato seeds to plant so you can use them later for cooking) and a container to plant the seeds into. Figure out where you can place the container to allow the seeds sprout and grow. And if you have an outdoor garden, you can plan to continue this lesson later when the plants are moved outdoors.

- ✚ **Start the devotional with some songs and a prayer.** Taking turns leading a song and praying is a great beginning to the lesson to learn patience, especially if the kids like to do those activities. Read Galatians 5:22.
- ✚ **Ask the children what does it mean to be patient?** Here again wrong way/right way is a good activity to help demonstrate the quality. You can do scenarios like taking turns washing hands at the sink and waiting to play with a toy that has to be shared. Older children will need different examples. Cover what is important in their lives. Then tell them that you have something really special. They are going to get to learn about patience by being farmers!
- ✚ **Set them up at the table and let them fill their container with some dirt.** Show them how to make the shallow depression in the soil to the right level and then place the seeds inside. Finally, show them how to cover the seeds gently with the proper depth of soil according to the seed packet.
- ✚ **Next give them the means to give the plants a gentle sprinkling of water.** Place them in their spot to grow. Older children can take on a somewhat larger planting project. Wrap up the devotional with making their construction paper fruit and write **PATIENCE** on it. Tape it to the tree on the wall. Eat some fruit and relax together.

This lesson is so cool because you get to continue to be learning patience together each day as you check the plants to watch for their sprouting. Keep the soil just a little damp. This skill in itself is a lesson since one has to patiently inspect the soil and be careful about watering it. Eventually you will have tiny leaves appear. God will amaze everyone by how he makes things grow. You can have follow-up teaching moments about wonderful rewards of patience while letting the children pick the basil leaves or the tomatoes off their plant.

Warm encouragements,

Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene

Parenting Reflections 19

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, Kindness, ...

Galatians 5: 22



The word “**kindness**” in the Greek is chrestotes and means a “useful kindness” referring to “meeting real needs, in God’s way, in His timing and fashion”. Hence the kindness listed here is the “Spirit-produced goodness which meets the need and avoids human harshness”. Such a big concept! The funny thing is, we know kindness when we see and feel it.

Since kindness has to do with meeting needs with a good attitude, **this devotional will help the family explore this quality by serving one another**. To be ready for this devotional have markers, construction paper, scissors, tape, and bowl of fruit. Also have a pot of water, some hand towels and some washcloths.

- ✚ Have the family come together with some songs and a prayer.
- ✚ Read Galatians 5:22. Plan to share a story from your week where someone was kind to you.
- ✚ Explain how the kindness was shown and how it made you feel. An example can be how someone in the family did your laundry, folded it and put it away for you with a great attitude.
- ✚ Ask for the rest of the family to share how someone was kind and served them. You can help your very young children with examples that you saw happen in their lives.
- ✚ Ask them how the kindness made them feel. If possible, you can share stories about how they were kind to you, each other, or someone outside the family.
- ✚ Talk about how Jesus washed the feet of the disciples that followed him. For older children read John 13: 1-17 and ask them how this was kind.
- ✚ Have everyone take off their shoes and socks.

Then get out the pot of water (warm water recommended of course) and begin to wash the feet of the family members one by one with some water on the washcloth and drying them with a hand towel. Do this gently and with a smile. We recommend saying something nice about the person as you wash their feet. Then ask for a volunteer to wash everyone’s feet just like you did, including your feet. This might be hard at first so help the children with the courage it takes to serve like this. If they just can’t do it, that’s ok. The key is that they were able to see the example you showed them.

To finish the devotional, make some quick construction paper fruit and write **KINDNESS** on it. Tape it on your tree. If folks still have energy then play a round of duck, duck, goose or dead man come alive. End the night with eating some fruit.

With love,

Kelly and Cheryl Boyd

University Church of Eugene

Parenting Reflections 20

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, ...”
Galatians 5:22



Have you ever gotten wrapped up in a warm blanket with a cup of hot chocolate and felt the goodness of the moment? That feeling is a hint of the goodness of God. God provides, shelters, protects, and cares for us tenderly. In this family devotional we will think about the goodness of God.

As in the other studies in this series, have the construction paper, markers, scissors and tape ready. Get the family together and sing some songs. Read Galatians 5:22 and tell the family that you all will study about the goodness of God today. Let them make the fruit and write GOODNESS on it. Leave the fruit drawings at home for now.

Then this devotional can go several possible directions:

- 1. For families with younger children** – go on a walk together outside and find different things in nature to look at. Notice the sun, clouds, flowers, birds, ants, grass, trees.
 - ❖ Talk about how God made the sun and that is so good because it gives energy to the plants.
 - ❖ The plants are so good because they are food for us and animals and they also clean the air.
 - ❖ The water is so good because it helps the plants, animals and mankind stay alive, etc.
 - ❖ Ask the children to think of ways God has done good things.
 - ❖ Talk about how God was so good to make people, family, moms, dads, kids, the church, etc.
 - ❖ Have a great walk and talk. When you get home, tape the fruit on the tree.
 - ❖ Close out with a prayer.
 - ❖ If it was warm outside, get a tall cool drink for everyone to cool off. If it was cold, then get out the hot chocolate and wrap up in a blanket to cuddle together.
- 2. For families with older children** – take them for a walk outside when it is starting to get dark. Share with them as you are walking these facts about the earth and how good God has been in how he made it for us:
 - ❖ The 93,000,000 miles distance from the sun creates just the right temperatures to allow water to exist on the planet. It happens to coincide with just the right temperatures for us too. Our sun is a yellow dwarf, a relatively rare type of star that is both small, stable, and long-lived. Larger stars would scald us, and smaller ones tend to throw more radiation that would harm us.
 - ❖ The earth has a stable rotation – this allows for us to have day and night and keeps the temperatures in the right range for us and the other life God created.
 - ❖ The earth has a strong magnetic field that shields us from cosmic rays and solar storms. This magnetic field is created by the movement of super-hot molten rock inside the earth. That super-hot molten rock is possible only because of just the right amount of radioactive material inside the earth.
 - ❖ God placed the large planet Jupiter in the solar system to help protect us. Its large mass causes objects that come into the solar system to veer off toward Jupiter instead of hitting us.
 - ❖ Finish the walk with a prayer. Tape the fruit to the tree. Then get a soothing or warming beverage at home together.

Enjoy the goodness of God,
Kelly and Cheryl Boyd, University Church of Eugene