



Children's Spiritual Formation

Not Just for Sunday School

We know that it is not possible for families to get to church every Sunday. We also know that spiritual formation is not experienced *only* on Sundays or in our church building. You are your child's primary educator: before and beyond school where they develop and apply academic and social skills, even beyond what happens at church. Because, as valuable as we believe regular Sunday attending is; where we all worship, share, and learn in the context of a diverse but common faith, you remain your child's spiritual model and guide, as your family life is the axis around which all revolves for your child. Below are some suggested resources that can help extend the Sunday experience throughout the week at home, anywhere, any time.

We draw our Sunday lessons and experiences from a number of *lectionary based resources for children. Most of our Sunday school content comes from the Whole People of God Seasons of the Spirit curriculum which provides age appropriate stories, lesson approaches, and related activities. It is designed to help clarify the seasons of the liturgical year, bring the bible stories to life, explain the cultural contexts in which they were written, and with 21st century language and concepts, help children discover The Word's relevance for their faith, world, and lives today. If you can't attend church or would like to explore the bible stories and topics with your children at home, while traveling or any time, I recommend visiting the Seasons of the Spirit website: www.seasonsonline.ca , (Library and Action Zone, Links, and Spirit Sightings) or by subscribing to the Whole People of God Tip of the Week at tip@wholepeopleofgod.com If you seek a very good Story Bible for children, we use Ralph Milton's Lectionary Year Story Bibles, published by Woodlake. Also available by Milton, is a Family Story Bible with a collection of bible stories. We use those and we use and gift the Illustrated New Revised Standard Version Bible from Hendrickson Publishing. These can be purchased online from Cokesbury, the Seasons Online website, or Amazon.

Above all parents, you are your children's first and best spiritual guides and models. As Rev. Bauman has pointed out to parents, from a child's perspective, "What you do screams so loud I can't hear what you say." This quote is from a workshop he gave for parents, based on his experience of being one and observing many, an event which we hope to repeat soon. On the next page are his notes from that talk, another excellent resource for living "Faith Matters" in family life.

~Kathryn Carroll

* The Revised Common Lectionary is a prescribed series of readings which runs in three-year cycles, with readings typically from the Old Testament or the Acts of the Apostles; a passage from one of the Psalms; another from either the Epistles (Letters) or Revelation; and finally a passage from one of the four Gospels.



BAUMANS' NOTES ON RAISING EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY AND SPIRITUALLY ALERT CHILDREN

OVERARCHING THEMES:

- 1) "What you do screams so loud I can't hear what you say"**
- 2) Thoughtful intentionality**
- 3) Do the harder thing – go the distance**
- 4) Religious and spiritual matters should not be separated from routine life**

In no particular order of importance we offer the following suggestions:

- parental intentionality—talk out, debate, plan ahead, arrive at perspectives you can both support and speak with a unified voice. okay to disagree, but more useful to find consensus among parents and care-givers. This promotes consistency of approach and a defense against the divide and conquer wisdom your children will invariably and inevitably develop.
- share meals. establish comfortable routines that are reliable...children need reliability.
- spend routine time together... that is, planning for the big events like birthdays and holidays is not nearly as important as casual and preferably, routine time.
- conversation about god, spirituality, meaning and values should be blended in venues other than church and school. these should be routine, casual etc. grace at meals. prayer at bedtime.. weddings, funerals, pets, etc... be opportunistic about this... actually, opportunistic learning is key.... that is, be on the lookout for ways to teach and mentor...time in the car is often good for this...less judge, more coach.
- include books in your reading that reference faith, god etc.
- do "good works" together making connections with social conditions and your family values. (intentionality again.)
- listen... admit error... ask for and receive forgiveness...
- establish clear boundaries and maintain them.
- don't over-protect, but don't also unduly subject. Be alert to age-appropriate risks, and allow for them.
- demonstrate your own piety.
- take advantage of the astonishing cultural opportunities the city affords.

- don't take things personally...if u do, get over it...if u can't, talk about it...do not run from disagreement...play and fight fairly...do not hurt by toying with others' weaknesses... "love is born when holding tenderly the weakness of the other". (this is a deeply spiritual, and expressly Christian value.)
- remember who the adults are—be on-guard for the seduction of self-indulgent regression.
- if you want emotionally mature children, do your own emotional homework.
- be mutually vulnerable, but never lose the role of parent...parent is not the same thing as friend...kids need and rely upon parents....
- become increasingly self-aware of your attachments...vigilance with the consideration of "what matters most of all"—maintain perspective...stuff and things are less valuable than relationships, love etc. (a no-brainer, of course, but easily lost in busy lives dedicated to succeeding) talk about this with your children and let them see the evidence for these "most important matters" in your lives.
- stay abreast of your child's culture – it will be different than the one u grew up with – learn its language without being intrusive – watch what they watch, read what they read, etc...
- seek help when you need it. seeking help is not a weakness, it is a strength. we all need support, encouragement, wisdom, doctors, etc....
- go to church as a family. find friends there. make a useful commitment. Nurturing relationships with other families who share your general values are extremely important in supporting your parenting efforts.