



Sowers & Seeds

Published by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools to assist those in early childhood ministry.

Parents Need Help

by Ramona Czer – St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN

“If only we could take some kids away from their parents as toddlers and train them up right!”

As you might guess, the teacher who said these words was fresh out of college. Today, several years and five children later, that teacher understands what she didn't then: No matter how good a teacher I become, I can never hope to duplicate the special relationship between a child and its parent. “Let no one,” says Koehler in *A Christian Pedagogy*, “underestimate the influence of the home.”

This is what I would say today to that young teacher I used to be: “You need to understand how much the parent-child relationship differs from the teacher-child relationship, and you need to know how parents wish you'd help that relationship become even stronger.”

How does a parent's differ from a teacher's relationship with a child? Through his parents a child knows down to the center of his being that he is cherished. A parent instills this confidence in his or her child by being there for him



continuously, showing him time after time that he will be fed, clothed, hugged, warned, entertained, and taught every day, whether he wants it or not!

This continuous “thereness” also means that the parent and child become intimate. They see each other in tears, laughter, and anger. If a toothbrush gets lost, they share. They kiss each other even when

there are cold germs. A teacher cannot duplicate such intimacy and perhaps shouldn't try in today's society.

Children also model their parents' behavior far more than they do a teacher's. They often use phrases and gestures that match their parents', even when they didn't mean to — which is amusing and humbling. The old saying, “He's a chip off the old block,” refers to behavior as well as to appearance. Another old saying, “As the twig is bent so the tree is inclined,” is a testament to the powerful effect of modeling. And righteous modeling and training will have eternal benefit: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

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Perhaps the most important way a parent’s relationship differs from a teacher’s is the element of sacrificial love. Most parents would give up much for their child, even dying, if necessary. When the distraught mother stood before Solomon and heard his solution to her problem, she willingly surrendered her child to the arms of another woman rather than have her baby killed. Wise Solomon, of course, had counted on just that kind of sacrificial love and rewarded it by returning her baby to its rightful place.

The proper place of children is with their parents, because God has placed great responsibility upon parents to nurture, protect and train them in the knowledge of God. This is an intense relationship and will last the lifetime of all of them, unlike the short time teachers have them in their classrooms.

Parents serve as their children’s lifelong guides. Dr. James Dobson compares parents to the runway lights illuminating the narrow pathway a pilot must follow to land safely, because to the right and left lie darkness and disaster.

To become wise guides, who have their eyes fixed on the One True Light, parents need help. We long for our children’s teachers, especially their Christian teachers, to help us in our children’s training. Here is what we wish to receive from those teachers:

- Help us by never insinuating we do not care. Sometimes our busyness and lack of insight may make us seem uncaring, but that is far from the truth.
- Help us by giving us specific feedback about our children. We know them very well. We see their pettiness, their orneriness, as well as their moments of shining goodness. However, we worry that our vision is sometimes clouded and that you may have insight into their personalities that we have missed.
- Help us nip problems in the bud. If there is a behavioral problem, tell us right away. Please do not let them develop bad habits simply because you didn’t want to upset us. As Shakespeare said, “Better a little chiding than a great deal of heartbreak.”

- Help us with any calm, practical ideas about encouraging good behavior and curbing bad behavior. We could benefit greatly from your experiences of trying many things with many children.
- Help our children apply every Bible lesson to their lives. Talk about the problems we deal with daily: obedience, sharing, sibling jealousy, disrespect, taking care of things, showing love, forgiving, etc.
- Finally, help us build a strong relationship with our child by befriending us. Show our child that we are a team united by faith in Christ.

The relationship between parents and children mirrors the far more wonderful relationship God wants between all of us and himself. “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?... If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?” (Matthew 7:9, 11).

Though we love our children dearly, our love is nothing compared to the love Jesus has for each one of us. If our relationship with our children—that is, the way we love and train them—can help them understand the awesome fact that God loves them, then we have succeeded admirably.

May he bless our attempt, and when he is the One to take our children from us, may it be to his fatherly breast.

Most parents want to be good parents. Many want help. Christian teachers dare never try to replace or underestimate the importance of the Christian home. Enlisting, involving, and supporting parents in the Christian nurture of their children may very well be the teacher’s highest priority.



What Are Your Spiritual Gifts?

Do you know what a spiritual gift is? Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Do you know what God wants you to do with them? Do you know how your spiritual gifts and those of your co-workers could enhance your early childhood ministry? Go to www.wels.net/jump/bps-cad. Click “Discovering Spiritual Gifts” on the right side and take the “test.” See how God has gifted you, and how he wants you to use these special gifts for him and your dear students.

Great Goals for Your Early Childhood Ministry

from the preschool section of the "Christ-Light Handbook" 1997

Help your children/students know these spiritual truths:

- Sin is anything we do or say or think which is contrary to God's will.
- We are born in sin and we sin every day in thought, word, and action.
- Jesus is God's Son whom the Old Testament people awaited by promise. Jesus saved us by his suffering, death, and resurrection. He will come again at the end of the world.
- God made the world and us by his mighty power.
- By that same power he now watches over us, he blesses us with parents, family, and daily gifts of food and clothing.
- God the Holy Spirit works faith in us so we gladly embrace Jesus as our Savior from sin.
- For all that God in love has done for us, we want to thank him. We do this by learning to know his will and gladly saying and doing those things which please him.
- In prayer we talk to God every day to ask him for what we need and to thank him for all his loving gifts to us.
- The Bible is God's Word. God tells us about himself and what he has done and still does daily for us. God also tells us what his will is for our lives.
- In the Old Testament God tells us about many of the people who lived before Jesus came. These people looked forward to the coming Savior. Their lives show us many examples of faith and good works which help us grow in faith and living for Jesus. We also see many examples of unbelief and sin which serve as warnings to us.
- In the New Testament we learn to know many things about Jesus and the Christians who lived at that time. Learning these things also helps us grow in faith and living for Jesus. The examples of sin and unbelief we learn about also serve as warnings for us.

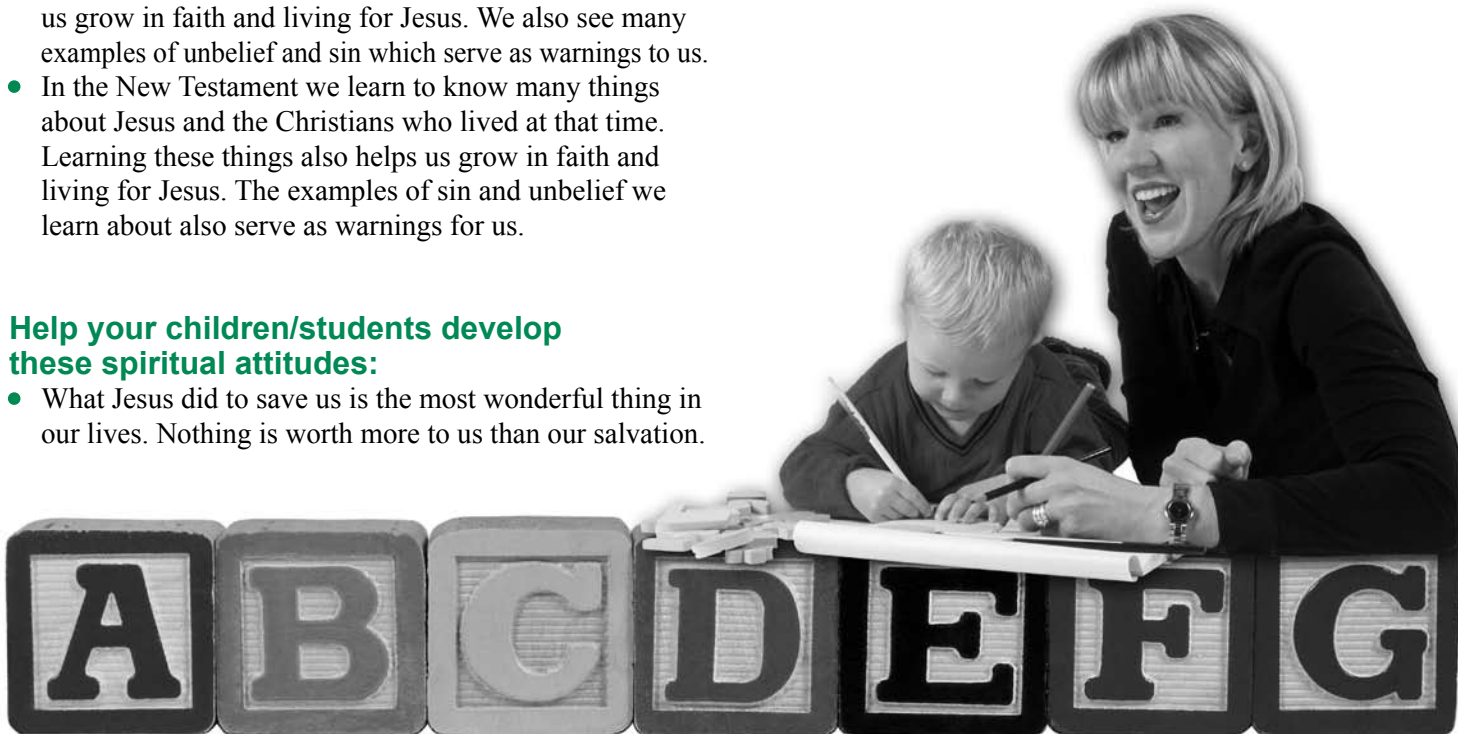
Help your children/students develop these spiritual attitudes:

- What Jesus did to save us is the most wonderful thing in our lives. Nothing is worth more to us than our salvation.

- Food and clothing are also wonderful gifts of God for which we are thankful and which we gladly share with others in need.
- We don't have to worry because God is with us always, watching over us and providing all our needs.
- Praying, singing, studying God's Word, and worshiping at home and in church are all things we gladly do in thanks to God for all his goodness to us.
- We hate sin and want to do, say, and think only those things which are pleasing to God.
- Growing in faith is important so that we love Jesus more and more. Then we will want to serve Jesus and live for him all of the time, here on earth and in heaven.
- Telling others about Jesus is important so they do not die in unbelief.

Help your children/students develop these spiritual habits:

- Praying at regular times and at times on his/her own
- Singing often the spiritual songs he/she has learned
- Hearing a Bible lesson every day
- Going to church regularly
- Thanking God by saying and doing what he wants
- Obeying parents joyfully
- Joyfully sharing with, working with, and helping others
- Telling others about Jesus and inviting them to learn more about him





Education Begins Early

by Professor Cheryl Loomis – Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

Education and childcare are two sides of the same coin. One cannot be separated from the other. They happen simultaneously. Education involves care and care involves education. The quality of brain development is shaped by a child's experiences. Infants seek out information through observations and experiences thus wiring their brains. The National Academy of Sciences sums up brain development in this manner - "Newborn brains should be labeled SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED."

Here are a few tips for "assembly" taken from *The First Years Last Forever (I Am Your Child)*:

Warm, loving responses

All learning happens in the context of a relationship. Young children need to be with adults who recognize and respond to their individual needs and temperament. Magda Gerber, a pioneer in the field of infant development, believed infants will become competent within the context of at least one authentic relationship. "If you make a child feel loved and connected, purposeful and inquisitive brain development will follow." (Zero to Three)

Talk, sing, read

Literacy is a learned behavior. It begins with talking and reading

with young children. Learning language requires practice just like every other skill. The more practice a child has, the better skilled she becomes. Conversations happen naturally as adults converse with children about happenings throughout the day.

Establish rituals and routines

Children flourish in a secure environment. Ever try to rush a child through a bedtime ritual? It doesn't happen without some commotion. The sense of security established in rituals and routines is reassuring to children. Rituals and routines can easily incorporate the Word as adults share songs and stories about Jesus and pray with young children.

Adults need to be intentional in their interactions with children. Recognize the child's stage of development and create experiences that will enhance learning. Brains change as a result of experience and every experience teaches!

The following websites will provide more information regarding early brain development:

Zero to Three

www.zerotothree.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org



From the Mouths of Babes

Little Jenna's Prayer:

Dear Lord, I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in my family and I can never do it. Sorry. Amen.

Little Bradley's Prayer:

Dear Father in heaven, I would very much like to have my own room because I am worried that I might do to my brother, Billy, what Cain did to Abel because they did not have separate bedrooms either. Amen.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the January 2007 posting of school data on the WELS Parish Schools Web site . . .

- WELS had 396 early childhood ministries (ECM). 251 were part of Lutheran elementary school (LES) and 145 were free standing.
- 575 teachers served in WELS ECM. Of those, 311 also served an LES. The rest, 264, served an ECM only.
- 9,354 children were enrolled in WELS ECM.
- The average enrollment in WELS ECM was 23.6 with the largest enrollment being 146 and the smallest two.

Data for the 2007-08 school year is being tabulated now. You will be able to find it here shortly:

www.wels.net/jump/cps

Look under “Testing and School Statistics”.



What If a Work Ethic Begins Very Early?

by Edna Ranck, *ChildcareExchange.com*
(<http://www.ccie.com/eed/issue.php?id=1612>)

But it's not just learning things that's important. It's learning what to do with what you learn and learning why you learn things at all that matters.

Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*



I have wondered over the years how early childhood programs contribute to a child's eventual career choice and success as a worker. What would a child have to experience to grow up to be a responsible worker and competent citizen? It seems to me a positive work ethic starts early in a child's life. Play may be the child's work essential to constructive development, but work — real work as part of a family, a classroom, or a team — also plays a vital role.

In *The New York Times Magazine*, November 26, 2006, Paul Tough quotes a charter school educator working with low-income children: “I think we have to teach work ethic in the same way we teach adding fractions with unlike denominators. But once children have got the work ethic and the commitment to others and to education down, it's actually pretty easy to teach them.”

Early childhood educators can learn valuable aspects of learning from charter and other innovative schools. Here are adaptations to Tough's summarized list:

- Take advantage of the long child care program day to give children many varied opportunities to learn about their world. Use conversation, speech, film, and books to converse frequently and at length with children.
- Design and implement an appropriate curriculum for the children, and educate the adults — teaching staff, parents, and board members — to help children learn all the time and everywhere.
- Emphasize and model the behavior you want children to exhibit. Teach values realistically and show behaviors that are important to all children.



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Awesome Resources

Believer Beaver

Looking for an interactive, highly visual and fun way to teach your children about the Great Commission all year long? Look no further than the *Believer Beaver* puppet series! Each series comes with an explanation of the purpose, usage, scheduling, preparation and execution of this cumulative curriculum – everything you need to easily implement a fun, new way to teach and encourage even God’s littlest disciples to let their light shine before others. Both series available from NPH at www.nph.net/welsproducts for only \$7.50/each! Schedule adaptations for Sunday school and VBS also included.

Early Childhood Walk With God

The most effective Christian education for children is in the home. Are you looking for a resource to offer the parents of your ECM that will assist them in the important and necessary task of training their children basic Bible truths? Or maybe you’re looking for a simple plan of Bible lessons for children that parents can follow during the summer months, when Preschool and Sunday school aren’t offered? Don’t forget about *Early Childhood Walk With God*, a collection of 12 Bible lessons, each with songs and activities, designed to engage children ages 3-5 in meaningful understanding and retention of God’s Word. This affordable resource is available from NPH at www.nph.net/welsproducts for only \$3.75!

All Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. **Sowers & Seeds** is published four times a year by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools. Comments about this **Sowers & Seeds** and ideas for future issues can be directed to Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship.

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