

The Home and Family: God's place for Ministry

The flow of God's work among mankind is channeled primarily through families. From Adam and Eve, through Abraham and Sarah, to Joseph and Mary. A significant part of God's work takes place as parents raise their children in the Lord and then turn them loose to serve Him with their unique gifts and callings. And we see much ministry takes place in homes as well. We are encouraged in God's word to open our homes as places where God's people can gather, where non-believers can be introduced to the Savior and where those in need can find help, encouragement and relief.

The Five Stages of Marriage:

Founding (Honeymoon) . . Child bearing . . Child rearing . . Child launching . . Empty Nest

Each of these stages brings new challenges and requires adjustments and changes in our relationships.

Family:

“God designed the family for four major reasons:

To meet the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of every family member

To teach every family member about God's attributes of love, justice and righteousness through the human example of other family members

To guide and train children since they have rebellious natures and need parental guidance

To teach respect for authority which is the foundation of our society”

(Bruce Narramore **Help! I'm a Parent!**)

Parenting: Psalm 127:3; Prov 22:6; 13:24; Hebr 12:5-13; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21

Raising children is a task for both parents! Prov 1:8; (1 Thess 2:7-8; Isa 66:13)

Our parental concerns include Teaching, Disciplining, and Loving our children.

God is a model for us in the ways He relates to us as a Father.

In training His children, God uses discipline, but does not punish; He earns our respect by the loving exercise of his authority rather than motivating us by fear and overwhelming us with power; He never ventilates His anger on His children!

Recommended reading: James Dobson's various books; Bruce Narramore **Help! I'm a Parent**

Honoring Parents in their declining years Prov 17:6; Eph 6:2

There comes a time when the children will need to begin to care for their aging parents.

Hospitality

To the Church Family Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9

To “Strangers” and those in need Hebrews 13:2, 3; Lev. 25:34-35; Matt 25:35;

Recommended Reading: Edith Schaeffer: Hidden Art, What is a Family?

Karen Mains, Open Heart, Open Home

10 Priorities for Parents:

(Goals in effective spiritual and moral training)

For our Children...

To experience God's Love personally

To see God's working in the world and in their personal lives

To come to a personal commitment to Jesus Christ

To develop a sense of calling and mission in life

To be content, patient and persevering (happy)

To internalize Biblical standards of morality

To develop good and responsible relationships with others

To avoid as many consequences of sin as possible without being overly sheltered

To develop an appreciation for life and nature

To be successful and develop leadership ability

Types and Stages in the Development of Morality

Birth – One Year --- **Physical restraints** – Protecting from physical dangers –
Requires constant supervision

One – Five (+/-) – **Punishment and Fear of Authority** – teaching right and wrong –
Requires authority Present

Respect for Consequences -- The "School of Hard Knocks" goes on through life

Two – Adolescence – **Internalized Parent** -- Self-centered Imitation of Parents –
May or may not promote a good self image depending on a sense of fear and guilt

Adolescence – **A developing and broadening personal morality** may include periods of rebellion and experimentation

Mature Morality – Aware and respectful of others, doesn't require external authority, a flexible and sensitive conscience, a healthy self image and sense of individuality.

(from Bruce Narramore)

TELLTALE MARKS

(Some selections from *Open Heart, Open Home* by Karen Burton Mains)

Telltale marks had been imprinted on my own heart by the timely reading of the Scripture verse: *If you give even a cup of cold water to a little child., anyone who takes care of a little child is caring for God who sent me.*

Why is it always easier to extend the courtesies of hospitality to those outside our immediate families? Husbands, house-mates, children, or strangely enough, their friends, often receive short shrift of our kindly attention. This point was brought forcibly home to me by my daughter, who cleverly exclaimed before a roomful of guests, “Mommy, why aren’t you this nice to us when people *aren’t* here?” Hospitality like charity, in order to be true, has to begin at home. The Lord has humiliated me enough through the comments of my own children that I have been forced to examine my attitudes toward them. Did it count, all this gracious open-house business, if I acted like a hellion the hour before company arrived? Wasn’t there something hypocritical about receiving laurels for my church work if my own children’s friends were neglected? Wasn’t there a glaring inconsistency if I really treated my children differently when outsiders were around? Through the years I had come to an understanding of the use of hospitality as a gift of the Holy Spirit for ministry. But was I really ministering to my own?

How often we overlook the needs of our own children, even those of the children of our own churches. Busy with adult conversations, with grown-up preoccupations, we are more concerned that they not run between the pews than about the condition of their impressionable spirits. The church is in reality an extended family and that we all bear responsibility for the nurturing of the children of this body. This is such a Christlike quality, this hospitality toward children. It is not simply a matter of being open toward our own, difficult as that often is, but it requires that we accept, encourage and want those born of someone else, whether we are married or not, whether we have children of our own or not. The story of Christ blessing the children is not only for the nursery but for adult Sunday school as well. If He could welcome the interruption of His ministry by wiggling, wonder-struck, bouncing, impertinent humanity, can we dare do less? Unless we come to know children, how can we deeply understand the meaning of His words, *“Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”* Childlikeness is a quality to be cultivated in our maturity—trust, dependency, anticipation, a sense of wonder. We can give much to those small people of our churches, but they can give more to us.

Naturally, there are times when, because of the intimacy of the subject, or because of the late hour, the children are excused. Often they have other pursuits which are more intriguing. Yet it is not unusual to have a child’s arm dangling over the back of my ladder chair, a small head pressing cheek to cheek, a hand squeezing out the non-verbal plea, “it’s all right if we stay, isn’t it?” What better way for children to learn to converse than by observing this lively art.

Still deeper effects have been worked in their lives by our hospitality to people in need. I have often been asked how our children have been influenced by the fact that David and I do so much counseling in our home with people in distress, and that we have even invited some to live with us for a while. My answer is that the influences seem to be only positive. It’s nothing to grab a child as he scoots through the hall and send him off for a box of tissues for someone’s tears. They are learning not to be afraid of people’s problems, but are realizing that human suffering is a part of living. They seem not to be surprised upon encountering it. In fact, I think they are better for knowing we can help one another despite the tears.

I can remember the time my back door opened and a grubby boot threatened to descend in ruinous contact with my kitchen floor. Impatience welled, but an inward voice spoke first. *Be careful what you say.* Look into those eyes. Don’t you see that Christ has come into your kitchen—The foot came down on the floor, and I knew at that moment this was going to be a hard discipline, this seeing Christ in those of my immediate family, in those who would leave their telltale marks over my floors and plans and life. A difficult discipline?—yes, but it is a worthy one. If I give to them but a cup of water, Christ counts it as unto Himself. I am not only called to minister to my church or to my world, but I am privileged to serve those with whom I live.

“Father, forgive me for caring more for clean floors and tidy schedules than for two little boys.” The world is full of children’s friends who just wanting a drink of water but track mud across our carpets, and of children who find in our homes what they are missing in their own. Many of them are our children’s friends. We really have no choice—we who know the One who is the Living Water, this same One who creates new songs in our hearts—we have no choice but to open our homes and our lives to those who may leave their telltale marks.

CREATIVITY AND SIMPLICITY: A WORKSHEET

(From Open Heart Open Home by Karen Burton Means)

We need to remember the whole first phrase from the Westminster *Shorter Catechism*, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Once we have established the right attitudes, we may minister with and be ministered to simply through laughter, joy and celebration. How many limitations Christ experienced, and what an example of simplicity He set—"foxes have holes but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head"! Yet what creative solutions He found to extend hospitality to a world which sought Him out. Bread for thousands from a few loaves, wine from water—all disabilities turned into opportunities. To all who came He gave Himself, rest for the weary, food for the hungry, water for the thirsty. Can we too learn to think as adventurously? Can we discover that hospitality is not what we have, but what we are? Can we give out of our limited resources only to find creativity rising out of that struggle "with and against that which limits us"? Not all creative applications of hospitality need to be revolutionary. In our dour and work-laden lives, an adventurous approach may be as simple as an evening of delight and celebration.

You may be convinced that you are not creative. Or you wish you could develop more creativity. Read the following list of Blocks to Creativity, then check the areas in which you think you are weak.

Fear of failure—drawing back; not taking risks; settling for less in order to avoid the possible pain or shame of failing.

Reluctance to play—overly serious approach to problem-solving. Fear of seeming foolish or silly by experimenting with the unusual.

Resource myopia—failure to see one's own strengths; lack of appreciation for resources in one's environment.

Over-certainty—rigidity of problem-solving responses; stereotyped reactions.

Frustration avoidance—giving up too soon when faced with obstacles; avoiding discomfort associated with change.

Custom-bound—overemphasis on tradition, too much reverence for the past; tendency to conform when not necessary.

Impoverished fantasy life—overvaluing the so-called objective, real world; lack of imagination in the sense of being able to pretend or ask, "What if?"

Need for order—Inability to tolerate disorder, confusion or ambiguity; dislike of complexity.

Reluctance to let go—trying too hard to finalize solutions to problems; inability to let things incubate or happen naturally; lack of trust in human or supernatural capacities.

Fear of paradox—not making sufficient use of contrasting ways to reach the meaning of things; tendency to polarize to opposites, rather than knowing how to integrate the best of both sides; lacking perception of wholeness.

Take your checked areas before the Lord and ask Him to help you change so that you might think more adventurously.