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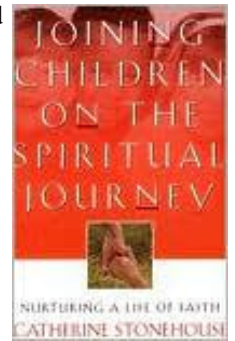
# ChildhoodMinistry

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Joining Children on Their Spiritual Journey by Catherine Stonehouse Part 2

This is a continued synopsis of **Joining Children on Their Spiritual Journey**. The first part is found in the October Top Ten Tips. I enjoyed because it presented children's spiritual development from a different perspective.

Page 180 ó When I first observed this form of children's worship, I wondered whether or not it was constructive to force some children, especially active little boys, into this slow-moving, quiet setting. It was almost impossible for John, a fourth grader, to sit still; it seemed his body wanted to be in constant motion. When I asked him what he liked best about church, he answered, "The way you give us time to think." Even active children need and appreciate time to reflect. Our society is stimulus addicted, and children need a place where they can come off that addiction and can discover the peace of quiet. It is amazing how comfortably children fit into the quiet when they have had a simple orientation on how things are done in children's worship.



Page 182 ó Children are aware of the most basic questions asked by human beings. They are aware of death, the need for meaning, the threat to their freedom, and being alone. The children cry out for help with these issues, but adults seldom notice, because children do not articulate their deep questions and hunger for God in ways adults understand. However, when adults assume children may be dealing with some of these issues and give them opportunities to meet God in stories and rituals that relate to basic life issues, response indicates the importance of the issues to the children. An encounter with God seems to satisfy the whole child to the depth of his or her being, and children demonstrate joy, peace, and a beautiful calm.

Page 183 ó Christian parents and teachers are often deeply concerned about the moral education of their children. Cavalletti cautions that to emphasize moral education too early may actually distort a child's morality. Early childhood is a time for being loved and protected by God, for enjoying God's love and responding in love. This love relationship is the firm foundation on which to build the moral life. Emphasizing what young children must do to please God may cause them to focus on what they must do to earn God's love and pleasure. A strained, often fearful relationship with God may develop as the child feels the pressure of doing to please God. Cavalletti cautions:

There is a "time for everything," as Ecclesiastes says, and early childhood is not the time for moral effort! We must not anticipate and confuse the times. If we do, we preclude the child's access to that aspect of God the child most needs. In our estimation, we compromise the child's very moral formation, which should be based on love, and should be the response of the child's love to the love that God first gave him / her.

This does not mean that young children are never required to live within reasonable behavioral expectations.

Page 184 ó We want our children to obey God because they do not want to cause grief to the one who loves them. As they become aware of their moral failures, we also want them to discover that their loving God forgives and wants to help children to do the right thing. The importance of the initial love relationship with God cannot be overemphasized; everything else in spiritual formation builds on it in the proper time.

Page 186 - í as adults worshiping with children, is to provide children a setting and in few words give them one of God's stories. We then get out of the way so that the Spirit of truth can lead the children to meet God in the story and to discover precious realities suited for them. The Spirit of God knows the mind and heart of the child and how best to communicate. We must never forget that we are merely assistant teachers or worship leaders, but God does give us the privilege of assisting, and he honors us by sometimes speaking through us to the children.

Page 187 ó The goal of godly play is not to give children prepackaged answers but to teach them how to enter God's stories to find the answers that give meaning and direction in their young lives. Children learn to enter stories as they watch adults enter them, with feeling, concentrated reflection, and respect. They learn the method more fully through the experience of working with



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the materials and modeling the teacher's use of them. By teaching a method of entering Scripture rather than concentrating on teaching specific answers, we demonstrate respect for each child's ability to hear God speak and our faith in God to communicate with children.

Another goal of godly play is to stimulate a sense of wonder and mystery in children as they approach the stories. Again, our actions during the storytelling communicate wonder and mystery to children. We model wonder only when we have spent enough time in the story to be moved by its reality ourselves. Wonder is an important magnet that can draw children to Scripture. Cavalletti states, "Wonder attracts us with irresistible force toward the object of our astonishment." It draws us to become immersed in the contemplation of something that exceeds us. Wondering takes time and a worthy object. In our fast-moving, noise-cluttered society, children are seldom given time to wonder and may be deprived of God's deep truths as we try to keep them entertained. Children need a place where they have time to wonder about the mystery of the gospel.

Page 209 The Christian master story begins with a Creator God who created humans in his own image and declared them very good. The humans, created with the power of choice, soon chose to disobey God and suffered the consequences of their willful action of death of their totally open, trusting relationship with God, and distortion of their relationship with one another. Wonder of wonders, God did not abandon these rebellious children but, even while explaining the results of their actions, promised to destroy the one who had drawn them into sin (Genesis 1-3).

In the Old Testament we see God choosing Abraham's family to become the people of God so that through them the whole world would be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3). Others are blessed as they see how God related to people in grace, patience, and tough love, and as they see that the blessing of salvation comes through Jesus, the Son of God and a descendant of Abraham. In the light of the Old Testament story, the death and resurrection of Jesus has meaning as we see our gracious God's action to destroy the power of sin and to make it possible again for human beings to come into a completely open, trusting relationship with God.

There is a division on parenting this is the notes I took from that section:

Page 38- According to Hess, parents support groups are better than a parenting class approach to parent education. A support approach acknowledges the complexity of child raising. If parents know that their task is difficult, they are not devastated by a failure; if they think the job is easy, their confidence is undermined when they fail. Feeling inadequate, they avoid further information that they assume will make them feel guiltier and less competent.

Page 39- Families benefit from tips on how parents can set the stage for talking about God in the normal flow of life. Do your Christian education leaders provide parents with the songs and verses their children are learning at church? What about having a parents meeting once a quarter when parents can sing the children's songs and discover what they will be learning? This could happen during a special Sunday school class, a Sunday potluck, a mothers' morning out program, or a men's breakfast. If the songs being used are on tape, encourage parent to buy the tape. Stock the church library with books, videos, and tapes for children and parents. Include ideas for family activities in the church newsletter. Advent, Lent, and Easter are good times for special family activities. In the newsletter or in a Sunday school class, suggest ways adults can get to know and express greater interest in the children of the congregation, how older couples could adopt a family, or how a younger families could adopt grandparents, an aunt, or an uncle.

Page 49- Response guided by a vision of the kind of person the child could become was demonstrated by Lloyd as he closed the door, leaving his daughter Christi crying in the bedroom. "I've fed and burped her, changed her diaper, rocker her, and I'm sure nothing is wrong. If she insists on making that noise, she can do it by herself where the rest of us don't have to listen." Lloyd believed it was important for Christi to become a person who respected the feelings of others. If she needed to vent her frustration she could, but not in a way that made the whole family miserable. The value of respect for others guided Lloyd's actions, not his momentary frustration.

Page 51- Healthy relationships must be mutual. Babies are not served best by excessively responsive parents. If babies always get what they want when they want it, they can take control. This may not be good for the baby's health or the health of the parents. Babies who always get their way through incessant fussing fail to learn more positive ways of interacting with others. They are not learning what others like and dislike or how to behave in ways considerate of those around them. Babies need tender loving care, but parents who give no thought to their own needs may be starting their child on a life of extreme self-centeredness.

Erikson believed that establishing a sense of trust leads to the basic strength of hope. Hope, rooted in trust, gives optimism and the energy to seek new ways of coping with difficulty and challenge. The ability to trust is fundamental to health, wholeness, faith and maturity in all of life. We never outlive the need for trust. If a infancy or later in life a person develops mistrust, wholeness and maturity cannot come until someone or some community gives the opportunity to experience love, acceptance, and care that can be trusted.

Page 54- Care must be taken not to shame children when they fail to control the bowels or bladder. When antisocial behavior must be restricted, the focus should be on the unacceptable behavior, not on an unacceptable child. When two-year-old Tiffany bites the baby while pretending to kiss him, her mother could respond, "No, Tiffany, Mother cannot let you hurt the baby."

But she should not say, "Why are you so mean?" Protecting children's sense of self-esteem is important. In this stormy period of life, children must be protected from themselves by firm outer controls. They have not yet learned when it is appropriated to hold on or to let go, what they are capable of doing what is beyond them. Shame results from a sense of being exposed. If the choices and efforts of toddlers are not guided, their limitations and inabilities are exposed, and they experience shame and self-doubt. Unbridled antisocial behavior may incur shame-creating responses from adults and other children.

If children are not taught how to do new things, they may be defeated, which can lead to doubts about themselves and even shame. Children who receive no guidance in their activities also face the danger of unfocused frenzy. They rush from toy to toy without focusing long enough to explore and enjoy any activity.



Such patterns of frenzy can inhibit the possibility of taking initiative at the next stage.

Children who gain self-control without losing self-esteem develop the ego strength of will. If adults over control them, children never develop self-control and become vulnerable to shame and doubt. Erikson found that the use of shaming to control children does not lead to genuine acceptance of the desired behavior. Instead, shaming stimulates the secret determination to try and get away with things unseen and to do what is needed to save face in the future. Shaming may even result in defiant shamelessness.

Page 57- Parents can help avoid inappropriate guilt by being careful to differentiate between the behavior and the child when reprimanding their children. Parents must communicate that although the behavior is unacceptable, the child is accepted and loved. If children come to see themselves, as fundamentally bad they feel guilty for who they are. Guilt becomes crushing, and they feel there is no use trying to initiate anything good.

The conscience, then, can guide and protect the young child, or it can create inhibiting bondage. A healthy conscience guides without crushing and is firm yet flexible enough to handle the complexities of our changing lives. Such a conscience forms when children live with clear, consistent guidance and boundaries so that they know what is expected but are given room to make choices, take initiative, and express individuality. If rules from parents and caregivers are uncertain and inconsistent, children have no clear voice to take in to guide them when faced with moral choices. If children are given rigid rules for every detail of life, there is no room for freedom or initiative- they are forever breaking the rules and feeling guilty.



Page 67- As children begin to develop new skills such as reading, writing, singing, or playing an instrument, they can feel affirmed in their worth if they can make real contributions at church. It is important to find ways for all children to contribute with their various levels of maturity and different gifts. Sunday school teachers face the challenge of allowing children to demonstrate their reading and writing abilities, while at the same time not embarrassing children whose skills are not as developed. Choirs are an excellent way for many children to minister to the whole congregation, and non-singers could read Scripture in a worship service or play during an offertory.

Take inventory: How does your church encourage children to take a meaningful part in the work of the church? Which children have not found a place? What might interest them? With whom might the child work?

Page 87- Americans value speed, we tend to assume that faster is always better. However, in the area of development, children are not best served by parents and teachers bent on the maximum acceleration of mental growth. Such efforts may lead to frustration, memorization of words without grasping concepts, and even a sense of inadequacy on the part of the children when they cannot grasp what we try to teach them. Children need from us a rich, accepting environment in which they can learn and grow at the pace that is best for them.

Page 88- Parents and faith communities have values they believe are important to pass on to their children, and children are most likely to understand and eventually own those values if they have the opportunity to experience them. When we prepare to teach a value, we must begin by asking how we can lead children to experience the value, later we may ask how we can best talk about the value. As we saw in chapter 3, parents can assist children in building a firm foundation for faith- trust- in God by giving them the experience of parents who can be trusted. Children can learn love and respect for older people by going to senior citizens' home to sing for or play games with the residents, or a Sunday school class could adopt a grandmother or grandfather and do special things for her or him throughout the year. Through each experience children learn Christian values.

Page 114- Morally healthy families value communication, trusting one another with their joys and their sorrows. Parents encourage children to share their opinions during family discussions and then take seriously those viewpoints, giving children the sense that they play a role in family decision-making. When parents and children differ in their opinions differences need to be discussed, with parents letting children express their perspectives and then parents further clarifying their position for the child. In this everyday decisions making and discussion, children learn to take the role of others and to feel good about themselves as they share in the responsibility for the family.

Part three will discuss the Theory Section in **Joining Children on Their Spiritual Journey by Catherine Stonehouse**