

Foursquare Department of Christian Education DIRECTIONS

A Newsletter for Christian Educators

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Doctrinal Truths... **TREASURE IN A TOXIC ENVIRONMENT**

The church is confronted by a new generation that is caught up in a wave of consumerism and high expectations of technology. This generation is becoming increasingly illiterate of the Bible. This "dumbing" of the Christian mind is creating fresh challenges in discipleship ministries (education and lifestyle). What a person believes affects every aspect of their life.

Because of the disintegration of values and societal stability, we have, for the most part shifted from preaching and teaching of doctrinal themes to focusing exclusively on pragmatic applications of Scripture. Much of Christian discussion and writing focuses on family crises, sexuality, self-identity, relationships, bitterness, forgiveness, cultural conflicts and a host of other valid ministry concerns. Noting this fact, U.S. News & World Report observes, "Many congregations have multiplied their memberships by going light on theology and offering worshipers a steady diet of sermons and support groups that emphasize personal fulfillment."

The weakness of the church has been that we have dealt with issues without grounding people in basic DOCTRINAL realities which undergird them. **BIBLICAL PRINCIPALS ARE IMPERATIVE BECAUSE THEY ARE APPLICATIONS OF THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD OF GOD AND GROUNDED IN FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE.** Doctrine is necessary to communicate and defend the Christian faith.

In caring for the needs of a degraded society, we may have been too lax in declaring our faith

and foundational doctrines because they seem to be less-relevant, less thrilling, and less oriented to societal needs presented in the media. However, in the long and short run of life knowing and living sound doctrine should be the way of life. Scriptural, doctrinal teaching is accompanied by specific values and life related applications that are inherently linked to successful living in the Kingdom of God. For example, family instructions are intrinsically grounded in the doctrine dealing with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21), eschatology (study of the end times-vv.22-24), Christology, (vv.25-33), and the nature of God (6:1-4). Morality is biblically rooted in the doctrine of redemption (I Cor. 6:15-20). Servanthood is built on the foundation of the Incarnation (Phil. 2:3-11).



Our challenge is to perpetuate our Christian faith by doctrinal instruction that those who come to Jesus Christ will not be swayed, and those who know Jesus Christ will be rooted and grounded in faith.

The primary purpose of KNOWING doctrine is not just for the information but rather the transformation in us!

"And YOU shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

Rick Wulfestieg is the National Minister of Christian Education for the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.



Making Religion Relevant

Why and how parents are bringing up kids in the faith (with a new attitude and a few rules of their own).

by Laura Mosedale



Studies suggest that religious involvement can provide an edge. "As a child's involvement in religion increases, all the forms of at-risk behavior decrease," says Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., president of the Search Institute in Minneapolis, which conducted a survey of 47,000 students in grades six through 12. "There's less drug use, antisocial behavior, and early sexual involvement and more empathy and volunteerism."

The challenge for most of today's parents is not deciding whether to expose their children to formal religion, but rather finding the right faith, practices, rituals, and community support groups that work for them--and that have a positive and lasting impact on their kids.

WHY FAMILIES TURN-OR RETURN-TO RELIGION

Real religious involvement is more likely to accompany a child's budding awareness of life's mysteries. In fact, the most religiously active people are families with children ages 6 to 15, he adds.

"Before kids, we looked into joining a church, but didn't act on it," says May Lou Kennedy, a mother of three in Cleveland. "When our oldest turned 4, she started asking about God. That's when we said, 'She needs to go now.'"

"Children are innately religious," says Harvey Roy Greenberg, M.D., a clinical professor of psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City who counsels people in spiritual matters. "They start wondering around age 3, 4, or 5 where they came from, where they're going, who created the world. Organized religion gives kids a framework to think about these issues."

"Kids also notice the powerful emotions families display around certain events—say, a birth or death," says Kyle Pruett, M.D., a clinical professor of psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, and author of *The Nurturing Father*. "They think, 'Wow, this is different. Mom and Dad are really struck by this,' and realize that there are things that cause strong feelings that you cannot see and can't explain."

Dear God,
I don't ever
feel alone since
I found out about
you. Nora

Faith is the cornerstone of organized religion. "Most parents want their children to do what's right—faith gives kids a sense of accountability in a society experiencing a moral free-fall," says Thomas Lickona, Ph.D., professor of education at the State University of New York at Cortland and author of *Educating for Character*.

Some experts contend that the values conveyed by most religions—love, mercy, kindness—are harder to convey outside of a religious context. "Parents may think if they just model the right behavior, their kids will be fine. But I'm not sure it's enough," says Carole Rayburn, Ph.D., M.Div., a clinical psychologist in Silver Spring, Maryland, and fellow of the Division of the Psychology of Religion of the American Psychological Association.

Some parents, like Kennedy, rely on the framework religion offers to reinforce their values. Morality comes up naturally in conversation when her kids come home from Sunday school, she says.

While Michael Schulman, Ph.D., a New York City clinical psychologist and author of *Bringing Up a Moral Child*, concedes that it may be easier to teach morals within a religious context, he cautions against teaching tenets you don't really believe.

Rather, children learn moral behavior by watching their parents' actions. For example, at Christmas, Patti Desroches and her kids bring gifts to the "giving tree" at the parish house, which is covered with notes requesting food and clothing for a family shelter. "We try to practice what we believe in lots of little ways," she says.

Sense of Community
"Of all the tools that facilitate moral development, a community of people who share the same values is one of the most important," says William Damon, Ph.D., a professor of education at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and author of *The Moral Child*. "For many kids, especially those living in the inner city, their religious congregations are enormously important. They see them as safe places, revered by people they revere," adds Dr. Pruett. Religious institutions are also often the only intergenerational meeting places in many communities.

The Rituals
A big emotional draw to religion for many parents are the rituals that organize and enhance family life: saying "grace," decorating a Christmas tree, changing over to Passover dishes. "These rituals give us a way of connecting with members of our family or our community. They also give us a sense that there's some predictable order in the world," says Fitzpatrick.

"Rituals are especially important for kids because they speak to them in a nonverbal way--and get the message across," adds Fitzpatrick. "When kids participate in rituals, all of their senses become involved--they see the candle's flame, touch when hands are held, hear special music."

The Stories
For children, religious stories are very appealing. "You have a personal bond with a series of characters--Moses, Mary, and Jesus," says Dr. Schulman. When kids stand up to a bully, say, or don't go along with the crowd, they don't feel so alone.

Desroches feels that in her own Catholic upbringing, sin was stressed at the expense of the message of God's love. Observing that her preschoolers were "troubled by the sight of Jesus on the cross," Desroches sought out kids' religious literature "that doesn't focus on the bad guys, though it's not easy to find," she says. With the story of Christ's birth, for instance, she doesn't dwell on the fact that there was no room at the inn, but on the joy of the baby's birth.

NEW SOLUTIONS TO THE RELIGION QUESTION

While some parents return to the faith they grew up with, they don't always "buy the whole package," says Fitzpatrick. Dr. Roof's research shows that many parents remain too alienated from their own religious background to engage in traditional observance. About half of Americans who belong to a congregation have belonged for fewer than five years.

According to Robert Wuthnow, Ph.D., a professor of sociology at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, and author of *The Restructuring of American Religion*, families are interested in spirituality but are looking for different venues in which to explore it. "They shop around for the right congregation--not necessarily on theological grounds--but based on what programs it offers," he says.

Of all the "new" religions, the biggest growth is occurring in conservative Christian evangelical churches, partly due to their aggressive outreach. These churches draw those who feel "**THE LIBERAL PROTESTANT CHURCHES HAVE 'WATERED DOWN' RELIGION,**" says Dr. Roof. The injunctions of these organizations against things like premarital sex and abortion may also help parents feel they can immunize their kids against many modern evils.

But there are down sides to all the "injunctions" formal religion imposes, experts caution. "When 'spirituality' becomes a tool used by adults to make kids feel bad for things they can't control--like jealousy and anger--kids spend their time seeking forgiveness instead of expressing their goodness," says Dr. Pruett.

"Recently I sat by a frightened girl in an emergency room. She was only 6 and was in the hospital because the child sitting next to her on the bus that day was hit in a drive-by shooting," Dr. Pruett recalls. "She held my hand and whispered, 'I'm so scared, will you pray with me?' She was telling me that prayer was an important part of her life and asking me if I, a stranger, would share it with her. No matter what our own religious upbringing, moments like this draw us back to our spiritual roots and remind us that we all really do belong to each other."

What today's parents are seeking when "shopping" for a congregation: a good youth director, same-age kids, a preschool program, support groups, quality Sunday school.

Good News Bears

How do they make it work?

Van Nuys Spanish Foursquare Church
An interview with Wanda Pineda

Q How do you organize ages?

A We have 200 children and 50 workers all of which are youth, couples, and singles. We have six groups - Nursery (babies and toddlers), 3&4's, Kindergarten, grades 1 & 2, then 3 & 4, finally grades 5 & 6.

Q Why did your church choose Good News Bears?

A We wanted to do something different and fun that would also involve the parents.

Q What do you use for curriculum?

A For Preschool through elementary we use the Good News Bears Leader's Guide and Fresh Waters.

For the babies and toddlers we use Victor Books *Hablame De Dios* which has a brief lesson & activity. We play worship songs and familiarize the young ones with clapping, raising their hands, and praising God.

Q How do you keep the older ages interested in the Good News Bears?

A We use the 5th & 6th graders as helpers in the Missions teaching and arts & crafts. We also offer workshops. Someone from the church comes in and demonstrates a skill or craft and plans an activity.

Q How do you plan your lessons?

A To coordinate the lessons, we have teachers meetings monthly. They always have a mission lesson once a month, then an arts & crafts time once a month. So they plan two or three teaching times from the BEARS curriculum or Fresh Waters. The teachers agree on what subject they will teach, but how they teach it is up to them.

Q Why do you have such success with getting helpers for Good News Bears?

A First of all, there is a lot of excitement generated. The teachers have the freedom to teach the way they are comfortable. Whether it is by demonstration, talking about the spiritual victories in their own lives, or teaching from a curriculum. Even if their methods may not be perfect, the kids know that the teacher is comfortable with the situation and that makes a good teaching time.

Q What has been your biggest challenge with the Good News Bears?

A All of the children speak English, but some of the adults don't so we have some communication or translation problems. But we talk to the children in the class and explain that they sometimes have to help the teacher understand or communicate. This teaches the children to help the adults while the adults are teaching them.

Foursquare Publications does have a Spanish translation for the Good News Bears teacher. Please call for information.

Wanda Pineda is part of the Good News Bears program at the Van Nuys Hispanic Church, but she also works with Customer Service at Foursquare Publications.



From left to right: Christian Education Ministers Ivan & Anna Valverde and Senior Pastors Loren & Cheilon Edwards of the Van Nuys Spanish Foursquare Church.

Kids really don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care!

Bill Wilson, Metro Ministries

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BUILD QUALITY BY LEARNING STAFFERS' WORK PREFERENCES

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Are you having problems getting your staffers to work as a team? Does it seem as though your people aren't giving their best effort? The problem may not be in the employees themselves but in the way you're managing them. If you know how your employees think, you'll be better equipped to motivate them.

Research has proven that some people, by their very nature, prefer to work with others as equals in teams. Others enjoy teamwork but prefer positions of leadership when on teams. Still others prefer to work on their own.

***F**ind out what kind of working environment they prefer. Some employees seem to enjoy a "procedural environment" in which the work was repetitive. Others get along better in an "optional environment" in which the work constantly changes. Many employees prefer some combination of these environments.*

***T**his strategy has a strong effect on productivity, quality, and teamwork. All improve when employees are doing the kinds of jobs for which they're best suited.*

***D**etermine whether staffers are "exclusionary" or "inclusionary" people. Exclusionary people are those who tend to recognize problems and then try to solve them. Inclusionary people, on the other hand, don't always see problems as problems. They often think in terms of how they will benefit from the working experience in spite of a problem.*

***I**nclude both exclusionary and inclusionary people on quality teams. Exclusionary people will help to analyze the procedures properly, and the inclusionary people will pull the team toward the goal.*

***O**bserve whether the staffers judge their own work internally or externally? Internal people tend to decide for themselves how well they have performed. In fact, they may resent compliments and even question your right to judge their work. If they are not doing things right, though they may think they are, it can be difficult to correct them.*

***E**xternal people tend to need feedback from others on how well they are performing.*

***R**ecognize the need to be flexible in your management practices. As a manager, you have been taught to be firm, fair, and consistent. However, to really be fair, you must sometimes be inconsistent. People don't always want to be treated the same way.*

***B**e cautious. Even once you're able to identify patterns in employees, it's probably not a good idea to tell them what you've determined about them. A lot of people get nervous and resentful if they feel they are being "analyzed." Instead, sit down with each person and say, Let's create a strategy to help you get the things you want. It makes a lot more sense to show employees that you understand them than to tell them that you understand.*

Sound Doctrine

Rick Wulfestieg

Good doctrine is healthy Biblical instruction that causes us to think correctly about God and express those thoughts accurately and plainly; in a manner that brings change to the way we think and live.

Christian leaders are not called to lead alone. Rather, they are to involve other faithful, qualified persons to help them oversee the people of God. The primary role of the Christian leader is TEACHING. We are to instruct others in godly living, regardless of our station in life. Also, we are to guard God's people from false teachers and deceivers who would take advantage of them.

"But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine . . ." Titus 2:1-5 (NKJV)
Spirit-Filled Life Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Our Prayer...

- 1 Help us to see that all that we do in practical ministry flows out of what we believe doctrinally.
- 2 Help us to view the world through the truth of Scripture, rather than trying to fit the Scriptures into EXPERIENCES with the world.
- 3 Remove the intimidation factor for pastors and teachers, regarding the teaching and preaching of sound doctrine.
- 4 Dispel the myth that doctrine is merely for academics or the scholars.
- 5 Help us to so articulate biblical doctrine that the Holy Spirit will reveal truth that sets free through the process of repentance, faith, and reformation of conduct.
- 6 We are alarmed that the children of today are missing the foundations of Christianity. We are convinced that this movement towards deeper commitment should start in children's ministry.
- 7 Doctrinal instruction is necessary to help adults move into a deeper understanding of the foundations of faith.

Community Update

U.S. Department of Education

Last month, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced the formation of a nationwide partnership to support the goal of greater family involvement in children's learning. Riley released a report documenting the crucial contribution families make to student learning. The report concludes that family involvement must be "a special focus of any school improvement effort." Riley noted that one of the eight National Education Goals, enacted earlier this year as part of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, calls on schools to "promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation."

A significant theme of "Strong Families, Strong Schools" is a review of existing public support for greater family involvement in learning:

- ✎ 40 percent of parents believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education;
- ✎ teachers believe strengthening parents' roles in their children's learning must be the top issue in education policy;
- ✎ nearly three-quarters of students aged 10 to 13 would like to talk to their parents more about schoolwork;
- ✎ 89 percent of company executives find the lack of parental involvement to be the biggest obstacle to school reform.

In his remarks, Riley said he had found "a desire on the part of many groups across the political spectrum to coalesce around this vital issue that is so important to the well-being of this nation." In the process of developing the family partnership for learning, Riley and his staff met with 125 different parent, religious, business, education, civic and community-based organizations. Pointing to the need for each of these groups to establish a supportive environment for family involvement in learning, Riley called on schools to make parents feel welcome and businesses to take steps to enable families to give attention to their children.

Excerpted from The U.S. Department of Education Goals 2000 Community Update, Riley Urges Families to Get Involved in Children's Learning. October 1994