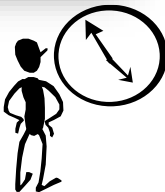


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Every Child Has Something to Say

By Jefferson David Tant

It is patently obvious that children have needs, beginning at the time of birth. They need food. They need clothing. They need to have their diapers changed. And they need to be held. But beyond these necessities for their life and well-being, there are other needs that are just as vital and even more so, and sadly, some of these needs are in short supply for some children. So, let's consider some of these needs, things that a child's very existence says.

Love

Love is a basic human need, from babies to the elderly. And while there might be general agreement with this, it is unfortunate that sometimes young ones rarely, if ever, receive the love and affection they need. Parents can be so busy with other things that the little ones are short-changed. There are different ways to show love besides just telling them you love them. Hold them in your lap. Read to them. Play with them.

Are children sometimes hard to love? That can happen. But God has given us an example that it can be done. *"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly"* (Romans 5:8). We had certainly done nothing to deserve what God did for us, so surely we can love our children, no matter how "undeserving" they may be at times.

Example

As children become aware of those around them, they naturally begin to imitate what they see in their parents. If they hear foul language, then that seems normal to their little ears. If they see the abuse of alcohol, then that will influence them as they grow older. If they see an attitude of kindness to others, that will also affect them.

And, of course, spiritual examples are of great importance. Some years ago, we had an elderly couple who were

members of the church my wife and I were with. They were faithful and spiritually minded. But in the days when they were raising their children, they had no spiritual life. And now that their children were adults and out on their own, none of them had any interest in spiritual things. They had no example to follow.

Time

Yes, we lead busy lives and are involved in many things. But one of the greatest things we can be involved in is our children. This is a part of loving them, as mentioned earlier. If parents don't have time for them, they will likely seek others to spend time with, and those others might not influence them best. Take them to the park. Take them to buy some ice cream as a treat. Read children's books to them. Show them that they are important.

Discipline

Discipline comes in two ways.

1. One matter of discipline involves giving a child some responsibilities. Make up your bed. Keep your room clean. Help with chores around the house. Keep up with your schoolwork. This is essential in forming a child's character and preparing for adulthood when family and job needs multiply. Early training in discipline is good training for adulthood. Learning discipline also has spiritual applications. *"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"* (Hebrews 12:9).
2. Discipline is also a part of learning the consequences of making the wrong decisions. Excusing bad behavior by saying "boys will be boys" may save parents from having to give discipline at the time, but it will produce some unpleasant consequences for the boys when they are out on their own. *"A wise son accepts his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke"* (Proverbs 13:1). *"Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death"* (Proverbs 19:18) *"He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently"* (Prov. 13:24).

Teach

God's words to David apply to us, as well. *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you"* (Psalms 32:8). And there is the familiar passage in Deuteronomy 6:5-9: *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."*

Then, we have Paul's instructions to the fathers. "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). I am afraid that too many times, fathers think they are so busy that they leave this up to mothers. Obviously, mothers have a part in this, as seen in Timothy's family. "*For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well*" (II Timothy 1:5). But mothers fulfilling their responsibility does not excuse fathers from their responsibility.

Guide

How does a blind person know where to go? A sighted person or even a guide dog may lead him. And how does a child come to know the way of life? That is not an inborn instinct but something that is taught. As in other matters previously mentioned, this is the responsibility of parents, as you might take a blind person by the hand and guide him to his destination. And what is our final destination? Heaven.

Parents, listen to your children. They may not always express their needs in words, but their very presence clearly speaks volumes.

As God guides us on our journey, so parents must guide their children. "*I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them And rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, And I will not leave them undone*" (Isaiah 42:16).

Lessons from a Leper

By Zack Lee

Naaman was a very successful man. He was commander of the Syrian army, held in high esteem in the eyes of his king, a victorious general, and a mighty man of valor. However, he had leprosy. His story can be found in II Kings 5. Naaman heard through a young slave girl that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure him of his leprosy. As we read the account of how Naaman sought a cure for his leprosy, we can learn some important lessons about how to cleanse ourselves from an even worse disease, sin.

Naaman thought his healing could be purchased.

When Naaman was given permission from the king of Syria to go to Israel, he went "*taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothes*" (II Kings 5:5). He obviously thought that he could purchase his healing from someone in Israel. Like Naaman, we cannot purchase our healing for sin. A price had to be paid to redeem us from our sins, "*not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot*" (I Peter 1:18-19). We can never purchase our salvation. Only through the blood that was shed on the cross can we be healed.

Naaman had a preconceived idea of how his healing would take place.

Naaman said to himself, "*Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper*" (II Kings 5:1). When Elisha sent a messenger out to tell Naaman to go and dip in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed he became furious. He thought his own plan for healing was better than Elisha's. When it comes to our own healing from sin, we must not come to God with our preconceived ideas of how that healing should take place. We must not approach God's word seeking to justify what we currently believe. We must seek to know God's word and submit to His will.

Naaman tried to substitute his own terms of obedience instead of the Lord's.

Naaman did not want to wash in the Jordan River. He asked, "*Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage*" (II Kings 5: 12). We do not have the liberty to substitute our own doctrines in place of God's plain teaching. Only when we are obedient to His commands will we receive God's blessings.

Finally, Naaman humbly obeyed the Lord's instructions.

Naaman could not see any logical connection between dipping in the Jordan River and being cleansed from his leprosy, but he obeyed. When Naaman chose to be obedient, he was healed. A believer in Christ may not see any logical connection between being baptized in water and having his sins washed away. However, we must accept God's word. Paul was told to "*arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name*" (Acts 22: 16). It is God who saves us when we choose to obey Him. Obedience has its reward, cleansing us from our sins.

Will you learn these lessons?

Christianity is a Crutch

By Zeke Flores

Some people say, "Christianity is a crutch for the weak!"

I agree; it is a crutch. More precisely, it's a help, a way to cope. God's way is a comfort for the afflicted (II Corinthians 1:3-5), help for the persecuted (Hebrews 10:32-39), and strength for the downtrodden (Romans 8:31,36-39). The reason we need this "crutch" is because we *are* weak. We're unable to navigate life solely on our own, and who better to guide us than the One who created us and knows us best?

But because faith is a help for the helpless, it does not mean it doesn't take grit and determination to see it through. Yes, Christianity is a crutch for the weak, but it's not for sissies.

"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18).

Hosea: A Leader Who Made an Astounding Sacrifice!

By Max Dawson

One of the things I have learned about leadership is that sometimes, the best leaders are those who were reluctant to be leaders. Witness the case of Moses (Exodus 3:7-4:17). I have known men who were reluctant to serve as an overseer of the church, as a deacon, or even as a Bible class teacher; their reluctance was due to the gravity of the work. They were hesitant because they knew the work was such that, if not done well, they might do more harm than good to the kingdom.

I wonder if Hosea was a reluctant leader. There is no doubt that God chose him to bring a message to the people of Israel (Hosea 1:1). In the opening chapters of his book, Hosea appears to have no reluctance. If there was any reluctance, it does not appear in the text. But why would there be any reluctance? It would be because of what God directed Hosea to do! He was told to take a wife of harlotry, so he went and took Gomer as his wife (Hosea 1:2-3).

How it must have grieved Hosea to marry a woman who would not be faithful to him! He watched her drift from their marriage time and again. When Hosea was told to speak to the Israelites about their spiritual condition, he could do so with pain and passion in his heart, for he knew firsthand what it was like to have an unfaithful wife. He knew firsthand how God must have felt about His unfaithful wife, Israel!

Few leaders have been called upon to sacrifice more than Hosea. God told him to marry this woman, a woman who was destined to bring him lonely nights and endless heartaches. Where was Hosea's chance at personal happiness and contentment in life? How he must have agonized over Gomer—just as God agonized over faithless Israel.

Indeed, Hosea sacrificed so much in serving God and in being a leader in Israel. While his role as a leader was certainly unique, don't miss the point: leadership is about sacrifice! Sometimes, people think leadership is about being looked up to and respected and about perks and privileges! Where were Hosea's perks and privileges? Who would look up to and respect such a man? Only those godly and devout Israelites who truly understood Hosea's role could look up to and respect him. They could appreciate his sacrifice.

An important lesson can be drawn from Hosea: Being a leader in God's kingdom is not about perks and privileges. It is not about gaining rights but more about giving them up! While God may not require leaders today to do as Hosea did, he does require leaders to sacrifice! For those men who lead God's flock as shepherds, God requires that they put time, energy, heart (and sometimes even money) into their work. Sacrifice.

Sacrifice. You can't serve God's people without it.