

FAMILIES FIRST

NEWSLETTER

Assisting Parents with the Spiritual Formation of Their Children

FIRST FRUITS OR LEFT OVERS

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Last week one of our dedicated Sunday School Officers expressed her sadness that the Sunday School offering was only a \$1.00 and sometimes it had been even worse. **I heard her heart.** It wasn't about the money; she was concerned that we are not teaching our children to give back to God. Everything we have is a gift from God and all He requires is that, at a minimum, we bring a tithe (10%) of all He has given us. Genesis tells of 2 brothers, Cain who brought some fruit as an offering to God and Abel who brought the best of what he had. In Genesis 14 Abram, returning from battle meets Melchizedek. Verse 18 says, "Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by the God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth...'" Verse 20 then tells us that Abram gave, this one who foreshadows Jesus as our great high priest, one tenth of all he had.

Now with this being said as your big hint, where is the only place in the Bible God says **"test Me"**? If you guessed it is bringing your tithes into God's storehouse (the church) you would be correct. Malachi chapter 3 speaks of God's people robbing Him and when they ask how, God's response was in their tithes and offerings. Verse 10b says, "Test me in this", says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." How do we teach our

children to give as Abel and Abram? May I suggest, begin as preschoolers giving them some money to put in the Sunday School offering or in the plate during worship. When my granddaughter sat with us in church, I would give her our envelope to put in the plate and when she would ask why? – it was a teachable moment. As children get older and begin earning a little money here or there, teach them to tithe what they earn. If they earn \$10 they should give \$1 back to God. Teenagers should be encouraged as they enter the work force to maintain the priority of giving back to God first. Your children notice you joyfully giving back to God and they need be taught, through our example that we can sacrifice here or there to see our missionaries properly funded and the mission of the church resourced to fulfill the Great Commission. Our example and teaching helps to establish a healthy respect and obedience to God's word and teaches children to be generous. They can see beyond their own wants to the positive affect they can have on people's needs. We are teaching our children to love God and one another. All our lives we fight the sin of putting ourselves and our wants ahead of others. These are some small steps that set up a lifetime of blessing for our family and our children's future. I can only imagine the impact First United Methodist Church could have if we "tested God", as He admonishes us to do, and how bright the future would be because children are being taught to follow God's word. What will I choose? - First fruits or leftovers.

Linda Bynum



What To Do About Movies?

About once a month I find myself at Blockbuster Video picking out movies for Parent's Night Out. I try to find one that is suitable for the younger kids (5 and under) and one that is appropriate for the older kids (5-12). Inevitably this is a HUGE challenge. The one for the littler ones is easy, something G rated and of course a cartoon, whatever is new will work. But for the older ones, the challenge begins. What would be appropriate to show them? What will engage them and perhaps lead to some conversation afterwards, either with me or their parents? And what does PG really mean? Does it mean potty language or does it mean some really bad language?

I realized the other day at home that this is becoming a bigger issue on an everyday basis with my 3 ½ year old. He was walking from one room to the other muttering "it's not complex, it's Comcast." I asked him what he was saying and he said he didn't know, he heard it on TV. This made me see how much more that TV and movies are becoming an everyday problem, and how kids repeat things or try things that they really don't understand. All those Saturdays and evenings come back into my mind with a baseball, football game, the news on TV while we are playing, and Tommy starts to pick up those things while he isn't even really watching. It makes me start to wonder, what is ok to have on the TV when he is in the room? What is he picking up when he is playing and listening? The more and more I think about it, the more I simply want to turn the TV off and not turn it back on when he is around. Unfortunately, that is not always possible, and if I did, I am sure that I would miss some good teaching opportunities.

Recently a mom recommended a site to me, www.moviemom.com. The site is through yahoo and it is a website that can help all parents with the problems we face having our kids watch movies. If you simply go to google.com and enter Movie Mom and then the name of any movie, a review will

come up. In the review there will be a summary of the story and then details that you may want to know about the movie. These include: the actual crude language that is used, type of violence, and type of intimate situations. Then she suggests some questions to think about and to talk about.

So, instead of turning off the TV permanently and never letting your child go to see a movie in the theater, do some research and take advantage of the show to talk with your child about some things that perhaps wouldn't be discussed otherwise. When the movie is over, parents have a great opportunity to talk with their kids about why certain characters made the decisions that they did. If there was risky behavior, it is a great opportunity to talk about what the right behavior is and what the consequences might be for the risky behavior. There also are often religious undertones in movies that your kids might miss, bring those up, and talk about them. Movies and television can be a great learning tool (in moderation) and an opportunity for us to parent in the secular world.

Take some time this month to think about what programs and movies you let your children watch and what you watch together. Think about if those shows portray messages that you want your children to see, and if not, decide what should be watched, or what you need to talk about with your kids. Check out some of the online resources before you go see a movie, and afterwards, take your kids for a treat and talk about the movie, what you can learn from it, what role God played in the movie (if any), and how as a Christian, we choose to act. Take the chance to relate to your kids about your spiritual life and how this affects our lives every day and in all we do.

Abby Kammann



THE POWER OF PRAYER

A few days ago I had to run an errand with my husband and four year old that took us on unfamiliar roads after dark. As we were driving along I spotted several groups of deer by the road. Having been raised in a rural area and being very aware of the dangers that deer pose during early morning and evening hours, I sent up a quick prayer asking God to get my family safely home. As I did so I was reminded of another incident that happened several months ago

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

when I was called to Indiana on family business. I had gotten up early and was on the road by six. I made the four hour drive, sat in meetings most of the day and was two and a half hours into my four hour drive back when the snowstorm

hit. It was dark and I was exhausted. All I wanted was to be home with my family and get some much needed sleep. With 100 miles still to go I was having trouble seeing the road even with the slow speeds that I was driving. The thought of having to stop and find a hotel so close to home and the comfort of my family was not a pleasant one so again I sent up a prayer. I asked God to keep just one line somewhere on the road visible so that I could navigate by it and reach home that night. Within one mile of saying my prayer the blowing snowstorm had eased to a gentle snow. I still had to drive slowly but I could clearly see one line on the road for the next 90 miles. I couldn't believe how quickly my prayer had been answered and how obvious it was that God was with me

and listening to my plea. It became even more clear to me what He had done when the snowstorm kicked up in full force when I was a mere five miles from home and back on roads that I was very familiar with.

I had a conversation recently that started me thinking about all the times God has answered my prayers concerning little things in my life. Not only was His response loud and clear during a snowstorm but He has also answered prayers regarding needing a hobby and some outside interests when my career as stay-at-home mom was getting a little frustrating and tedious. I Thessalonians 5:17 sums it all up with two words, “pray continually”. The older I get and the further along my spiritual journey I travel the more I appreciate being able to ask God for help and guidance in the little things in life for those are the things that seem to cause me the most frustration on a day-to-day basis. What a blessing to be able to take EVERYTHING to God in prayer.

Lest I start to sound like I am patting myself on the back I do have to confess to a failing as well. While I have thanked God for His answers to these prayers, I have certainly not thanked Him often enough. How many times have I taken His intervention for granted by chalking something up to chance or fate? How much more could my life be blessed if I remembered I Thessalonians 5:16 and 18 as well as 5:17? For together it says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Darlene Maginley



Parenting together with Fusion Student Ministries

My friend Jason called me a week ago. He's a friend from High School who is in Italy for the next 5-10 years. After the conversation I began to think about how my life has been enriched by my friendship with him and his wife. I didn't have any idea when I met him that we would have so much in common or that we would have such a mutually edifying relationship. We were a couple of sophomores in small town Ohio, who met in church and were looking for fun stuff to do on a Friday night.

Like Jason and I meeting at church and developing a great friendship, we who lead Fusion Student Ministries, want to focus on creating more opportunities for students to connect with one another and with God. During an unscientific poll of some High Schoolers we found that the most common felt need at the PCS educational park is connection or acceptance. That might not be a surprise to you, but at least one student from this church plays a sport, not because he is good at it or particularly likes the sport, but simply to have the camaraderie of the team around him. While sports are nice we need to be focused on making connections between godly students, between godly adults and students, and between God and students. In short we are working this year to make connections between as many people and God as we can.

We also want students to know the Word and have clean souls. So much of what students see and encounter in their daily lives is spiritual trash. They are bombarded by messages that will eventually rot their souls. They carry around the weight of dealing with big things like sex and alcohol, and seemingly smaller things like gossip and insults. We are committed to telling the students the truth about things that God has told us to refrain from in order to keep our souls clean. We are also committed to sharing the

promises that God has given us in the form of his Word. We want students to be able to understand a basic outline of the Bible, to recite it, and especially to teach it to other students.

So how does this deal with parenting? Well first of all, you have a compatriot in the fight for your adolescents. You aren't in this alone and we are committed to doing everything we can to help you through some difficult parenting years. Secondly, we have provided some framework for saying no to your adolescents. When they ask you if they can watch an R-rated movie, you can say no and follow up with the idea of this movie dirtying their soul. If they have been to Fusion much this year they will understand the analogy. And finally when students start reading their Bibles, and incorporating the information in the Word, they have such a solid base for making decisions even while you aren't present with them.

You are the primary encouragement for the things we are doing in Fusion, and you are the primary model for your youth. If you value the Word, and clean souls and a connection with other Christians then your youth are more likely to value those things as well. So join us in practicing these three objectives this school year. You might be surprised at the outcome.

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