

FOR HIM OR IN HIM?

Sometimes I do things for God. Do you?

Sometimes I get very busy doing things for God. Sometimes I even get too busy to pray much.

Just occasionally I realize how insane this is! God invites us into a loving relationship with a heavenly Father... He is not some kind of distant employer. Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him. To get to know Him, to follow His example, to walk alongside Him as a friend, moment by moment.

"I no longer call you servants, but friends." (John 15:15)

Hard work is not what Jesus is looking for. He is interested in our loving submission to Him. He would like to work through us by the power of the Holy Spirit as we live closely with Him.

Sometimes I try to put the cart before the horse, and put my ministry for God before my relationship with God, which of course, goes nowhere. (John 15:5, John 8:28)

But, I would like to learn to live in Him and in His love always.

Would you?

Janet Woodlock

Editor



UP & COMING EVENTS

Saturday 17th November CPN brunch and AGM.

Further details on Page 6

For more information, contact your CPN Representative (see back page for contact information)

A CONVENT PRAYER OF JOHN WESLEY



And now, beloved, let us bind ourselves with willing bonds to our covenant God, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

This taking of His yoke upon us means that we are heartily content that He appoint us our place and work, and that He alone be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, some bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves,

in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given us in Christ, who strengtheneth us.

Therefore, let us make the Covenant of God our own. Let us engage our heart to the Lord, and resolve in His strength never to go back.

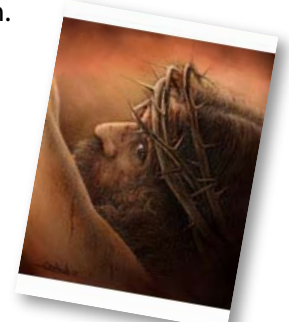
Being thus prepared, let us now, in sincere dependence on His grace and trusting in His promises, yield ourselves anew to Him, meekly kneeling upon our knees.

I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt; rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be

employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen



THE SPIRIT OF A YOUNG CHILD



Do you think children are born with an innate God-dimension? Could it be part of being “made in the image of God”? I remember a chat with a mother, whose young child was asking “God-ques-

tions”. The mother was frustrated and a bit angry. “We had already decided that we would keep “God-stuff” away from her until at least primary school, because she would better be able to handle that then. But now, at three, she is asking about God! I want to know who got to her! We can’t understand it; we have been very careful!”

The mother was a little puzzled and a bit put out when I suggested that maybe the “God-stuff” was built into her daughter. That no one had pushed it in; God had planted it!

This doesn’t mean that we are supposed to just let it happen, and stay out of the way. All we are as parents—what we do; what we say; how we look; our attitude – all will have a shaping impact on what content our children will give to the “God-stuff.”

Parents have the key role, however much a good Christian community



can support that key role. In fact, the early understanding of God in small children is mixed up facts and fantasies about their parents. Fear of a parent can easily carry over into fear of God.

Consciously or unconsciously, parents communicate their own images of God to their children. This makes the skill of listening one of the main skills for parents of young children. If we really care [which we do!], we will want to help our children discover and drop any unhelpful distortions in their understanding of God.

But, if we are going to listen, we must really listen. Too often, adults get carried away with the “funny things children say,” without realising the true significance of the moment a child said the “funny thing.” A child rarely asks a “silly question” to an adult in a caring relationship. The child might struggle with the words, or the ideas, but they are not trying to be funny. In the rush and bustle of daily life, we need to “slow down” inside, as well as outside, if we are to “hear” our children’s “God-stuff”. Consequently, bedtimes remain an amazing opportunity to listen.

Once an idea has formed, it can be corrected, but it can’t be forced out of existence. I once taught a group of boys about Jesus curing a leper. I told the story with enthusiasm and then invited the boys to draw something from the story. One boy was busily drawing an animal with spots on it. He told me that he was drawing the leopard Jesus cured! I apologised, corrected the information and he drew something else. He had done the best he could with my poor communication. If I had not encouraged a visual response he would have left

the class with a wrong image that might never have been corrected.

We need to “tune in” to the image of God our children form, because if “God” is not to be thrown away like a worn-out teddy, the early image must be reshaped and transformed. One writer said, “It is impossible to give an image of God in childhood that will be adequate for a lifetime. The [first] image of God is powerful and lasting, but the relationship with God must be continually transformed. Coming to God is a lifetime process.”

Listening to children, and correcting any misunderstandings, is very different to telling children what to find, of course. Some of us still find it hard to let the child discover, instead of telling them. We really need to become committed to joining our children on their own spiritual journey, don’t we?



Ron Buckland

Ron is the minister of Montrose Church of Christ. He worked for Scripture Union for many years, runs a children’s ministry internship program through CCTC, and is the keynote speaker at this year’s CPN AGM and brunch at Ringwood Church of Christ.

BIG NIGHT OUT

On Wednesday the 22nd of August around 60 people gathered at Glen Waverley Anglican Church for a BECT/CPN dessert and coffee evening for those involved in playgroup ministry. This involved worship, brainstorming sessions on a variety of topics, a DVD presentation and time to browse through playgroup activities and resources. Comments about the night included:

- playgroup activities were excellent
- I picked up a number of ideas
- good sharing time with others
- the lemon tart was divine!
- remembered the things I haven't tried for a while
- I heard of ideas that had never crossed my mind
- great to hear from other churches and denominations of what works for them



CHRISTIANS IN PLAYGROUPS

Are you a Christian? Are you involved in Playgroup or any other ministry to families outside of the Church? If you are, people will be following you. Where do you want people to follow you to?

Recently someone said to me, "I'm just a helper". Do these words sound humble to you? If so, perhaps you need to look deeper. This person needs to be encouraged that if they are a follower of Jesus, they are a leader of people. Helping

is a wonderful gift, no 'just a helper' about it!

"I'm not a leader, I just go along" are words which Christian women in Playgroups often say to explain their involvement in Playgroup. I

CHRISTIANS IN PLAYGROUPS continued

hope that what they mean is that they are not involved in an administrative or facilitating role. I hope this doesn't mean that they see themselves as without a leadership role. Every Christian involved in Playgroup can influence people to become followers of Jesus.

Am I a leader? Again and again the books of the New Testament reinforce that Jesus intends all his followers to be leaders. This is most famously obvious in Matthew 28:18-20, 'Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them...". Our desire for others is surely an echo of Paul when he called the Christians at Corinth to 'Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ' in 1 Cor 11:1. Neither Jesus nor Paul were referring to looks, social standing, skills or charisma but a desire to reflect Jesus character, radiating His love and sharing the gospel

of grace. Your status as an heir of salvation is one of leader, and is there for you to embrace.

How do I show those following me where I am going? As you consider your own role in Playgroup, I would like you to pray about several relevant aspects. The first is destination as a leader. Where am I going? The most important place you can lead someone to is the feet of Jesus. You can't confidently lead someone to where you haven't been, and you can't comfortably lead someone to where you are not spending time yourself. Take time to be on intimate terms with your Friend, the One you want to introduce your friends at Playgroup to. (This crucial point can be further explored in the CPN/BECT elective "Help! I want to share my faith".)

There are many facets of leadership, and even more books written about them. In our secular working lives we pour so much time and resources

into training, and professional development, yet sometimes we miss the point of training and professional development for our vital volunteers and their ministries. Take your work for the Kingdom seriously, and take advantage of all the resources available to build it joyfully and confidently.

If you have doubts, if you need direction, if you want prayer, then don't put this all in the "too hard" basket and quit. Use another resource God has given you – people. Enlist the help of a prayer warrior, discuss goals with your minister, network with others who have common goals, call or email someone from the CPN committee – after all, you are our heartbeat. We count it a privilege to encourage and support you in every way we can.

Judy Harris
CPN Vice-President

RICH IN RESOURCES

Books which could help with the journey of developing Godly character are:

- The Holy Bible
- Practicing His Presence by Charlie Riggs
- The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren
- My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers

Useful courses for all Christians involved in Playgroup are:

- CPN training events
- Jesus and Playgroup by Yvette Wynne
- Everyday Evangelism by Stephen Abbott.

There are also wonderful evangelism encouragement books such as

- Know and Tell the Gospel by John Chapman
- How to Give Away Your Faith by Paul E. Little
- Gentle Persuasion by Joseph Aldrich
- Out of the Saltshaker by Rebecca Manley Pippert and many others weighing down the shelves of Christian Bookstores and Online ordering sites. Try to read at least one every year to refresh and encourage yourself.

Courses helpful to developing as a leader for those who are responsible for the administrative and facilitation of Playgroups are:

- CPN training events
- Caleb Institute of Leadership
- Willow Creek

- Ministry to Children Seminar
- Kidshaper

Many other reputable organisations are available. These vary in breadth, depth, time and money, so carefully consider what will be the most suitable and valuable to you.

Some light and not so light leadership development reading includes books such as:

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey,
- Spiritual Leadership by Oswald Sanders.



ACTIVITIES FOR PLAYGROUP CHILDREN

Creative Development – refers to the provision of materials and opportunities that enable the children to make something that evolves from their own thoughts and ideas.

0-1.5 years

- Easel painting.
- Roller painting.
- Printing different shapes.
- Chalk drawing.

1.5-3 years

- Easel paintings.
- String block paintings.
- Roller painting.
- Roller painting over stencils.
- Finger painting.
- Mural painting.

3-5 years

- Golf ball/marble rollings.
- Rolling paint over leaves and printing them.
- String pulling.
- Painting using;
- Thick brushes,
- Thin brushes,
- Shaving brushes,
- Foam brushes,
- Foam rollers,
- Varnish brushes,
- Plastic eye droppers,
- Toothbrush,
- Printing using;
- Foam shapes,
- Kitchen gadgets [whisk, potato masher, etc.],
- Lego shapes,



- keys, buttons or any flat object,
- Sponge shapes,
- Alphabet foam sponges.
- Splatter stencilling.
- Paper dyeing using paper towel and eyedroppers.
- Body painting.
- Drawing using templates.

Pretend Play Ideas– encouraging the children use props in make believe play, in order to understand and experiment with social relationships in a safe environment

0-1.5 years

- Cubby houses – professional or home made.
- Bucket and spade
- Dolls in carry baskets

1.5-3 years

- Washing dolls and dolls clothes.
 - Dress-ups – including handbags, gloves and hats – only if they are cleaned after each session [no shoes].
 - Dolls house with figures and furniture.
 - Work benches with tools and builders belt.
 - Hospital – child size bed, white aprons, doctor's set, bandages, etc.
 - Home corner – sink, stove, pantry, fridge, microwave, dishwasher with plastic utensils, cups and plates, and plastic food.
 - Supermarket – used produce boxes, carry baskets, cash register and pretend money or plastic disks.
 - Bedroom setting – bed, wardrobe, draws, dressing table.
 - Ironing board, iron and canister of tea towels.
 - Puppets.
 - Dolls with sets of clothes and carry baskets.
- 3-5 years
- Sets of play themes – doctors and nurses, police, circus performers.



- Plastic shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows.
- Sets of plastic power and/or hand tools.
- Block people in family or occupation sets.
- Cars, planes and trucks on car mats with road signs. [carpet ones last longer]
- Train sets with multiple trains.
- Animal sets – dinosaurs, Australian animals, zoo animals, farm animals, insects, aquatic animals, reptiles, etc.
- Puppets;
- Hand puppets,
- Finger puppets,
- Spoon puppets,
- Glove puppets,
- Masks.
- Box Cars, buses, etc.

Miriam Stewart

Baptist Early Childhood Team member & Director of Operations of Surrey Hills Baptist Children's Centre.





presents.....

PLAYGROUP CONFERENCE '07 & AGM

When: Saturday, 17th November
9.30am (registration)
Conference 10.00am - 12.30pm

Cost (includes brunch):

- \$ 15 for CPN members
- \$ 20 for non members
- \$ 15 for ministers
- \$ 35 inc. conference + 1 yr email CPN membership
- \$ 45 inc. conference + 1 yr mail CPN membership

Where: Ringwood Church of Christ
13 Bedford Road Ringwood Vic
Carpark off Pitt Street

Keynote Speaker: Ron Buckland

Ron Buckland has dedicated his working life to children's and family evangelism. He is currently the minister at the Montrose Church of Christ, and is on the faculty of Churches of Christ Theological College, coordinating Children's Ministry internships. His recently republished book: "Children and the Gospel" will be available for sale on the day.

"Would you like your playgroup to become a successful outreach into your community?"

"Come and enjoy a fantastic brunch and network with others in playgroup ministry."

Registration:

Bookings Essential: RSVP 5th November

Send name, address, phone number, email and the church you attend to:

Jacqui Berris: 4 Scotsburn Court, Grovedale Vic 3216

Ph: 5221 7176 or email: jacqui.berris@aus.salvationarmy.org

Make cheques payable to: Christian Playgroup Network

Christian Playgroup Network Inc AOO4:3344J

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FEEDBACK

■ We would appreciate your feedback on the website, and suggestions for helpful links and material. You are invited to email these suggestions to Judy Harris at juanha@optusnet.com.au.

CPN WEBSITE

■ Don't forget to visit us at <http://www.cpn.org.au>.

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