

A Blessing Called Children

Summer is here and it brings with it opportunities for traveling, vacations and time together. Family is one of God's greatest blessings and too often, a blessing we take for granted. May we take time to thank the Lord for our parents, children and siblings that have helped make us who we are.

Like you, I receive dozens of emails each day and most of them are unwanted advertisements or forwards that I simply do not have time to read. I did, however, receive an email several months ago that caught my eye. You have likely seen this before, but it is worth re-reading.

The email dealt with the cost of raising a child. It is said that the government calculated the cost of raising a child from birth to 18 years and determined it cost a middle income family about \$160,140 per child. Talk about sticker shock! That does not even cover college tuition. That works out to be \$8,896 a year, \$741 a month, \$71 per week, \$24 per day and just over a dollar an hour.

The email went on to describe all the benefits you receive for your "investment". You get naming rights, giggles under the covers every night, a hand to hold (usually covered with jelly or chocolate or both). You get a partner for blowing bubbles, flying kites, building sand castles. You get someone to laugh yourself silly with, no matter what the boss said or how your stocks performed that day.

You have an excuse to keep reading Whinnie the Pooh and Piglet, to watch cartoons and to count the stars. You get to frame rainbows, hearts and flowers under refrigerator magnets and collect spray painted noodle wreaths for Christmas. You receive hand prints set in clay for Mother's Day and cards with backwards letters for Father's Day. You get to be a hero for retrieving a frisbee off the garage roof or finding a golf ball in the gutter. You can serve as coach a baseball team that never wins a game but always gets treated to ice cream regardless.

You get an education in psychology, sociology, nursing, criminal justice and communication that no college can match. You have the power to heal a boo-boo, scare away the monsters under the bed, patch a broken heart, police a slumber party, ground them forever and love them without limits so that one day, they, like you, can love without counting the cost.

May we enjoy our children and our families and may we never focus on the struggle more than the blessing!

Michael Staton
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Mustang

A Strange Calling and a Faithful God

“May the God of peace...equip you with everything good for doing His will” Hebrews 13:20-21

As a young child I enjoyed being in front of people. I was eager to audition for speaking parts in a school play or to volunteer to speak at church. I even remember in second grade wearing a coat and tie to school for “show and tell” and bringing my Bible to preach to my class when it was my turn (I’m sure they really enjoyed that!).

It has been said many times that the number one fear of Americans is public speaking...even more than death. When I was a child, that fear made no sense to me. I enjoyed sharing my story with an audience. My father, who is a musician, was always on stage and it did not seem to be a frightening thing.

Then, it happened. I was in the seventh grade and giving a speech in front of the student body. I had no nerves whatsoever and was looking forward to it. Yet, in the middle of my speech, my throat got tight, my eyes watered and for the first time in my life I understood why people had rather die than speak in front of a crowd. I had no idea what had just happened to me.

That problem would bother me, in fact, torment me for a number of years. Perhaps the greatest example of how bad it was came my freshman year in college. I was in a mandatory speech class. My first speech had to be two minutes long and could be on any topic. What should have been no big deal brought me huge stress. The night before my speech I got in my car and drove for about two hours with my radio up loud while I was singing and screaming hoping to lose my voice. I woke up the next morning with my voice still working, but with a very sore throat.

Then, something really strange happened. The Lord put a call on my life to surrender to preach. I had always loved the church and enjoyed preaching (remember second grade show and tell?). But, how does a young man who dreads the thought of speaking for two minutes in front of a small group, surrender his life to preach week after week?

I knew I should not run from God. I read the Bible each day and I loved the Lord and wanted to honor Him with my life. I just did not understand how I could be effective and do any good for His glory. I knew I did not have the talent, strength or skills necessary to be a teacher of God’s Word.

Then, it hit me. God has not called me in spite of my weakness, He has called me BECAUSE of my weakness. He was going to show His power through my lack and the *God of peace was going to equip me with everything good for doing His will* (just as His Word promised). God was not looking for the most eloquent or the most talented. The Lord was not seeking to call the most knowledgeable, gifted or powerful. Instead, God was finding a weak, scared and fragile person to prove that true power comes not from what we have, but from what He pours into us.

I now preach three times every single Sunday. From time to time someone will come up to me and say something like, “Good message this morning” or “You are a good speaker.” I thank them for their kind words, thank the Lord for the encouragement and smile. This guy who once

had rather be sick than have to give a speech remembers that God's Word is true. The Lord will indeed give us what we need. He may not give you everything you want, He may not give you the same things He gives someone else, but He will be faithful to give you everything you need for doing His will. Trust the Lord, follow Him and let God use your life to bring Him glory.

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