

# **ChildFaith: Sharing the Spiritual Journey with Children**

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**Summary:** The spiritual formation and experience of children can be encouraged by parents, family members, and the church, by use of systematic activities with the child. Parents, in particular, play an important role in the spiritual development of children, and they in turn can benefit by understanding the process of Christian growth and experience in their child is in some ways like their own. Children can minister to parents and parents can learn from children because youngsters can also hear from God and be used by God. As a result both parents and children can foster an atmosphere of spiritual vitality in the home and during family activities in other settings as well. There is the possibility of adding a chapter on how children's concepts about God, faith, and church tend to change as they get older.

## **Tentative Outline [subject to revision]**

### **1. The Spiritual Growth and Experience of Children**

- introduction
- my experience as a child at a campmeeting
- what is spiritual development?
- stage-centered spiritual development
- spiritual growth as a process unrelated to age
- the spiritual experiences of children
- the numinous experiences of children
- Christian spiritual experiences of children
- encouraging children's spiritual experiences
- conclusion

### **2. Baby Faith: Forming Strong Roots of Faith in Infancy**

- before birth: preparing for the child's spiritual development
- temperament and faith
- faith builds upon trust
- feelings about God
- the spiritual experiences of infants
- babies as examples

### **3. Crawling, Walking, and Running Toward God: Toddlers and Preschoolers**

- teddy bears and God
- parents: the child's first god?
- experiences with God and angels in the preschool years

- share your faith and track your child's faith
- guidelines for teaching your preschooler
- encouraging the preschooler's experience of God

#### 4. Salvation: Moment and Memory

- crisis and relationship
- salvation at different ages
- stages that take place before salvation
- some suggested guidelines on leading a child to Christ

#### 5. Co-creating Life in God: You, Your School-Aged Children, and God

- what is it like to be a child?
- sharing yourself with your children
- spiritual spirals
- reciprocal discipleship
- putting your child's faith (and yours) into action

#### 6. Telling, Acting, and Applying Bible Stories

- effective story-telling
- enacting Bible stories
- enacting applications, role-playing, and family puppets
- a wide variety of methods to consider

#### 7. Daily and Weekly Rhythms of Faith: Children's Rituals

- tasty rituals--no boredom, please!
- healthy families have rituals
- children naturally have rituals
- daily and weekly faith rituals

#### 8. Touching, Smelling, and Eating: The Biblical Holidays

- the seven feasts plus two
- children's activities during the feasts
- adapting and adding activities for Passover

#### 9. Communion or Commotion: Children, Parents, and Church

- preparing for church: more than just clothes
- worshipping together or apart?
- diversity in worship styles
- can children minister to adults?
- spiritual mentors
- a Christian bar mitzvah?
- moving from conflict to caring for children and parents

#### 10. Handel's Messiah and Visiting a Sheep Farm: Family Field Trips

- vacation Bible school, campmeeting, and camping
- music, drama, and television as contexts for spiritual growth and experience
- farms and fishing as foundations of faith formation
- pilgrimages to the holy lands: Israel and Georgia

## 11. Potential Faith Partners: Brothers, Sisters, Friends, Grandparents, and Schools

- sibling rivalry . . . and revelry
- child culture, school culture, and home culture
- grandparents and substitutes: the faith community as extended family
- the spiritual influence of friends
- spiritual development and schools
- luminous, numinous parenting