



# What does it take to Nurture a child's faith ?

<< Compilation from Jonathan [HOM - Children Ministry]>>

It says, "It takes a village to raise a child", would you agree with this proverb? We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results. We are created for one another, created for relationships, just like iron sharpens iron.

Children, regardless of age, are not rugged individualists. They depend on the adults they know and on thousands more who make decisions every day that affect their well-being. All of us, whether we acknowledge it or not, are responsible for deciding whether our children are raised in a community that doesn't just espouse family values but values families and children.

On 14 April 2019, a group of Sunday School teachers and parents attended a workshop on "Nurturing a child's faith" conducted by a passionate and enthusiastic guest speaker & his wife in view of the upcoming Celebration of Hope (COH).



So, what does it take to nurture a child's faith?

Let's hear from (1) a young Sunday school teacher's perspective, (2) an experienced Sunday School teacher's perspective and (3) from 2 parents' perspective.

### A Young Sunday School Teacher's Perspective

*Did you know that a pre-schooler can only see you in one role? That's something new that I learnt at the 'Nurturing a Child's Faith' Workshop. I knew children took things literally but not to the extent that they were unable to see their Sunday School teacher in their housing estate and immediately relate the "two persons" as one. When speaking to children about matters of faith, care-givers may find the lack of or numerous questions daunting. While "I don't know" or "the pastor has not spoken about it" sounds reasonable, as our speaker David Leong said, the Word has been given to us and such an excuse (if we're honest) should not be used.*

*To increase the effectiveness of the lessons learnt at Sunday School, it was shared that the parents are the best enforcers. Sometimes it is hard to gauge if a child has truly understood what they have been told, but we were assured in the workshop, that children do remember what teachers taught and God can use those lessons in time.*

*A touching example shared by Cynthia, David's wife ( a kindergarten principal for 12 years) was how a mother who was going through a rough time, was comforted by her daughter's singing of God's presence and strength, a song she learnt in her kindergarten. With God's enabling, we can adequately nurture a child's faith. --- Gilda.*



## An Experienced Sunday School Teacher's Perspective



Home - Sunday School Partnership should be emphasized in Church too!

Expecting to hear what we as Children Ministry teachers need to do to nurture a child's faith from Uncle David's workshop, I was enlightened that

it is also important for us to work hand in hand with the parents to nourish our children in their life of faith.

As a parent myself, I could not but admit that at times I had the mentality of outsourcing my work to the church teachers to help develop my children's faith. When I took up the role as a church teacher, I was so focused on preparing for the lessons that I also neglected the importance of having the parents to follow up on what their children have learnt from the lessons.

The Four Stages of Faith Development Uncle David shared helps me understand why it is so crucial to have home-school partnership in the church.

The first stage is the discovering stage for children up to five years old.



### An Experienced Sunday School Teacher's Perspective (cont'd)

This stage involves helping the children to build positive feelings towards Christianity and cultivating their desire to know more about God. The second stage is the discerning stage (4 to 8 years old), which is a time when the children start to raise questions, gather facts and explore the bible.



Their seeds of faith start to grow through observing, having someone as role model, to teach them and to answer their questions. The third stage (7 to 12 years old) is the deciding stage, when the children need to make personal decision to commit to Jesus. This is a critical time for the Gospel to be clarified, for their struggles to be understood and for their conviction to be supported. The last stage is the discipling stage (10 years old and up), when they have to establish life time of sharing the Gospel. Every stage has their unique tasks and every stage requires a lot of work and consistent efforts from the adults to support and nurture the young ones.

How could we achieve these if we merely rely on that 1.5 hours of Sunday School lessons? How could we as parents do it alone when it is sometimes hard for us to even squeeze half an hour every day to talk to our children about God?



An Experienced Sunday School Teacher's Perspective (cont'd)

I guess the best way is to adopt home- Sunday school partnership. As parents, we could ride on what were taught during our children's Sunday School lessons and consolidate their learning at home. Just a simple act of asking our children to tell us what they have learnt in their Sunday School would help to encourage our children to pay attention to the lesson, consolidating their learning, as well as allowing us to answer and clarify their questions if they are too shy to approach their Sunday School teacher.



Knowing what the children have learnt would also allow us to plan how we could help them to apply what they have learnt at home. Uncle David shared that "nurturing our own kids is our first and most important ministry". As Sunday School teachers, we are not only here to teach, but to support the children in applying what they have learnt in their daily life. This is not possible if we don't have close communication with the parents.

Hence, what are we waiting for, parents and teachers? Let's stretch out our hands to support each other in order to nurture our precious little ones!

--- Mong (Sunday School Teacher & A mother of 2 kids)

## A Parent's Perspective

Despite all that rushing around on a hot Sunday afternoon, Mr David Leong was full of enthusiasm and passion about this oft-neglected group of people that God had Himself placed so much emphasis on.



David shared in detail about the essence of what it meant to nurture a child's faith.

Being trained in Early Childhood education myself, I am in total agreement with him regarding the home being the most vital factor in childhood growth and where (Christian) values are more caught than taught.

Duo-income families are the norm in our society now. As parents get so caught up in the rat race, there is only so much time and energy one can have with their children on a daily basis.

Many a times, even in Christian homes, parents focus a lot on the academic aspect; gradually neglecting the moral development of the child, forgetting that godly habits are just like sports or Mathematics where regular practice is much needed to excel and thus as a Church, we need to remind parents of their godly task to pass on the faith from generation to generation instead of rendering such important faith-building work to the Sunday School teachers.

### A Parent's Perspective (cont'd)

David and his wife shared cheekily that in setting our children's relationship right with God, we are also helping them to earn three degrees.

**B.A**

• Born Again

**M.A**

• MARVELOUSLY  
ALTERED

**Ph.D**

• Praise Him Daily

These three degrees are truly super useful because it is only when we, as parents, have fully embraced and lived out these 'degrees', then our children could role model from us and be right with God. Thereafter, His

immeasurable blessings will flow and that is surely the best we want for our children.

Besides sharing about the importance of forming good home-church partnership as well as the need for effective and purposeful follow-up when establishing the role of the Sunday School ministry, David also shared many fun and useful strategies to engage the young new believer so that every seed sown will take root firmly and blossom in His time.

A good number of adults tend not to get the little ones to help pray for our needs in a bid to be seen as strong or share our testimonies of how God answered our prayers, deeming them too young to understand but the trainers shared several testimonies to prove otherwise.



A Parent's Perspective (cont'd)



In fact, by having such prayer intercessions with our little ones, we are actually allowing them to experience in live context that everyone needs God, He is real and He listens to our cries.

Some people shared, "It is good to have something to be busy about, otherwise your company won't need you." All of us are

always busy at work or in our different ministry work but let's remember that **-The parents' first ministry is to their own family.**

--- Karen (*Early Childhood teacher and A mother of 4 kids*)



---

*"We must not put our spiritual opportunities before our spiritual responsibilities. My family is my first ministry." (Josh McDowell)*

---





## Another Parent's Perspective

I was asked to share on the workshop conducted by the children ministry about the nurturing of a child's faith. This was of good timing because I had a few thoughts floating in my head and this helped me to organise them and put it into words. I felt like I was journaling.

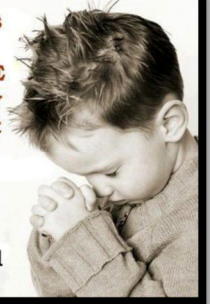
David Leong and his wife Cynthia were the speakers and they have been in the ministry for more than 25 years! It had a good mix of parents and teachers of various ages, from the senior teachers who have been in the ministry for about 20 years to those who are just starting out.

The first is that the parent's first ministry is to their family. I find this especially so when the children are young between 1- 6 years old. A very wise sister in Christ reminded me that most of the children's values are being formed within that period.

So time needs to be invested to impart these values to them.

The speaker shared an example that a primary school going child in Sunday school refused to go to church because she felt that her parent was spending too much time serving in the church and did not give her the attention that she needed. Thus I think it is important that we need to have a good balance of family life, work and ministry. There is a time and season for everything and as parents we need to do some soul care in order to minister to our children. May God give us the grace and wisdom to work that out.

**As long as  
there is  
SOMEONE  
in the sky  
to protect  
me ,  
There is  
NO ONE  
on earth  
who could  
break me.**



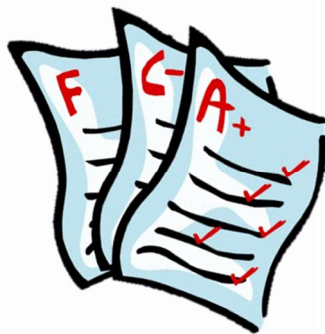
## Another Parent's Perspective (con't)



Secondly, as parents, we need to keep in mind that we are preparing our children for eternity in heaven rather than just the life here on earth. Before this workshop, I attended the pre-AGM in the morning. One of the challenges that was brought up by the youth

ministry leader was that the youths were spending a bulk of their time in their studies and probably thus were unable to take part in some of the youth activities. This issue was also brought up in the workshop as well about the emphasis that parents and our society place on education. I have to admit that I struggle in that area as well, now that my son is in primary 2, the homework given in school is still not much and manageable. I also need to clarify that sometimes it is not the parent that stresses the child but the system and their own expectations.

I was just talking to a parent the other day and he mentioned that his son was very stressed out over his studies, but his hope is that his son will take it easy because his mental health is more important. As a parent, I hope that my emphasis is not on the grades but on his attitude towards learning and giving his best based on his aptitude.



Another Parent's Perspective (con't)

But it's something that I have to constantly remind myself that his educational level will not have much standing in the kingdom of God. God chose unschooled, ordinary men to be his disciples. On the flip side, I also have to remind my son that whatever wisdom and knowledge he attains, comes from God, so that we remain teachable.

**Psalm 78:4-7**

*<sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their descendants;  
we will tell the next generation  
the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,  
his power, and the wonders he has done.*

*<sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob  
and established the law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach their children,*

*<sup>6</sup> so the next generation would know them,  
even the children yet to be born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God  
and would not forget his deeds  
but would keep his commands.*

What stood out to me was He commanded our fathers (other translations use "ancestors") to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them and set their hope in God, not forgetting the works of God but keep his commandments.

Another Parent's Perspective (con't)

I am thankful that I had a loving father who set a good example for me on what it means to be a follower of Christ. He may not have taught as much in terms of words, but he showed it in terms of his actions. As a saying goes, actions speak louder than words. I am also glad to see that our church has many godly fathers who are actively working out their faith in action.



Even though actions have more bearing but words are needed as well. The word of God that is being shared will accomplish its purpose and not return empty (Isaiah 55:11).

We hope to encourage more families to begin family devotions at home because as each generation passes, times are getting more challenging as the end draws near. I am aware of the challenges of setting aside the time in our busy scheduled lives, so even if we can manage to have a family devotion once a week or fortnightly, or whatever our schedule permits, it would be of great benefit for our children and our marriages.

This probably needs to start from young because it gets increasingly challenging, as they get older. Thus we need to anchor our faith in God and what more better way than within the bonds and roots of the family.

--- Fellow Sojourner (A mother of 1 kid)

The Anchor



Families Anchored in Christ