

Parenthood (8): Children and the Bible

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Our youngest daughter, Kaitlin, had been begging for a Bible of her very own. When we finally bought one for her last month, her little face lit up with joy and pride. Surely her unspoiled enthusiasm for God's word is what Jesus meant when He said, "*unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven ... let the little children come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt 18:3; 19:14).

But where does this enthusiasm come from? Is it innate? Or is it conditioned? Interest in the Bible must be created by parents who themselves cherish and revere God and His word. How is this done?

It begins very early in a child's development, before they are able even to speak. With our own children, we began to point to trees, the sky, the moon, animals and ask, "Who made ... ? God did!" No, they didn't understand at first, but we were staking out the territory of their minds before Satan came along and claimed it for his kingdom. What better first words in a child's vocabulary than *God* or *Jesus*?

In addition to conversation, the market is now full of Bible books, videos, games and other educational items which appeal to a child's need for the concrete. Every child should have Biblical books, toys and games to balance out his or her secular ones.

In addition to parental training at home (but not supplanting it), Bible classes with other children are vitally important. At Hueytown, we have Bible classes for children as young as six months. Those who might think this to be frivolous reveal their own lack of Biblical interaction with children. It is amazing what can be learned in such a class between 12 and 18 months of age. Too, it is important for children to interact with their peers in learning the Bible, for there will come a time when most all of their associations will be with those who couldn't care less about spiritual things.

The Bible naturally appeals to children. Stories involving animals, miracles, battles and other adventures fire the imaginations of children. Movie and toy makers are making a fortune off the same qualities that attract children to the Bible. Only the Bible is *truth*, not fantasy.

Parents and Bible class teachers have a huge responsibility to nurture the enthusiasm which comes so naturally to young children. What a tragedy to neglect such opportunities early on and then helplessly watch their apathy later in life.