

Will Our Children Have Faith?

As a parent, you shape your child's life in important and indelible ways. Is your child's spiritual development among your top priorities?



John Westerhoff, a leading thinker on faith development, wrote a book entitled *Will Our Children Have Faith?* That is a question that confronts us all as Christian parents, teachers and pastors.

Many Christian parents seem unclear or unsure about their role in their children's spiritual development. The unspoken expectation is: "Isn't that something that the children's ministry takes care of?" While the children's and the youth ministries in the church are a great thing to have, **parents cannot 'outsource' the spiritual development and discipleship of our children to the spiritual 'professionals'.**

Here's why: God has entrusted the responsibility of spiritual development and nurture of children to the parents. In the Old Testament, the home is the primary place for faith development. In

Deuteronomy 6:7, parents are commanded to "impress them [the commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Throughout the Bible, there is the recurring theme of one generation telling the next about what God has done. Psalm 78 is just one example of this: "...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done... which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God." (Psalm 78:4-7)

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people to the next generation so that children would know that they too are part of that story; that God, who did these amazing things, is their God and can be trusted in all situations. Our challenge is to find ways for our homes to be full of God's story so that it's all around us, and known through the things that we do together.

It is clear that the spiritual formation of a child takes place within the home and the church community. While parents have the primary role in helping children grow in faith, the church has

an important role in encouraging and supporting parents in their awesome responsibility. **Parents and pastors need to work together to establish a stronger link between church and home**, so that what is taught at church is brought to life in the fabric of everyday living.

Will our children have faith? John Westerhoff's answer, in a nutshell, is that they will – if the adults in their lives accompany them on their spiritual journey and provide them with opportunities to experience the life of faith. As parents, teachers and pastors, we walk alongside children and young people on this journey of faith. Let's remember that we are not alone in this task. The Holy Spirit is on hand to woo our children to Himself. **Though our responsibility is awesome, it is ultimately a partnership with God.** 

This article is adapted from **Top Tips on Encouraging Faith to Grow** (Scripture Union, 2008) by Ruth Hassall & Piers Lane.



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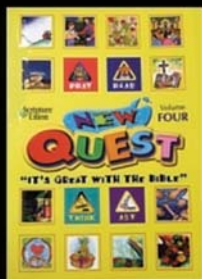
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