

1 Samuel 3:1-9
Sensing the Sacred
WRCoB 10.31.21

Hear a few comments from children concerning God.

1

Karen, age 9; *God has big hands because the song says, 'He's got the whole world in His hands'.*

2

Lauren, age 9; *God is very loving. I imagine he is very tall. I love him.*

3

But Justin, age 10 replies; *Yes, God is loving, but he's also a "sin hater," who's the "nicest man in the world." I think he has a beard. He is not that old. He lives in heaven. Jesus is his son.*

4

Ashlyn, age 10 wrote this remarkable thought; *God is like a never-ending story that you want to read again and again. When I hear about Him, I want to know more. Although I can't see Him, I feel Him. He is perfect and pure. I know He has felt pain and has suffered greatly to take away my sins.*

Amazing!

St Catherine of Sienna is said

To have had her first vision of Christ at age five.

At 5, she saw Jesus smile at her

And bless her

The experience left her filled with unspeakable joy.

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Christian author Anne Lamott

Raised by her dad to be a devout atheist

At an early age sensed God's presence

5 She writes; *even when I was a child I knew that when I said 'Hello,' someone heard.*

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I believe children have an innate sense of the sacred.

We are morally responsible to nurture it.

6

Proverbs 22:6 KJV Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Many children, even before they are introduced to God
At home or in Sunday school
Have experienced God's presence.

A prime example of this is found in our Old Testament story.

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Samuel was thought to be about 12-years-old
When he experienced the events
In our Scripture Lesson

We've heard the story both from Scripture
And from our Time With Our Children.

So I won't go over the details of it.

But what I want to point out and emphasize today
Is the small but important verse in the passage.

It is an editorial note the author wrote in verse 7.

7

1 Samuel 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

Sam did not know the Lord
So consequently, mistook who was calling him.

It is the author's way of emphasizing
That this was the first time
Samuel experienced anything like this.

Oh, he probably attended Sunday school
Maybe gone through catechism
Confirmation class, or instructions for baptism.

But he had had no previous experience of God.

He was a 12-year-old boy
That knew of God but didn't know God.

There's a huge difference
Between the knowing of someone and knowing someone.

Do you know God?

*Well, I know of God
I've heard of him
I've heard people talk about him*

But no, I do not personally know God.

But this very night, 12-year-old Samuel
Heard loud and clear not once but four times
The voice of God calling!

Well people, if you ask me, that's pretty cool!

And don't think these biblical characters
Are the only ones who experience God
In some sort of profound way!

These encounters happen.

It affirms what I have been saying
Children have an extraordinary sense of God.

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Now saying that, it is our duty then, our moral obligation

As parents
Grandparents
Aunts and uncles

As Sunday school teachers
Pastors and elders of the church
As brothers and sisters in Christ

It is our moral obligation
To bring out in children what is already there
A sense of the sacred!

If indeed they sense God's presence within them
Then it is our responsibility to name it and nurture it.

~~

Jason Stubblefield a graduate of Duke Divinity School
And minister in the United Methodist church
Wrote an article entitled

8

Should Children Make Up Their Own Minds About Religion?

He bemoans the fact that many of today's parents
Don't force their kids to go to church.

I'm sure you've heard people say it.

9

"I don't make my kids go to church; I want them to make up their own minds about religion."

His argument is that if parents don't nurture
A sense of the sacred in their children
They will soon simply ignore it.

If it isn't important to the parents
It will soon not be important to the children.

Stubblefield thinks it vital parents bring up their children
In the same basic truths, they themselves believe in.

10

We—the Christian parents of America—should not leave our kids to make up their own minds about religion. We need to go against the grain. If we really believe the Gospel, we ought to join the shrinking ranks of those pushy parents who insist their children attend church with them.

11

We make our children eat their vegetables. We make them brush their teeth. Let's make them go to church. In doing so, we will be no more guilty of indoctrination than the parents who let their kids "make up" their own minds about religion.

12

After all, we Christians do not think that the Gospel is merely a matter of personal opinion. We believe it is true.

13 *What could be a kinder gift to our children than teaching them to see the world as truthfully as we do?*

Cathy Lynne Grossman

In an article in the Washington Post

Mentions a book by psychologist Lisa Miller

Miller, in her book, *The Spiritual Child*

14

Writes that the essential sense of the transcendent power in the world—one that will love, guide, and accept them and wrap them in a protective layer of self-worth—has to be nurtured.

15

Miller's studies found children with a spiritual connection at a young age were "90 percent less likely to be depressed" as teens or young adults.

There is mounting evidence

From a variety of research

Both religious and secular

That confirms church is a good thing.

The acknowledgement and nurturing of the spiritual life

Through worship, education and service

The sense of belonging to something bigger than one's self

Is vital for physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Harvard Professor Tyler J. Vandewheele

Did a simple study on attending church.

Here are some of his findings

16

- *Regular church attendance over a lifetime translates into approximately seven additional years of life.*
- *It is associated with less smoking, drinking, and drug use which benefit overall health.*
- *Regular attendance leads to 20%–30% lower rates of depression and 3- to 6-fold lower rates of suicide.*
- *Life satisfaction, lower divorce rates, and a greater sense of meaning and purpose also seem to be connected to weekly church attendance.*

So let's do ourselves a favor

And make going to church a weekly habit.

And let's encourage those with children especially.

We are all here to help nurture children's spirituality.

17

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 NRSV

**⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God,
the Lord alone. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with
all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your
might.**

18

**⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in
your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about
them when you are at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you rise.**

If children today are anything like Samuel in our lesson

That they can sense something of the sacred.

Then it is our moral duty to name it and nurture it
To do everything possible

So that one day they might come
To the knowledge and experience
Of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Today Benedict and Susan, Dustin and Carrie
Have made a commitment to their children
To the following dedication service.

They have with great intention
Dedicated themselves to nurture them
In the knowledge of God

Let us stand in solidarity with them
Doing everything we can
To make that possible.

So that one day, when they hear the Lord calling them

They might say, "Here I am".
"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

May it be so. Amen.