

Spirituality

INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS

A mother, wishing to encourage her son's progress at the piano, bought tickets to a Paderewski performance. When the evening arrived, they found their seats near the front of the concert hall and eyed the majestic Steinway piano waiting on the stage. Soon the mother found a friend to talk to, and the boy slipped away. At eight o'clock, the lights in the auditorium began to dim, the spotlights came on, and only then did they notice the boy--up on the piano bench, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." His mother gasped, but before she could retrieve her son, the master appeared on the stage and quickly moved to the keyboard.

He whispered to the boy, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in the bass part. Soon his right arm reached around the other side and improvised a delightful obligato. Together, the old master and the young novice held the crowd mesmerized.

In our lives, unpolished though we may be, it is God who surrounds us and whispers in our ear time and time again, "Don't quit. Keep playing." And, as we do, He augments and supplements until a work of amazing beauty is created.

If you were to identify the foundation piece of your family, what would it be? May I share ours? The foundation for the Fellingham Family is spirituality. Our belief in God and our love for Him help direct our lives and our decisions. This is not to say that either our lives or our decisions meet with God's approval. Nonetheless, our family shares a great desire that God be the rock upon which we are founded.

Being well aware that this is a sensitive subject and not wanting to offend, I approach the issue of spirituality carefully. Knowing that there are many ways to experience and express spirituality, I would like to simply share with you my interpretation of how spirituality works for our family in day-to-day living.

The four lessons in this chapter are Believe, Pray, Worship and Share. I would like to write about these parts of spirituality from experiences in my home. You may have different, highly effective ways of experiencing spirituality in your family. I would thoroughly enjoy hearing about them.

Believe

We believe that God exists and that He loves us. Because of these beliefs we look for God's hand in the beauties of the world. We give Him gratitude and glory for all good things in our lives. Believing that God loves us gives our family a wonderful feeling of comfort and security--knowing that Someone is aware of us and cares about our lives. God sees our efforts to live correctly, and He knows the secret desires of our hearts. We also believe that when we fail, He will forgive and give us the strength to try again.

Because we believe that there is a "master plan" for this world and for each one of us, we feel there is a purpose for this life, and we believe that the things we do to improve our lives have meaning.

We believe that God has expectations for each of His children on the Earth, and He set forth rules and guidelines for us to follow. These rules were not made to be barriers and stumbling blocks, but rather to make our road smoother and to bring us joy through obedience. We have discovered as a family that when we are living in accordance with God's laws and commandments we're happier. It is our belief that since God never forces His will on us, the principle of free agency is an important one. Our family has learned that we actually have more freedom when we make wise choices and obey God's laws.

Believing in God, seeking His help and guidance in our lives, and feeling His love for us has been an integral part of our family life.

Pray

Our family believes that God wants to help us and that He will help us according to His great wisdom and love. We ask for God's help when we speak with Him in prayer. We've found that sometimes the way God helps us isn't exactly the way we wanted or expected His help. However, hindsight has shown us that His method of answering our prayers has always helped us learn and become better people.

Communicating with God through prayer has been a strength to us in times of need. In our immediate family we have experienced death and near death. Twice in hospital emergency rooms my husband and I have been told by doctors that they were sorry, but there was nothing modern medicine could do for our children. Additionally, I have struggled in relationships which have caused me heartache and deep disappointment. In my hours of emotional and spiritual need I have turned to God in earnest prayer. I know that in those hours I was strengthened by God. He heard and answered my prayers.

Communicating with God? It sounds incredible. I believe, however, that prayer is a gift from a loving God. He cares about our well-being and happiness. Our family prays each morning before we go our separate ways, and then we kneel in prayer together at the end of each day. We also give thanks and ask a blessing upon our food. Then, as I mentioned, we pray during times of special need. I think that the formalities of what we say are not as important as the act of reaching out to God in faith that He will hear us.

Worship

Worship is defined as the act or feeling of adoration or homage; the paying of religious reverence as in prayer, praise, etc. The word adoration is defined as an emotion of profound admiration, utmost love and devotion. According to this definition, the things we worship in life are what we adore, admire, love and show devotion to. Does that describe our feelings about God?

That question helps us think about how we worship God. It causes us to reflect on the things to which we show devotion, and adore. I can't help but think about the days and weeks I've spent dreaming about and planning for homes we've built. I believe, however, that our hearts play a role in this matter. Where are our hearts? Do we treasure our possessions more than our relationships? Do we care more about accumulating money than we care about our family? Have we ever sought power or promotions at the expense of our integrity? I sincerely believe that every day we show what it is we worship by the way we live our lives. We prove where our heart lies with every decision we make. The definition of worship helps us realize that if we truly worship God we'll try to live as He would have us live. In our family when we're faced with decisions we try to remember to ask ourselves the question, "What would God have us do?" The answer is often obvious and simple.

Attending a weekly worship service as a family has also been a source of spiritual strength for us. As we gather weekly with those who believe as we do, we have the opportunity of learning more about God during the worship service, and also discerning who in our religious community may need our help. I believe that people truly worship God when they are obedient to His laws, when they're kind and unselfish, and when they love their fellow men. Then, because of their good lives, others will want to know more about God.

Share

When you hear some really good news, what do you immediately want to do? You want to share it with someone. If it's really exciting, life-changing good news you may want to shout it from the rooftops and tell the whole world. I believe that the strength and peace God can bring into your family's life is good news--life-changing good news.

Solutions FOR FAMILIES

Part of the **TOTAL LIFE EXCELLENCE** program

It is very difficult to raise a good family. In the book *A Tale of Two Cities* author Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." Sometimes do you feel that way in your family? One moment you're discouraged and feel like a failure. The next moment something happens that fills your heart with gratitude and hope. Our families can be the source of our greatest concern and heartache, and also the source of our greatest joy and happiness.

I believe that we don't have to raise our families alone. We don't have to struggle through the years without help. God is there for all of us. God will help us if we turn to Him, seeking His guiding power and influence in our lives.