

TURKEY, 2008
SPIRITUAL GROWTH CLASS #2
CHILDREN and YOUNG MEN
2-9-08

JULIE

BRONWYN BOSS OF THE OLD HOUSE STORY

Isn't that just like a little child? They have yet to learn just who is in charge.

Isn't that just like a spiritual child! They have yet to learn that God is in charge.

ROGER

•SLIDE #: Let's talk today about some characteristics of what spiritual children look like. Then we will see what spiritual young men and women might look like. Tomorrow we will see the characteristics of spiritual mothers and fathers.

•SLIDE #: 1 JOHN 2:12: I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

•SLIDE #: SPIRITUAL CHILDREN EXPERIENCE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Bullet proof vest 48 times. New threats on my life since last year—threats now included Julie. Attack Casas: rape Julie; kill roger. Julie and I both wearing bullet proof vests and woman follows Julie into Ladies' room to protect her. Job sermon on "When fears come true."

•SLIDE #: STORY: Bill Johnson's list of 10 to kill. Swat team: "What do I do?" "Jump behind me. I will take the bullet for you."

Humbling experience like no other.

Jesus took the bullet for us.

JULIE

Next characteristic:

•SLIDE: 1 John 2:13: I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

•SLIDE: CHILDREN KNOW WHO THEIR DADDY IS. IT JUST TAKES A LITTLE FAITH.

SLIDE: Little Boy

Two little boys were lying in a hospital one dark night. One little boy was hit by a truck, the other was burning up with a fever.

The boy hit by a truck told the boy with the fever: "I was at Sunday school last week and they said that if you believed in Jesus that you could go to heaven when you died.

The feverish little boy said, How can I ask Jesus to take me to heaven, too?

“Well, they told me at Sunday school if I raised my hand Jesus would come into my heart.”

“But what if you are asleep when He comes.

“I guess He sees your hand.

The boy hit by the truck helped the boy with the fever prop up his hand on his pillow.

That night, the boy with the fever died and when the nurse entered the room in the morning there was his hand still propped up on the pillow.

Now you know Jesus saw that hand?

It only takes a little faith to become a child of God.”

Imagine in your that God is putting His arms around you and says, “I love you. I accept you for who you are. There is nothing more you have to do.”

It is good to know that God is your father if you had a good father.

Time for you, tucked you in bed at night. Attention, comfort, love, approval security, etc.

Then you will enjoy this verse from the Lord’s prayer.

SLIDE: In Matthew 6:9 and Jesus teaches us how to pray: “When you pray, pray like this, Our Father, Who art in Heaven. . . .”

ROGER

But what if your dad was not that good?

Roger’s grandfather: come home drunk, kids hiding under the bed so not to get hit.

What if you had to hide from dad when he was drinking? Or, Dad never had time to give you any attention, compassion, say I am sorry.

We were leading a conference for pastor’s and wives in Atlanta. During a testimony time, one woman, with tears in her eyes, shared a childhood experience with her parents. Dad wanted to go somewhere and mom did not want to go. Mom was angry. Daughter was sent to the neighbors to be cared for while mom and dad were away. While at the neighbors, she was attacked by the neighbor’s dog.

She said, “I remember awakening with blood all over my face and chest, my heart racing in terror.

“When mom came home, she was angry.” Now she began to sob. “She wasn’t angry at the neighbors, she was angry with me. How could I let this happen?”

I am so sorry. Children are not well equipped emotionally to handle their parent’s anger. Hard to process anger from the one who is supposed to love and care for you.

“But, that’s not all. The dog had not been vaccinated. I remember my parents talking about what to do. Rabies has no symptoms until it is too late. If they took me for shots the neighbors would get upset and they might put down the dog. So they decided not to get me shots. (weeping) I learned that the neighbor’s dog meant more to my mom and dad than I did.”

Talk about rejection, betrayal, disappointment, and hurt.

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Can you imagine that she would have a hard time with the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who is in Heaven."

Our dads powerfully affect our view of God. That is why it is imperative that we go to the Bible to experience what God is really like.

■ SLIDE: We must make a distinction between our father on earth and our Father in heaven.

■ SLIDE: If there is one way God wants us to remember Him, He would say, "Whenever you think of Me, think of Me as your Father."

■ SLIDE: Matthew 6:26: Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

I heard a man tell a wonderful story about his four-year-old daughter. There was a thunderstorm and he was concerned that she might be frightened by it, so he rushed upstairs to her bedroom to check on how she was doing.

Lightning was flashing and thunder was roaring outside. But, when he got to her window and looked in, he saw his daughter standing on the windowsill smiling into the glass.

"What are you doing?" he shouted at her. "Jennifer, what are you doing?"

The little girl responded, "I think God is trying to take my picture!"

Now, that is a little child who knows how special she is in the eyes of God.

■ SLIDE: Psalm 103:13, 17: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him."

ROGER

● SLIDE #: IT IS ALL RIGHT TO BEGIN AS A SPIRITUAL BABY, BUT TO REMAIN A BABY OFTEN RESULTS IN STUNTED GROWTH AND SIN.

● SLIDE #: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual (*fleshen*-soft baby skin) but as worldly (*fleshly*—hardened, leathery wind and sun damaged skin)—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly (*fleshly*). For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly (*fleshly*)?

Describe the images of *fleshen* and *fleshly* and how they apply to the Christian life.

DRAW GRAPH of carnal Christians huddling back at the door of salvation on spiritual growth graph.

How long can a child remain a child and not become hardened? Three years.

Paul taught entire counsel of God to the Ephesians in 3 years.

3 years between 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

Jesus trained His disciples and got them ready in three years.

•SLIDE #: SPIRITUAL CHILDREN TEND TO FIGHT AND ARGUE A LOT.

•SLIDE #: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual (fleshen) but as worldly (fleshly)..... For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly (fleshly)?

How many of you have ever been in a church split?

How many of you have ever seen of been involved in a church fight?

Stories of sad displays of churches and Christians arguing among each other.

Dennis and hymnbooks—"the weasels are out again."
Fired two weeks later.

SBC fights: watching spiritual children fight it out.

•SLIDE #: **EXERCISE: What are some of the ways your father shared his care and compassion for you. Did any of your father's behaviors and attitudes make it hard for you to imagine the real God of the Bible as loving, caring and intimately involved in your life?**

Let's change focus now and talk about some of the characteristics of

•SLIDE #: SPIRITUAL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

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•SLIDE #: 1. YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ARE STRONG.

1 John 2:14: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

When I look out over my spiritual growth classes I don't usually see a lot of big, physical muscles.

There are some strong, muscular people in our midst—just not many.

How do they get those big muscles? They take weights and they lift and lift.

My experience is that most Christians never develop big, strong spiritual muscles? There are no secrets here. How do we develop strong spiritual muscles? "Spiritual disciplines" are the

•SLIDE #: The Spiritual Disciplines are the God-given tools we exercise in order to build up our spiritual muscles.

•SLIDE #: LIST OF DISCIPLINES

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Meditation (Joshua 1:8). Last Israelite in the Red Sea trying to make it to safely before the Egyptians get him.

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Prayer (Matthew 6:9). Atlanta Drought—Mayor calls prayer meeting on steps of city hall—criticized for mixing religion and politics—rained two inches the next day—no one brought an umbrella. This is a faith builder. Strengthened spiritual muscles of everyone who prayed.

ROGER

Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18) Vi Johnson Story

Later Vi shared an intriguing observation: "I think that the reason that God did not heal me during the prayer service was because all of you men might get proud. I think God waited until I was alone so He would get all the glory." She never had another pain as long as she lived. I buried her many years later.

JULIE

Service (John 13:5, 34-35).

Ladies in Jubilee choir bawling out Julie in front of children. Served them any way. Took food, hospitals. When I serve them God brings healing to my heart.

ROGER

Study (2 Timothy 2:15-16).

Ukrainian Pastor wanting to confess his sin. Sin of only being able to memorize through the Book of Philippians. I was supposed to hear his confession and I had never even memorized more than one chapter—much less an entire book.

Simplicity (Psalm 73:25).
Solitude (Psalm 46:10).
Submission (Hebrews 12:9-10)!
Celebration (John 15:11).
Fellowship (Hebrews 10:25).

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Confession (James 5:16).
Roger confessing his sins on Good Friday.

ROGER

Guidance (Matthew 18:19-20).
Gary: "Now is about the time the average pastor does something stupid."

Love (Matthew 22:37-40). AIDS story in California

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Worship (John 4:23-24).
Worship story: I was very sick this fall, and I had to wear a tube down my nose that went into my stomach. I felt as if I were choking all the time. I have never been in so much pain. I asked the Lord to give me the grace to tolerate it, and He spoke to me to worship Him. Even though I could not talk, I could play worship music on the piano and play my praise to Him. In the darkest moments of my life, the discipline of worship has been my sustaining grace.

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•SLIDE #: The spiritual disciplines remind us that the victory belongs to God and not to us.

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•**SLIDE**: THE WORD OF GOD LIVES IN SPIRITUAL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN.

1 John 2:14: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

WORD concept John 1. The WORD is Jesus lives in spiritual young women.

STORY: Little girl who answered “Christ.”

Impressed with young 14 year-old girl in occupied France during the final days of WWII. Afraid German soldiers might take her bible so tore off all pages and hid them through out her house.

One night an errant bomb hit in the street outside her house. Mom and dad killed. She was picked up and sent to a concentration camp.

Told every one she met about Jesus.

Commandant not a Christian. Brought her into his office and demanded that she stop and sent her back to her cell.

But, she couldn't stop talking about Jesus.

Several times the commandant brought her into his office and reprimanded her and forbid her to talk about Jesus.

Once more she was called into his office.

Commandant: “Will you follow Hitler or Christ?”

She answered, “Christ.”

The commandant nodded to a soldier standing across the room who removed from the fireplace a branding iron in the shape of a cross. Held the fiery iron in front of her face.

“Hitler or Christ?”

She answered, “Christ.” He bent her over his desk and branded a cross in the middle of her back—and sent her back to her cell.

Day after day he asked her, “Hitler, or Christ?” and each day she answered, “Christ.” And he took that branding iron and branded a cross in her back.

Infections set in; but still she answered, “Christ.”

American soldiers finally liberated her camp. Sent her to an American field hospital and the doctors and nurses prepared her for immediately surgery.

As she lay on the operating table, she looked up and said, “If I had it all to do over again, I'd do it again—for Christ.

Two doctors trusted Christ that day. They are the ones who related this story.

The “Word”, Jesus Christ, certainly lived in her life.

ROGER

•**SLIDE**: YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN KNOW WELL AND APPLY CORRECTLY THE WORD OF GOD—THE BIBLE.

While the “Word” referred primarily to Jesus Christ, we also refer to the Bible as the Word of God. Jesus is the Living Word; the Bible is the written Word.

Young men and women are mastering not only the content of the Bible, they are becoming skilled at making relevant, practical applications of the written Word for themselves and for others.

How well do you know the Word of God, the Bible? For some of us, this is a soul searching question.

Outline the Book of Philippians in four sentences.

What two psalms are just alike? (Psalm 14 and 53)

What Bible book is just like Ephesians?" Try Colossians.

The Book of Jude resembles what other New Testament book?

Hebrews is really the fifth gospel. Why? What Old Testament Book is the best commentary on Hebrews? Hebrews is incomprehensible without a working knowledge of Leviticus.

Sum up the book of Obadiah in one word?

What is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels?
(Why was this miracle the "high point" of His earthly ministry?)

These are not trivial questions. If we are going to shepherd little lambs we must know the content of the Bible so that we can apply the Word for their profit and edification. Their knowledge of the Bible puts them in a powerful shepherding position.

Saturating our minds with the Bible does not occur overnight. However, as we continually expose ourselves to God's Word our minds are increasingly filled with its content and truths.

Hard to sleep, read Leviticus, go right to sleep.

Some Applications:

● Have you ever cut someone off in traffic? And it was all your fault? And the other driver pulled up along side of you and gave you—a piece of his mind?

Seminary driving from Dallas to Ft. Worth four days a week. Always late and always tired.

In a hurry and pulled out in front of this other driver. He was angry. I was wrong. Pulled up to red light. I stopped 30 feet back so we would not face each other on the line. He stopped 30 feet back. He reached over and rolled down the window to yell at me. I did not want an altercation.

What to say?

● SLIDE: Proverb 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

As our windows rolled down, I spoke first: "I am sorry. I was wrong to cut you off. I was in a hurry and what I did was rude and selfish. Will you forgive me for what I did?"

He was startled. Took him off guard. "Uh, well, O.K. Just don't do it again."

● One of our counselors came to me with a problem. Two individuals in our church families were fighting and it was messy. They had not asked for his help; but, he was wondering if he should intervene. He really did not want to get involved. But wondered if he might should?

● SLIDE: Proverb 26:17: "Like one who seizes a mad dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own."

- I was sitting in a leadership meeting when one rose to speak against me. He didn't like my plans for relocation. He was disappointed in direction of my leadership. Arose, and walked behind me, saying some rather nasty things about me and my leadership. My cheeks turned red. What to do? Fortunately, I learned street smarts from the book of the wise.
- SLIDE: Proverb 19:11: "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense."
- Steve Dowdle, head of our Pastoral Care Department came to my office once and said, "Roger, you have done something wrong. I need to rebuke you—in the Biblical sense of the word." Fortunately, I was street smart.
- SLIDE: Proverb 17:10: "A word of rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into the back of a fool."
"O.K. Steve, I am ready."

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- SLIDE #: 1 John 2:14: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.
- SLIDE #: YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE.

In other words, They are Able To Fight Satan on His Own Ground And Win.

Just like you, I know that every time God gets ready to use us in ministry, the enemy's attacks become more intense and overt John wrote of it quite plainly as he mentioned the characteristics of spiritual young men and women in his first letter:

STORY: Brazil roger strangling

Dianne's broken arm and alone with no money and speaking in Portuguese.

STORY: Peru. We are going to Peru in October. Hector's witch doctor's story: Blindness

ROGER

DRAW: No end run: But, consider that no one can mature into a spiritual mother or father and bypass the essential experiences of fighting in spiritual hand-to-hand combat with Satan and winning.

Too many Christians say, "I want to be a spiritual father or mother; but, I don't want to do that evil, spiritual warfare, kind of stuff." They do not understand. Defeating the evil one is part of the process.

EXERCISE: Have you ever faced a Satanic battle and lost? Have you ever faced a satanic battle and won? What profitable lessons have you learned regarding spiritual warfare?

•SLIDE: DRAW Multiple characteristics at the same time.

“Roger, most people settle this issue when they are 13 years old...blah...blah...blah!

One of the most frequent questions from my students are, “When do we know that we are spiritually mature? How do we know that we have finally arrived?”

My experience is that the journey to maturity is never completed. But, we know when we are making progress—and we enjoy every stage. I loved my childhood years. I enjoyed growing up as a teenager and transitioning into adulthood. The presence of little children around the house was a delight to me during what I call, “the golden years” of fatherhood. Every stage of growth had its own special trials and delights.

So, we set our hearts on growing up in Christ—and someday when we least expect it, we realize that we are no longer just children; we have grown into spiritual young men and women. Soon, we are acting more and more like spiritual mothers and fathers and enjoying a deep intimacy with the very heart of God.

•SLIDE: “I want to be a spiritual mother or father at any price—I don’t care what it costs.”

One day we pray, Father, I want to be a spiritual mother or father, I do care what it costs—but I want it any way.

In my experience, praying to be a spiritual mother or father is one prayer God guarantees to answer. And we will never regret it.