



## ***How To Speak To Children About God***

**by Suzy Lynch Cummings**

Being asked to speak to a group at a church gave me the unique opportunity to examine my own spirituality. The topic “How to Talk to Children about God” also reminded me of the awesome responsibility I have as a Christian Education teacher.

Of course children ask all the easy questions such as “Who is God? Where does he live? What is heaven like? Does God see me?” Simple answers always work best. For my thoughts about this topic, I’ve divided it into categories: Who, Why, What, How, and When.

### **Who should talk to children about God?**

It is my belief that there are times God places children in our lives to halt irresponsible behavior and to grasp a new meaning of our spiritual side. When most responsible people are entrusted with a child, (his or her own, grandchild, babysitting job, teaching) they are able to view it earnestly. That has definitely happened to me as a role model for children. Prayer assures that the assignment be divinely inspired.

Ideally, a mom or dad would open up the opportunity for spirituality in a child’s life. This isn’t always the case. Other family members, church leaders, babysitters or teachers are sometimes the cheerleaders for God. Think back to your own childhood. Who was your spiritual leader? Did someone read bible stories to you? Did you have fun doing crafts or singing songs in a Christian setting? My Sunday school teacher and the person most responsible for introducing me to Jesus Christ was Wilma Reed, in Cleburne, Texas. She is such a Godly person. She listened to all our stories like they were interesting, she read with a quiet beautiful voice and she wore red lipstick, which we knew Jesus would love. She presented God to us in a non-threatening way, as a loving, forgiving God. I never forgot that, and to this day, that is exactly what he is in my life. The children in my life learn about him in the same way. It is everyone’s responsibility to use his or her gifts to spread the good news.

Romans 12:4 *“For in one body we have many members and all the members do not have the same function.”*

### **Why do we talk to children about God?**

- To ensure that a child begins an understanding of a power greater than him or herself. (Sometimes bigger than us.)
- To assure them of a respect for a spiritual life and system of values and beliefs.
- To give them a place to return. How many of us return to those wonderful places of worship with our own children?

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

## **What is the message we want children to have?**

A colleague of mine compares God's love to the love she feels when she watches her precious red-haired granddaughter. She, for the first time, understands his complete love because of what she feels for this little girl. "I look at her and love her so much that I know how God feels when he sees every single one of us." He laughs with us and is probably disappointed at times, but loves every single one of us so very much. So our message to children is:

- God is good.
- God forgives.
- Grace is what we get just for being us.
- Just believe.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

## **How do we talk to children about God?**

- Model behavior that shows the child that you know it is God's world.
- Use Bible stories, songs, beautiful books, art and personal stories to open discussions about God.
- Practice random acts of kindness with the child. It comes natural to them. This is humbling for the adults. Our world is so complex and random acts of kindness have a lasting effect on the giver and receiver.
- Look for God everywhere. Adopt an attitude of inquiry or discovery, not institution, with the child.
- Explore and continue to provide simple answers. Be enthusiastic but don't overdo it.

My Jewish friend, who teaches Religious Education at her temple, says, "How long did Jesus look at the burning bush before he knew it wasn't burning down? Did he have to accept immediately that he was given a message by God? This sort of discussion is great for older kids. Any Bible story can be open for discussion. For older children, don't push. Accept their beliefs or even "unbeliefs," but be firm with yours. How many times do we have to say, "I know how you feel right now and I understand. However, I believe, and that is why my life works. I love you no matter what." We have to "let go with love" at times with teens, but accept where they are. Perhaps our calling as leaders is just for today. Not to judge a searching teen, but to continue to love and set an example.

Psalm 84:11 *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."*

## **When do we talk to children about God?**

If our talk is gentle, fun, loving and non-judgmental, the presentation of our loving God is appropriate anytime. It is never too early to sing songs to babies, recite poetry, learn Bible verses, draw, color and make crafts. Pray for and with children and always remember to laugh.

At each Baptism, we as Christians, accept responsibilities to teach our children about God. "We receive you into the household of God, confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection and share with us in his eternal priesthood."

I recently had a bedtime prayer passed on to me. It is as wonderful for children as it is for adults.

***"Dear God, please have people treat me tomorrow the way I treated everyone today." Amen.***