

Teaching children through love

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Jesus had great love for children. He was so gentle toward them, enveloping them in warm approval and tenderness. His method of teaching children and others was to reach them through love.

Too often messages are taught through fear rather than love. Fear of God, fear of consequences, fear of being harmed. But Jesus did not teach children or adults to be afraid. Rather his message was to fear not, and to overcome fear with love. As John, the beloved disciple, assures us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:” (I John 4:18)

This is so helpful in teaching children. Rather than frightening children into obedience, we cultivate their natural love of doing and being good. Nurturing a love of God and teaching children of God’s protecting love for them will give children a solid foundation from which they can learn to pray.

When I was in the first or second grade, I began having a recurring nightmare. It involved pirates and walking planks and crocodiles. Apparently “Peter Pan” was a little too graphic for me.

Anyway, my Dad would hear my crying and come to comfort me. About the third time this happened, he asked if this was the same dream as before. Yes. He was quiet and I knew he was praying.

Then he asked what I would do if I was watching television and a program came on that I’d seen before and didn’t like. “Why you wouldn’t watch it, would you? You’d change the channel.” He explained that I had complete control over my thought whether I was asleep or awake. If a program or dream came on that I didn’t like, I could wake myself up. But he continued, I didn’t even have to wake up. I could recognize the dream as a bad program and change the channel to something else, even without waking up.

He assured me that God was good and that God was divine Mind. Therefore all God’s thoughts to me were good. God was not sending a bad dream, and if it didn’t come from God, I didn’t have to accept it. I could turn to God,

even when I was asleep, change the channel and think good thoughts. He told me the next time a bad dream started to do this. I went peacefully back to sleep that night.

It was several weeks before the pirate dream returned. To this day, I remember thinking, “Hmmm, I recognize this dream. This is the one I don’t like.”

I remembered exactly what my Dad told me to do. Although I don’t believe I actually woke up, I stopped the dream and consciously began to think, “What do I want to think about now?” I decided to dream about taking a walk in a pretty meadow with lots of wild flowers and tall grass. In other words, I changed the channel to good thoughts. That was the end of the pirate dream and the end of nightmares for the rest of my life.

What a blessing to help children overcome fear. Instead of sympathizing with childish fears or using fear to control children, we can teach them the power of good and the presence of divine Love. In this way, children will learn to turn to God when they are afraid, and find answers to meet their every day (or night) problems.

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