

Nurturing Faith Through Relationships WORDshop

Originally taught on February 7, 2007

Welcome and Prayer

So What's a WORDshop?

- An opportunity to add specific tools to your Toolbox for a Life of Faith

Equipping Your Toolbox for a Life of Faith

◆ Family

“The family is a gift from God and is intended to be that place where children receive the kind love and care that God wishes for all. . . . Family is not just the birthplace for individuals. It can be a forge for the formation of faith.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 93

“How can we rediscover the faith center of family? . . . Begin no matter what age the child is. First, pray for them, and pray for the lessons to be learned in life. . . . Second, remind yourself that parenting is a wonderful and yet difficult expression of “letting go” love. . . . Third, pray with your child. . . . Fourth, read from the Bible to them and, as they grow older read it with them. . . . Lastly, when the child is old enough to understand that they will eventually be on their own, speak to your child about their leaving.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 94

“God can come to us in our relationships with family, with children or grandchildren. The call of the disciple is to relate to them for the sake of spiritual growth - both theirs and ours.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 96

While most people think of family in terms of blood relatives, the reality in today's fragmented world is that one way to describe your family is the three people you would call first in an emergency. This functional family is often the place which we relate to for spiritual growth and support. Foss suggests that we are called to pray for and with children in the midst of a family, I would assert that we are also called to pray for and with our functional families regardless of age.

- JW, 2/7/07

How have you experienced faith growth in the midst of a family setting? How might you increase the role faith plays in your family setting?

◆ Meeting Christ in Our Friendships

“The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

- John 1:43-45

“Great friendships are spiritual incubators. And I don't think true friends can keep their greatest joys from one another. . . . If you love Jesus Christ and you love your best friend, you'll want the two of them to meet. We don't make friends in order to get them to God. That's spiritual manipulation. But when we have a good friend, it is only natural that we would want to share the deepest parts of ourselves.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 98

“Friendship is a spiritual trust from God. Close friendships are relationship within which we can learn of God's kind of loyalty. . . . Our close friendships built on a foundation of faith offer a glimpse of the eternal love of our heavenly Father. . . . Friendship is also a gift of joy. . . . Friendship has the remarkable possibility of growing our souls. The human spirit shrinks in isolation. I think that is why God make us for friendships with one another. “

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 98-99

How has a close friendship helped you to grow in faith? How has God been revealed to you through a close friendship?

◆ **The Gift of Fellowship with Others in Small Groups**

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.”

- Mark 9:2

“Throughout the centuries, Christians have gathered in large assemblies for worship and in small groups for spiritual growth and mutual support. In our time, we are discovering once again, the power and joy of small groups. Disciples of Jesus can find their lives of faith enhanced by gathering in small groups for personal sharing and caring.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 102

“Certain steps are useful in forming a small group . . . that mirrors Jesus and his disciples. First gather some people you like or would like to get to know. Make it clear that this is an opportunity for spiritual growth. Let them know that you want to reflect on faith and pray with and for one another. . . . Second, set the schedule for a given period up front. When the specified time is over, the leader can call each participant and , in the privacy of that phone call, discover how each person feels about continuing further as a part of the group. Third, set the ground rules. Confidentiality is a must. . . . Fourth, don’t make the group meeting time a preparation burden. . . . Fifth, allow time for sharing personal news after the devotion. . . . Sixth, encourage each member to keep a prayer list. . . . And set the length of meeting time. . . . I recommend that ninety minutes be the time frame. . . . Lastly, encourage consideration of fun time apart from the group meeting for building relationships. . . . This is a group for honesty, support and spiritual growth.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 102-103

Have experienced your life of faith enhanced by participation in a small group? What have you learned from your experience with small groups?

◆ **Sharing Jesus with Acquaintances**

“I think that Christians are sometimes unwilling to witness to the Savior because they have allowed evangelism to become no more than a set of questions about a person’s eternal welfare. . . . The Christian joy we experience is more than salvation in the future. It is knowing Jesus and experiencing the fellowship of his people in the present.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 106

“The disciple of Jesus knows that sooner or later there will come an opportunity to speak in his name. We also know that we are not responsible for what others do with our words. We are responsible for how we share and in what manner we speak of him. . . . Witnessing to Jesus is not hard, but it does require a spiritual readiness. Evangelism is telling the good news of God’s love and loyalty, forgiveness and grace to all humankind. It is not an intrusive declaration of judgment, and it is best shared by the one who has received the gift of that very love and claims the presence of Jesus.”

- Real Faith for Real Life, Mike Foss, pg. 107-108

How have you shared your faith with an acquaintance in your life? How might you be open to doing that in the future?

◆ **Sent into the World**

Which one relationship in your life do you wish to strengthen or add?

Loving and Holy God, when we are lonely, surround us with Your love. When we feel dislocated, help us to know Your presence. When we become disoriented, guide us in Your way. Help us discover roots, place and belonging. Help us cherish the friends You give us along life’s way. Grant us the gift of family, who love us for who we are, and whom we love for who they are. Help us to find home, to be our best true selves. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

- Twelve Keys for Living, Kennon Callahan, pg. 67

This WORDshop is based on “Real Faith for Real Life” by Michael Foss, Augsburg Fortress, 2004 and Twelve Keys for Living by Dr. Kennon Callahan, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.