



Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



REAL. PRESENT. GOD.:

Finding Good in Life

It seems strange to say that positive emotions need to be cultivated. With exception to those who harbor pain, most of us are generally positive and that positivity rubs off on our children. This is good because positive emotions promote benefits in physical health, emotional health, sleep, the ability to stay calm and stronger relationship skills. Even beyond what science has found, God gives us an additional promise. When we think about good things, and practice them, we are aware of His peace.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (PHIL. 4:8–9).

It is easy to believe that positive emotions are good for us, but why do we need to cultivate them? Think about riding a bike into the wind. As you ride, you notice the wind pushing against you for the entire trip. However, if you turn around and ride the same route with the wind at your back, you will only notice the benefit of the wind for a brief time. Pretty soon, you will take the wind for granted. This is the same thing we do with positive emotions. We take them for granted until they are no longer there. In a similar fashion, we take God’s goodness and care for us for granted. When we focus on goodness, we can more easily focus on the Source of that goodness.

Think about how you ask your children about their day. Do you ask for negative or positive things? If you ask in



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a neutral way, do they respond negatively or positively? In order to foster a more positive mood, ask your children to list three good things every day. It is important to develop a habit with this so your children begin to notice good things in order to save them for sharing. If they are not looking for good things, they are likely to remember only disappointments or frustrations. In other words, they will remember when they were riding into the wind.

When you are exchanging your lists of good things, take some time to reflect on why these things happened. Doing this will not only set a pattern for looking for good things, but also will teach your children how to make more good things happen. For instance, a good grade on a math test comes from paying attention in class, or a good day at recess comes from being a good friend to someone who also knows how to be a good friend. Your children will develop recipes to find and create good things in their days.

An especially good time to do look for good things is when a child is faced with a frustrating problem. Finding the good in a tough situation will promote good problem-solving and help your children to identify the people in their lives who can give help. Cultivating positive emotions works to improve self-regulation because calm and optimism will be better practiced than panic and pessimism.

When we set about to cultivate positive emotions, this does not mean we ignore feelings such as grief, anger or just plain grumpiness. God created these



emotions for a purpose. When we are sad, we grieve. When we are hurt or frustrated, we get angry, and often when we don't feel well, we get grumpy. Moving into a positive mindset does not prevent us from feeling other emotions, but it does help us to regulate those emotions more effectively. When we are grieving, we will be able to feel love from those who care about us. When we feel angry, we will be able to think about a way to prevent the situation that caused the anger. And when we feel grumpy, we will know to give ourselves a break, or possibly a nap. Positive emotions help us to more effectively read our negative emotions.

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns” (PS. 46:4–5).

God's love, care and forgiveness give us so much to be grateful for. If it weren't for the grief caused by our sin, we would be happy all of the time. Teach your children the blessing of knowing that even in the midst of danger, angst or dreariness, God fills our hearts with trust for Him. Each morning brings a new day full of optimism and promise.