

Children and Teens in Worship (and the Life of the Church)

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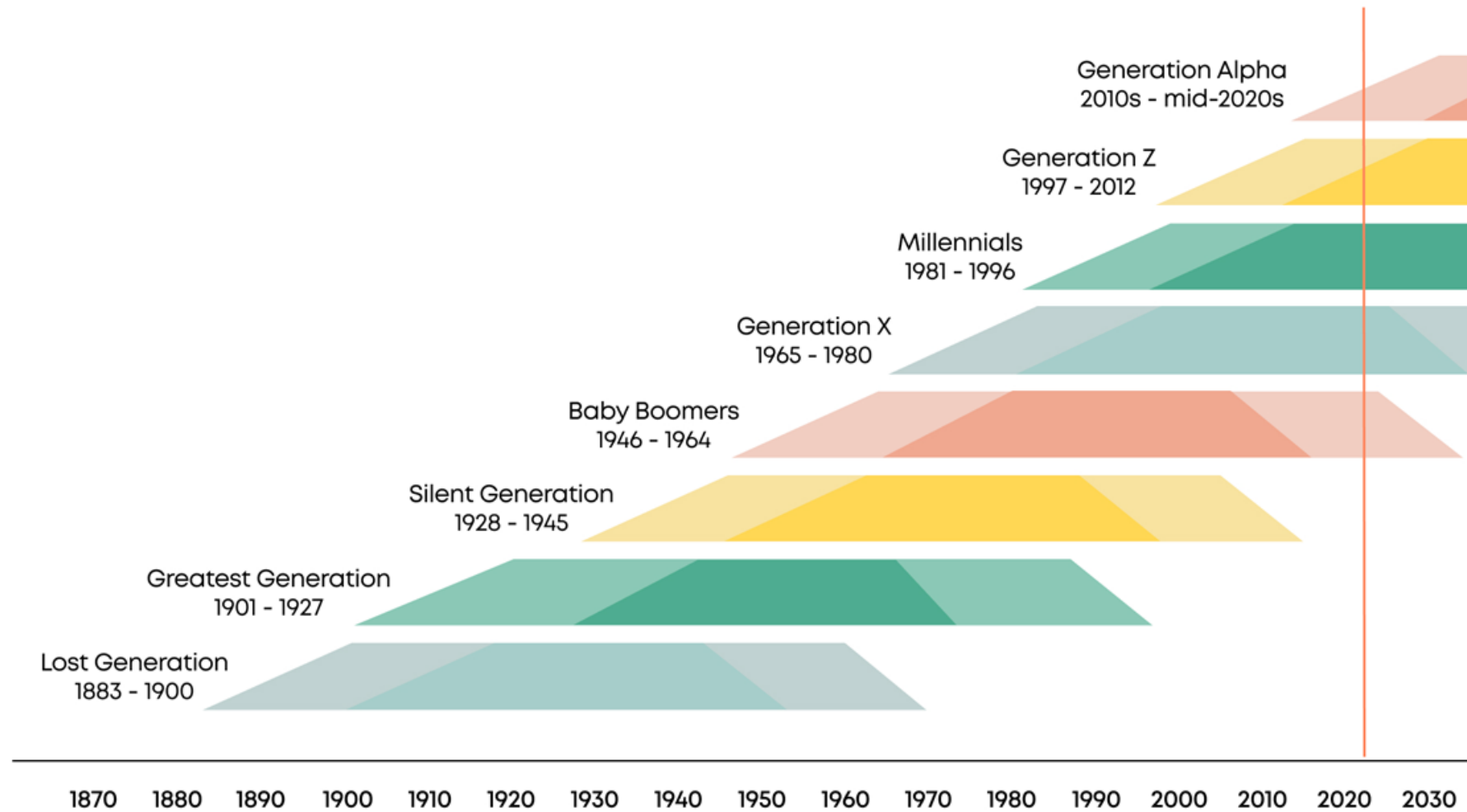
Rev. Dr. Phil Huebner
WELS Worship Conference
2024

Short Bio

- Becky, Noah (17), Gwen (14)
- Christ the King, Palm Coast ('07-'16)
- WLHS Campus Pastor (2016-Present)
- '99 WLHS, '03 MLC, '07 WLS
- '11 WLS, '19 CTS-FW



Generational Decay



A close-up, slightly low-angle shot of a man's face, likely from a movie. He has a serious, intense expression, looking directly at the camera. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his forehead and nose, and deep shadows on the sides of his face. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an interior setting like a control room or a vehicle.

HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

MCM www.mcm.com

Youth & Teen Problems Today

- **Totally overwhelmed**
- **Breakdown of the family**
- **Pressure**
- **Social media comparisons and temptations**
- **Anxiety, sadness, depression**
- **Decline in Christianity**
- **“Expressive Individualism”**

Losing Our Youth

- WELS is down 34%-50%+ in various groupings of our youth
- 88% of our own youth express critical doubts about faith before going off to college
- Teens are completely lost in secular culture
- Teens are losing their identity

A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE
WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN SYNOD

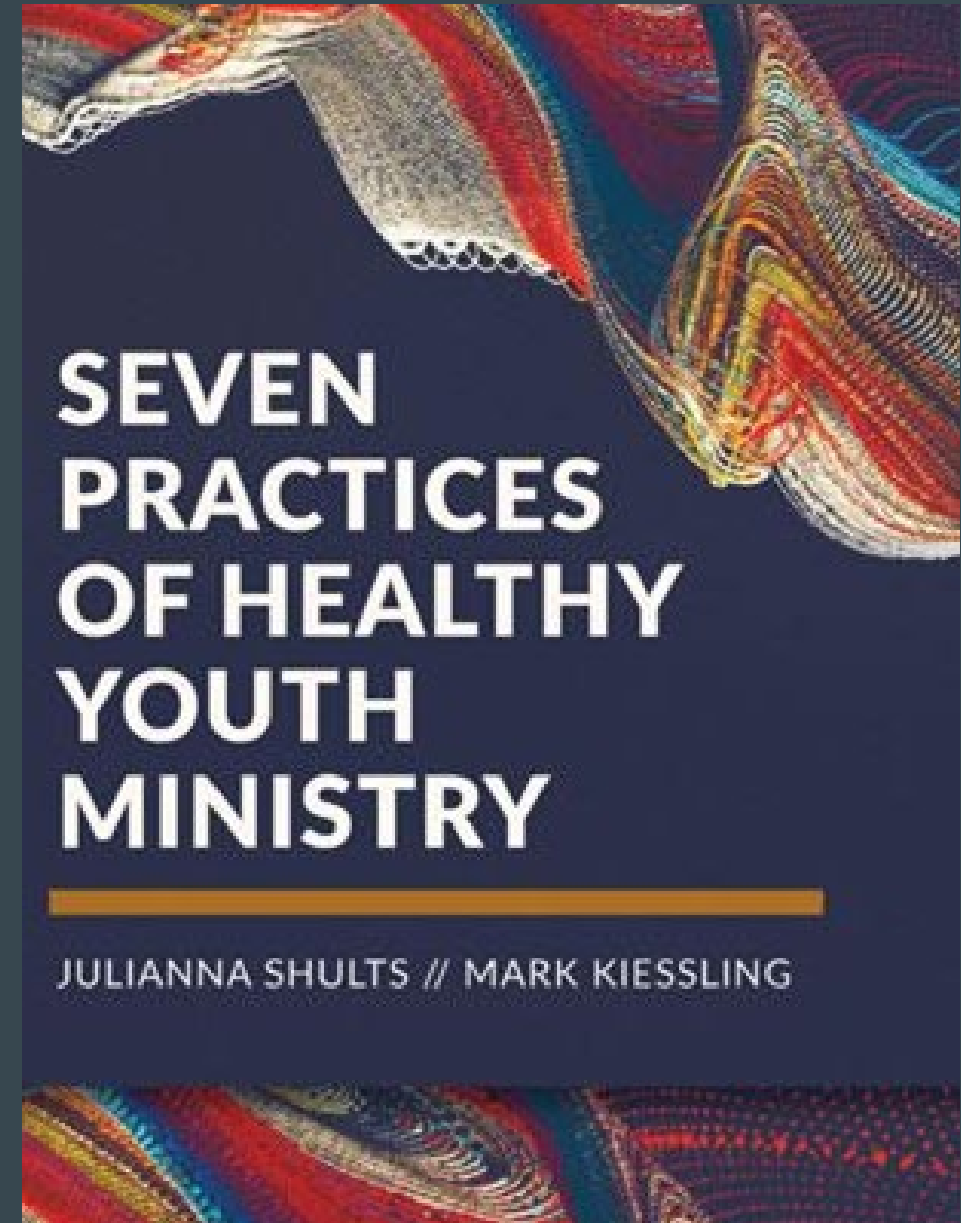
Jonathan R. Hein

Losing Our Youth - A Specific Example

- **33% of WLHS students do not have two parents at home**
- **31.6% of WLHS students never read the Bible**
- **34.7% read the Bible 1-15 mins per week**
- **22.5% of our WELS students never go to church**
- **10.5% once/month and 12.8% twice/month**

LCMS Reports

- 60-70% make it from baptism to confirmation
- 33% make it from confirmation to adulthood
- 20% make it from baptism to adulthood
- 21% of churches have almost no budget for youth ministry
- 1 in 7 are unsure of their view on LGBTQ issues



How do we retain our youth?

- More exciting youth or teen groups?
- Dedicated staff and budget money for events and materials?
- Change our worship styles?
- Offer alternatives in or during worship?
 - Children's church
 - Concurrent Sunday School
- Something else?

What's going on here?

- What do we do with children today?
- What do we do with teens today?

What's going on here?

- ~~What do we do with children today?~~
- ~~What do we do with teens today?~~
- **What do we do with parents today?**

History Repeats Itself?

“The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.”

--Martin Luther to Nicholas von Amsdorf



SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

Key Scriptural Thoughts - A Summary

- Children are a blessing
- Children are uniquely created and cared for by God
- Children are to be disciplined
- Children are to be taught the ways of the Lord
- Parents are called first and foremost to raise and teach children
- All are called on to “tell the next generation”

Biblical Examples

Cain and Abel



Biblical Examples

Abraham
and
Isaac



Biblical Examples

The Passover

And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

Exodus 12:26-27



Biblical Examples

Solomon and the Temple



Solomon and the Temple

King Solomon and **the entire assembly of Israel** that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted.

1 Kings 8:5

Biblical Examples

Josiah

And the Law



Josiah and the Law

He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—**all the people from the least to the greatest.** He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord.

2 Kings 23:2

Biblical Examples

Ezra Confesses



Ezra Confesses

While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—**men, women and children**—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly.

Ezra 10:1

Joel Urges Repentance

Rend your heart and not your garments . . . Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, **gather the children, those nursing at the breast.**

Joel 2:13

Other Biblical Examples

- Baby John the Baptist
- The boy Jesus in the temple
- Sermon on the Mount
- Feeding of the 5,000 / 4,000
- Jesus in Nazareth on the Sabbath
- “Let the little children come to me . . .”
- Children as examples of faith

Other Biblical Examples

- Peter's Pentecost sermon
- Practice of the early in church in Acts 2
 - "all the believers"
- Lydia and the jailor at Philippi and their families
- Eutychus and the window
- Young prophet Jeremiah / pastor Timothy
- Practice of reading NT letters
 - "Children, obey . . ."

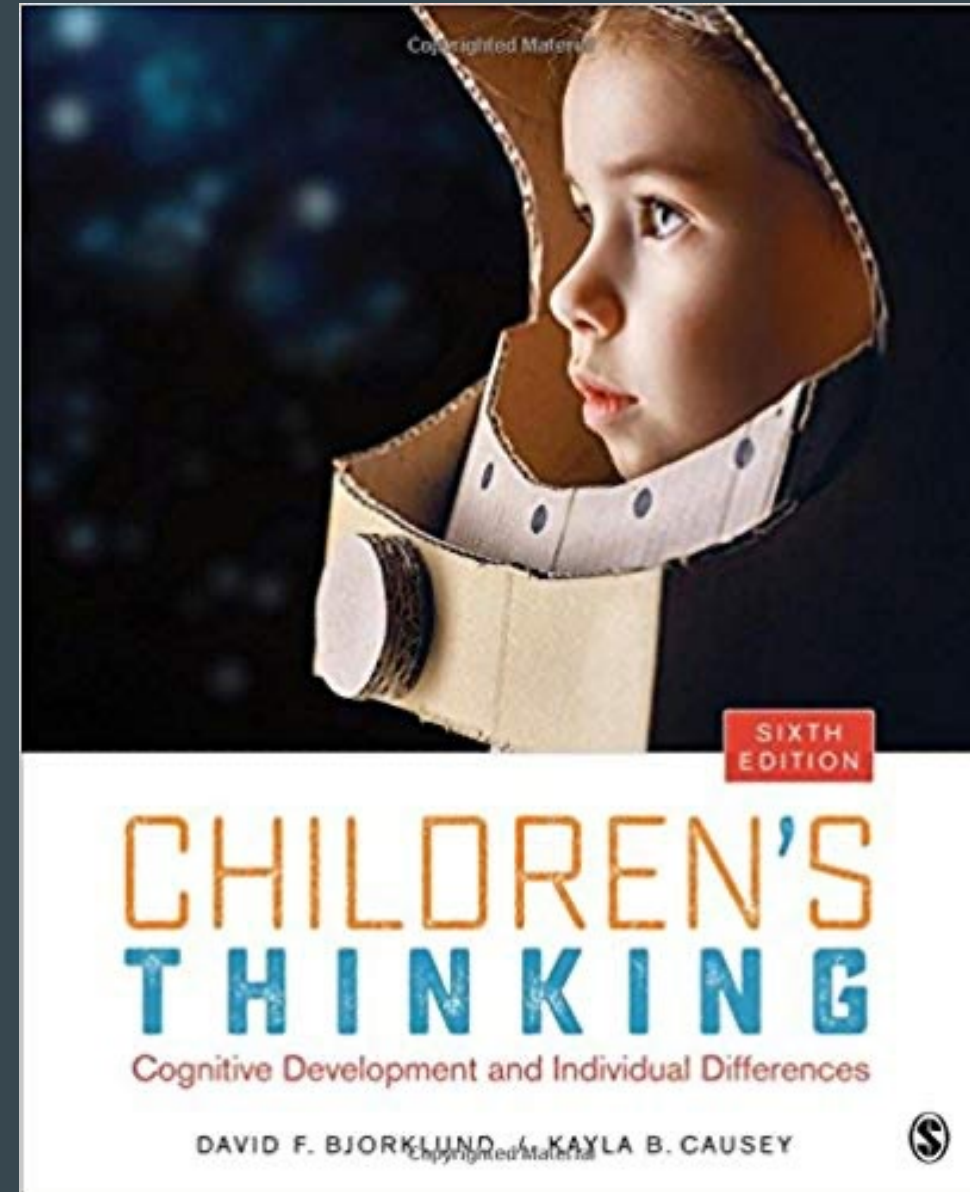
Key Scriptural Thoughts

- Children usually/always seemed to be with their parents for worship and acts of faith.
- The whole faith community came together.
- Children are examples of faith in life and worship.
- Children were included
- Parents took the lead in spiritual training
- The whole community of believers was to be a part of training the next generation

SEARCHING SCIENCE & HISTORY

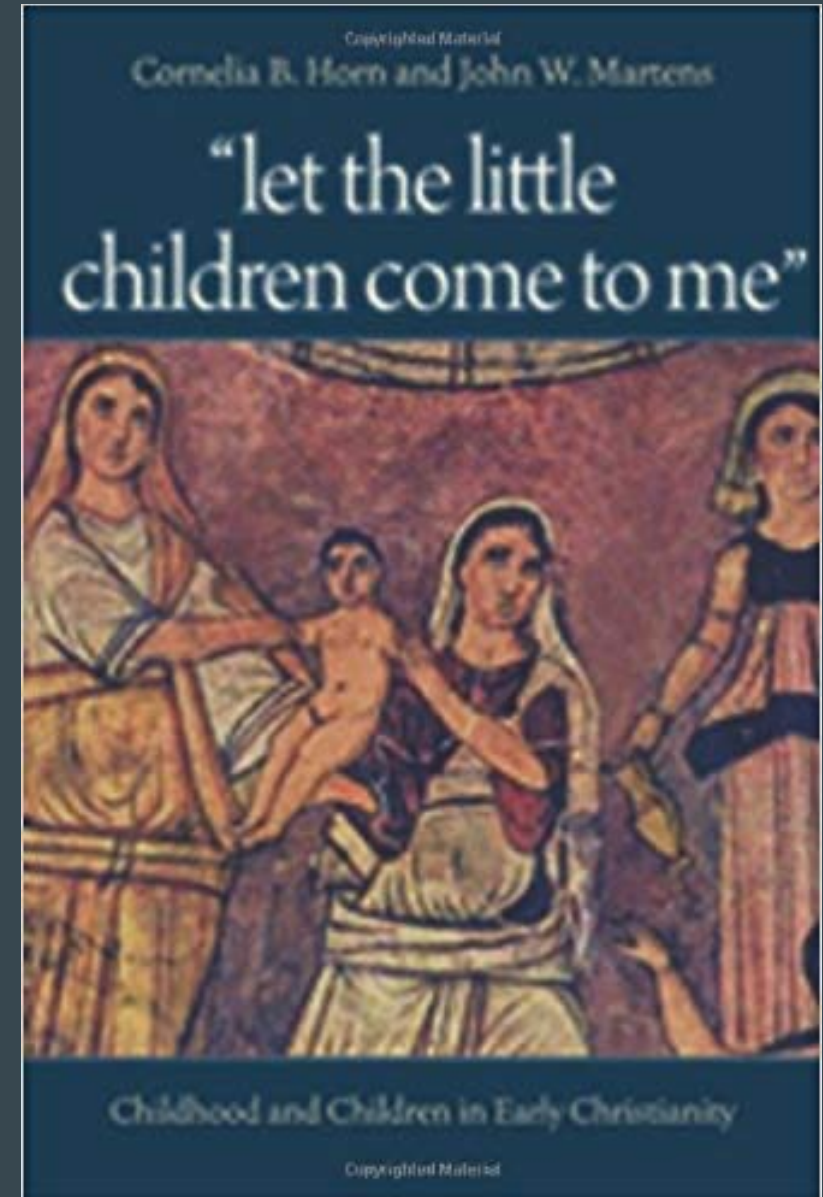
Science

- Children learn best through parental example
- Children learn socially
- Children learn through repetition
- Children learn actively
- Children learn through the senses.



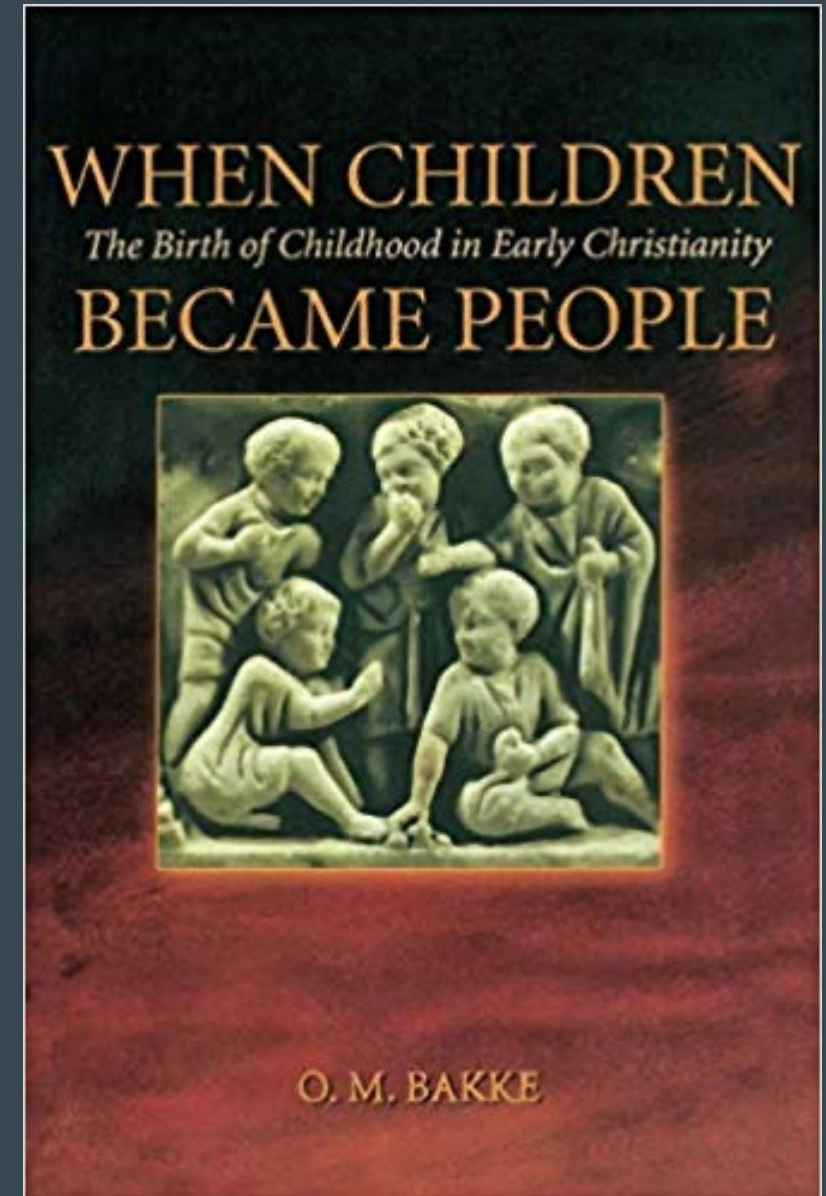
Church History

- God have mercy on the people who do not have mercy on their children!!
- The Church fathers wrote frequently on the importance of parenting and training children



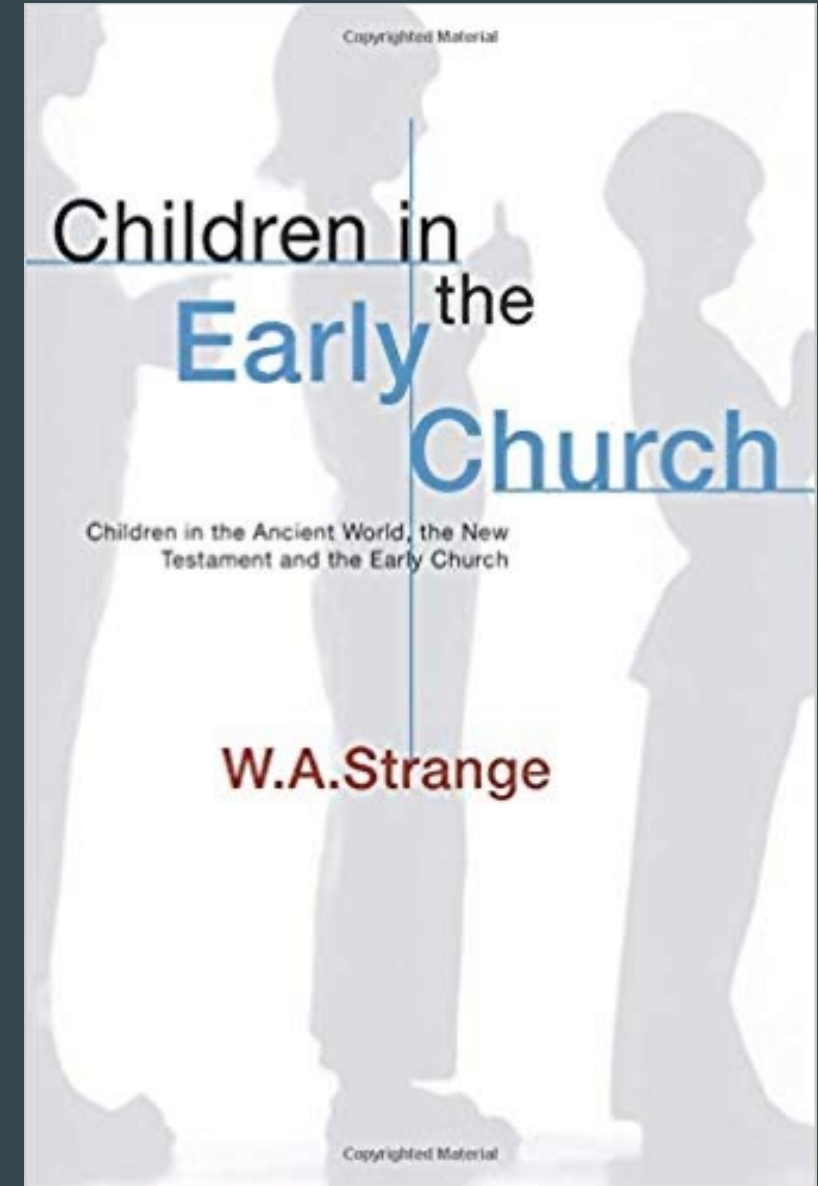
Church History

- Children frequently participated in church / worship
- Children were liturgically active
 - Lectors
 - Children's choirs



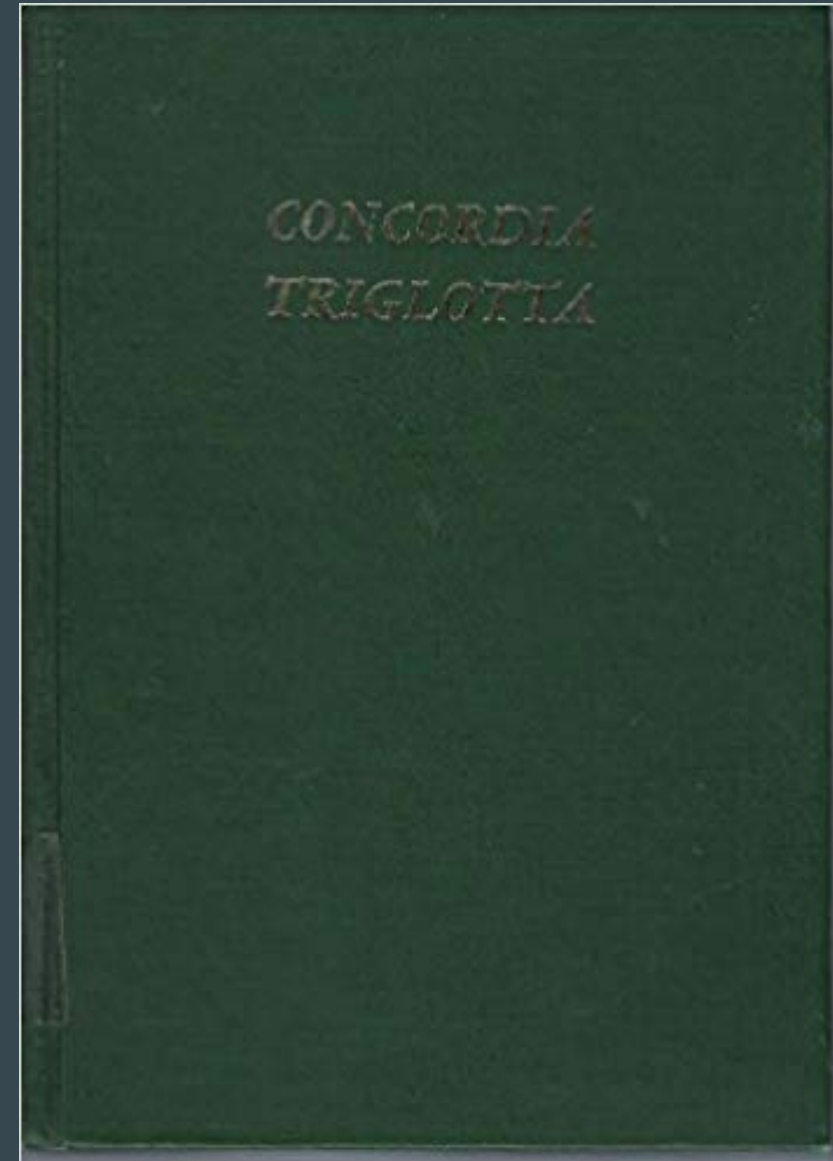
Church History

- Children (and babies) were baptized in a robust baptismal rite
- Children of varying ages communed with adults for hundreds of years



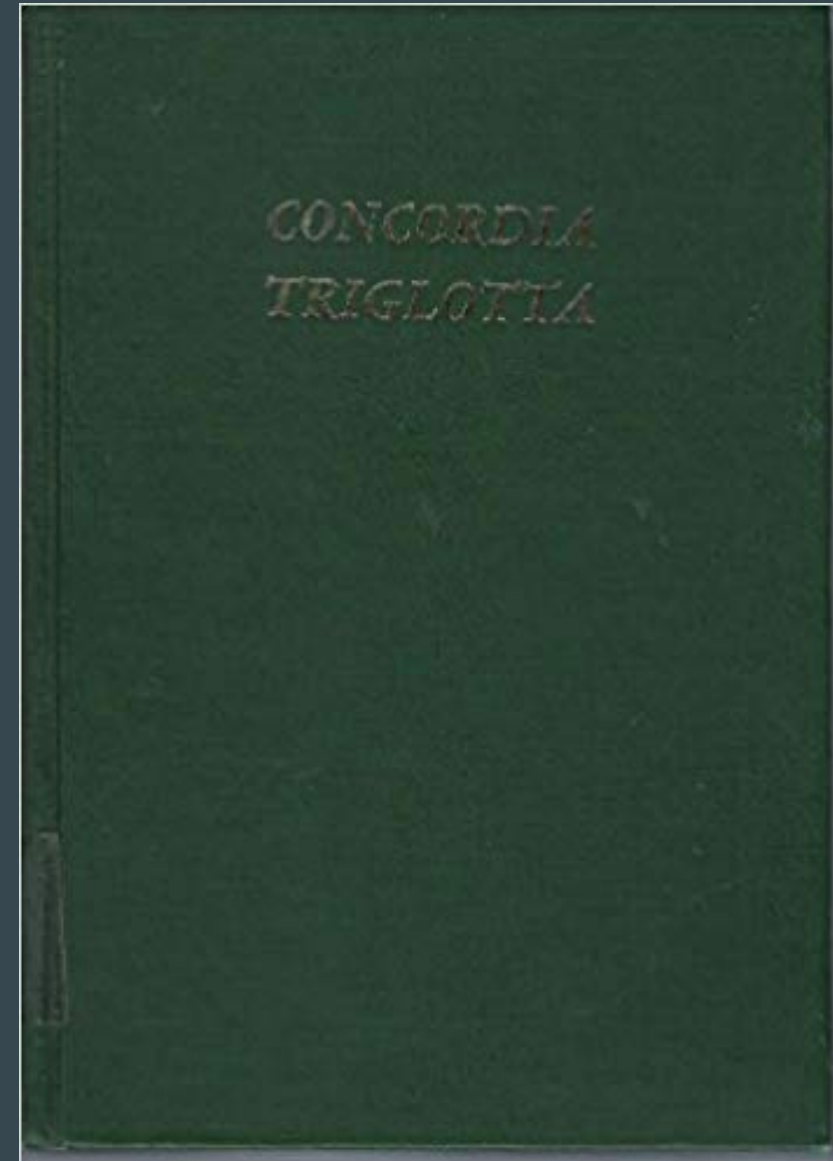
Church History (Luther)

- Luther believe the Reformation “must be done through the young”
- Home, church and school must cooperate
- Father as pastor of the home



Church History (Luther)

- Catechetical hymns
- Children's liturgical choirs
- Lectors
- Children communed (around 8)



Luther on the 4th Comm.

“For if we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and the spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world. We must not think only of amassing money and property for them. God can provide for them and make them rich without our help, as indeed he does daily. But he has given us children and entrusted them to us precisely so that we may raise and govern them according to his will; otherwise, God would have no need of fathers and mothers . . .

Luther on the 4th Comm.

“Think what deadly harm you do when you are negligent and fail to bring up your children to be useful and godly.

You bring upon yourself sin and wrath, thus earning hell by the way you have reared your own children, no matter how holy and upright you may be otherwise. Because this commandment is neglected, God also terribly punishes the world; **hence there is no longer any discipline, government, or peace. *We all complain about this situation, but we fail to see that it is our own fault.***”

SOLUTIONS
IN
HOME, CHURCH, & SCHOOL

Solutions in the Home - Spiritual Life Check

- What is the spiritual life like at the home?
 - How can it be enhanced?
 - How active are fathers?
 - What can we model or resources can we offer?
 - When a father attends church regularly, the retention rate for children rises 75% (Hein)
 - When family devotions are held regularly, the retention rate is 80% higher than average (Hein)

Solutions in the Home - Early Intervention

- Children are inundated with screens way too early!
- Children are exposed to content way too early!
- Children / teens are thinking about big life issues but few are talking about or addressing them.
- Children / teens are not prepared well to defend their faith or address real life issues.

Solutions in the Home - Treat Like Adults

- G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, 1904
- To be a helicopter or not to be . . . ?
- How do you teach and yet empower?

Solutions in the Church - Worship

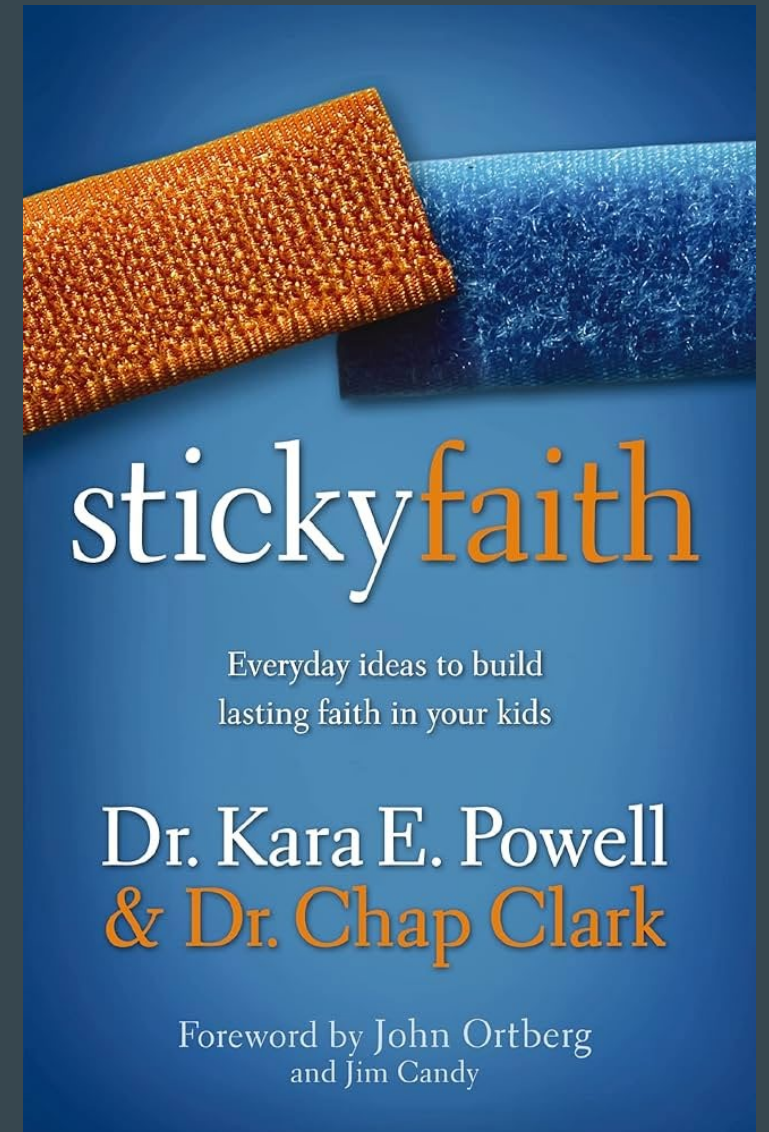
- **Worship that is done well, not just “relevant”**
- **Worship and sermons that are meaningful and address and include them**
- **Opportunities for service and inclusion!**
 - **Musicians, singers, ushers, greeters, tech team, acolytes, lectors, Sunday School, and more!**

Solutions in the Church - Training

- Parents need more training
- As parents
- About worship
- 92% receive no training in engaging children in worship from their WELS congregation
- Children need more training
- Other members need training!

Solutions in the Church - Mentoring

- Children/Youths/Teens need 5 adults active in their lives for their faith to “stick.”
- Could this be a branch of the elders program?



Solutions in the Church - Catechism/Groups

- **Youth Group needs to change!**
- **Teens want something meaningful**
- **Teens want something applicable**
- **How can parents be involved in Catechism?**
- **Can we do Confirmation earlier and train better in Middle School?**

Rethinking Catechesis

Faith Formations

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
0-4	PreK	Basic Bible Stories	Songs and Hymns	Sunday School, VBS
5	Kindergarten	Basic Bible Stories	Songs and Hymns	Sunday School, VBS
6	1st Grade	Basic Bible Stories	Songs and Hymns	Sunday School, VBS
Congregation/ LES Presentation of 1st Bible				

Rethinking Catechesis

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Congregation/ LES Presentation of 1st Bible

Faith Foundations

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
8	2nd Grade	Bible History		Sunday School, VBS
9	3rd Grade	Bible History		Sunday School, VBS
10	4th Grade	Catechism	Bible History	Sunday School, VBS
11	5th Grade	Catechism	Bible History	Sunday School, VBS
12	6th Grade	Catechism	Bible History	Sunday School, VBS

Rite of 1st Communion

Rethinking Catechesis

Faith Applications

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
13	7th Grade	Bible on Sexuality	Large Catechism in Applicaiton, Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project
14	8th Grade	Bible on Social Media	Large Catechism in Applicaiton, Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project
15	9th Grade	Junior Apologetics	Large Catechism in Applicaiton, Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project, Mission Trip or Youth Rally
Rite of Youth Confirmattion				

Rethinking Catechesis

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Rite of Youth Confirmation

Faith Identifications

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
16	10th Grade	Christian Identity	Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project, Mission Trip or Youth Rally
17	11th Grade	Christian Vocation	Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project, Mission Trip or Youth Rally
18	12th Grade	Christian Life Planning	Biblical Studies	VBS Leaders, Canvassing, Service Project, Mission Trip or Youth Rally

Rite of Adult Confirmation

Rethinking Catechesis

Faith Applications

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
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Rite of Youth Confirmation

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Rite of Adult Confirmation

Faith Fortifications

Age	Grade	Main Material	Supplemental Material	Faith Activities
19	College/Military/Trade	Young Adult Materials	Congregational Mentorship for Young Adults Program	Campus Ministry Programs, Mission Trip
20	College/Military/Trade	Young Adult Materials	Congregational Mentorship for Young Adults Program	Campus Ministry Programs, Mission Trip
21	College/Military/Trade	Young Adult Materials	Congregational Mentorship for Young Adults Program	Campus Ministry Programs, Mission Trip
22	College/Military/Trade	Young Adult Materials	Congregational Mentorship for Young Adults Program	Campus Ministry Programs, Mission Trip

Full Congregational Assimilation

Rethinking Catechesis

Yearly Family Faith Enrichment Plan

Year	Marriage	Parenting	Devotional Life	Worship Life
1	What is Love?	Discipline	Why Home Devotions?	Understanding Christian Worship
2	Godly Men / Godly Women	Law & Gospel Parenting	How to Have a Devotion	Getting More Out of Worship
3	Communication	Godly Use of Technology	How to Use Your Hymnal	Getting More Out of the Sermon
4	5 Love Languages	The Bible on Sex	A Survey of Devotional Materials	Worship as a Family

Solutions in the Church - Service &

Purpose

- Teens are capable of WAY more than most would expect
- Teens appreciate mentorship
- Teens appreciate opportunities for leadership
- Teens like to be challenged
- Teens want to make a difference

What Teens Want

- To be loved
- To be respected
- To be valued
- To communicate
- To be active with their faith
- To make a difference in the world & spiritually































KRELO/Creeds
Resurrect/Creation
Father Almighty
Holy Spirit
appear the father
appear the son
appear the father
appear the son
appear the father
appear the son







Comments and Discussion with Students



Oliva
Hermanson



Micah
Buschkopf



Discussion/Questions

Phil Huebner

Wisconsin Lutheran High School

386-237-4368

phil.huebner@wlhs.org

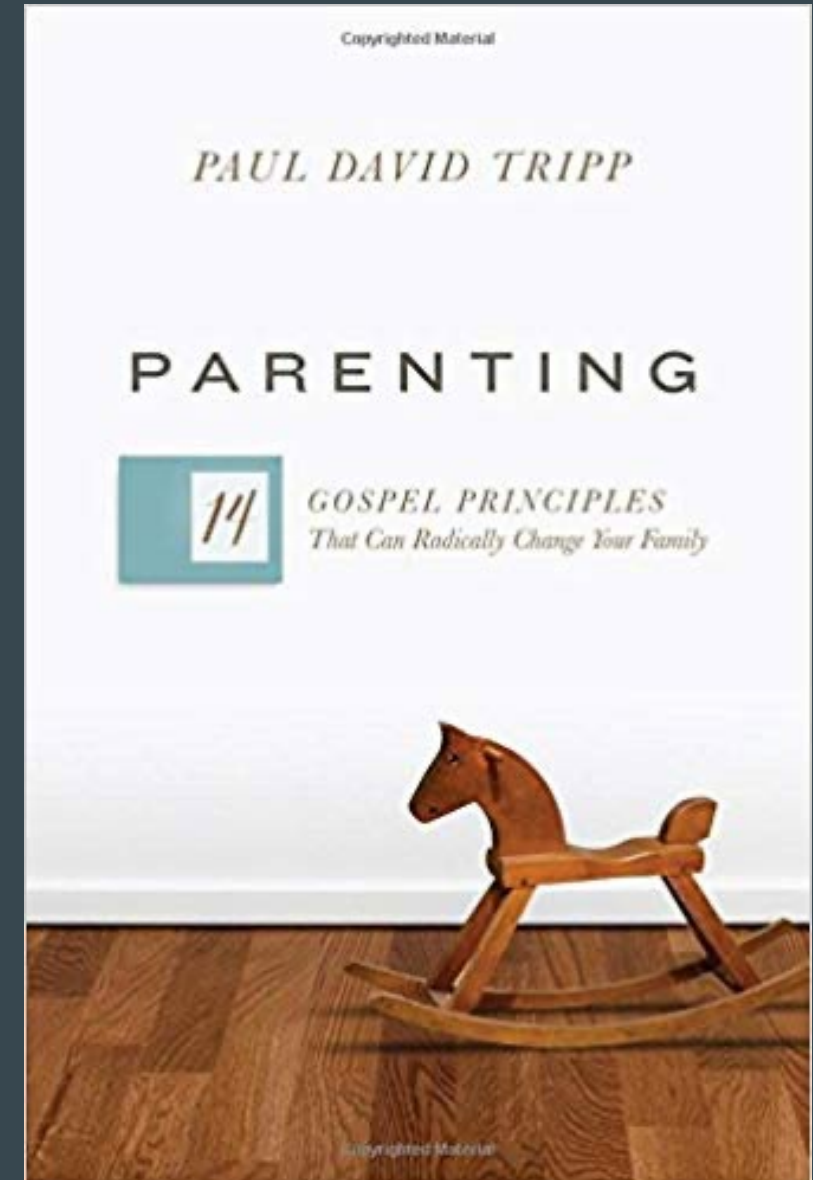


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Presentation
Slides

**Other Ideas Not Shared During Presentation
and
Resources for Further Learning**

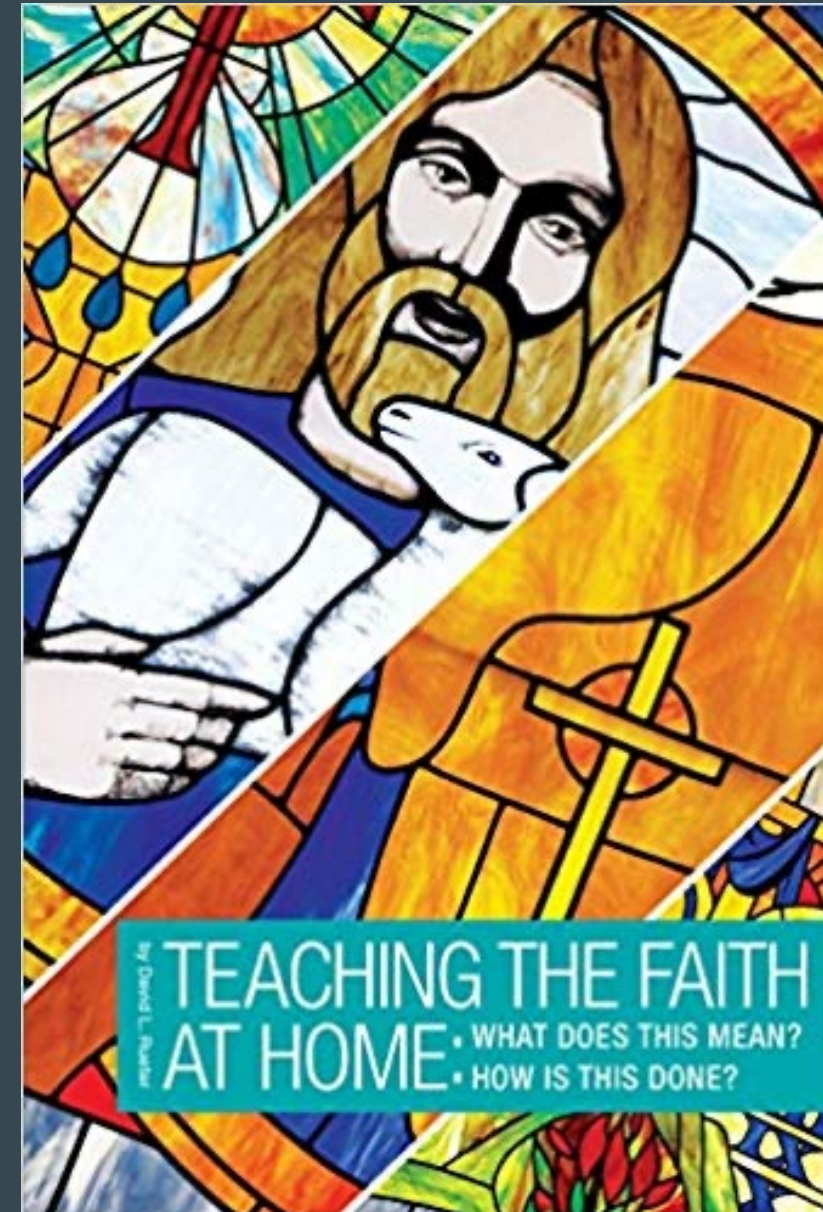
Solutions in the Home

- Parents must grow in their identity in Christ
- Parents must double down on discipline
- Parents must double down on catechesis (Christian formation)



Solutions in the Home

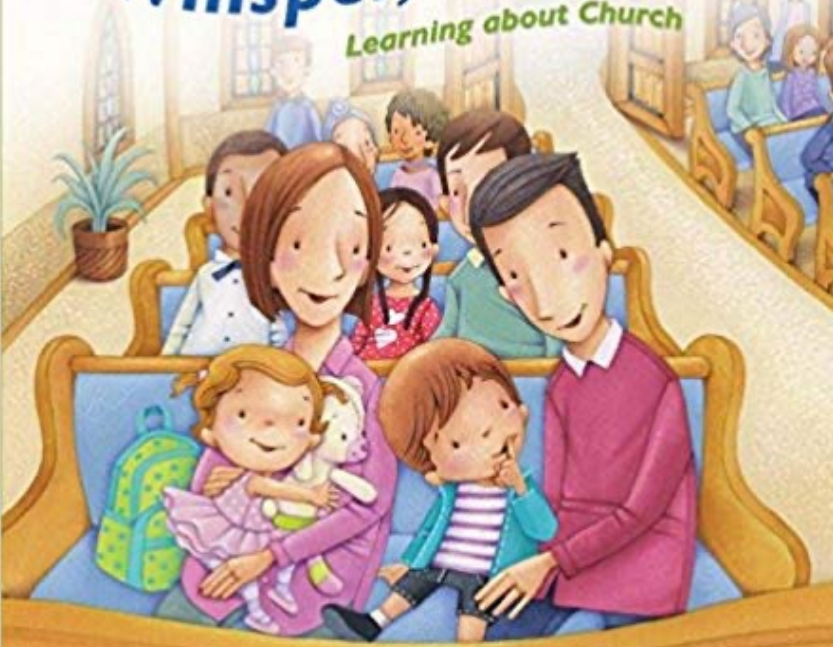
- Double down on home devotional and worship time!!
- Personal Bible reading time
- Use of the catechism
- Use of the hymnal
- Live the liturgical life: Seasons, readings, hymns, baptismal candle, etc.



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Whisper, Whisper

Learning about Church



MARY J. MOERBE + PICTURES BY MARTHA AVILÉS

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God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

Illustrated by Jonathan Mayer



◇ www.kloria.com/books

◇ www.cph.org and www.nph.net

My Little ABC Liturgy Book

By Caven M. Mize Illustrated by Ryan W. Porter



Solutions in the School

- **Teacher incorporation of worship concepts**
- **Hymnology coordination with pastor**
- **Liturgical choirs**
- **Promotion of the arts**
- **School Chapel**
- **Pastoral presence**
- **Pastors, principals, and teachers on the same page!**

Solutions in the School

- **Modeling of home devotional life**
- **Encouragement of home devotional life**
- **Resources provided or created for devotional life**

WELS Resources

◆ **Worship Resources**

◆ **Preacher Podcast**

◆ **Family Devotions**

◆ **Teen Devotions**

◆ **School Devotions**

◆ **WELS Family Devotions, Teen Devotions**



JEAN M. TWENGE, PhD

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—Chris Colin,
author of *What Really
Happened to the Class of '93*

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GENERATION ME

Why Today's Young Americans Are
More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and
More Miserable Than Ever Before

Jean M. Twenge, PhD
author of *Generation Me*

iGen



Why Today's
Super-Connected
Kids Are Growing Up
Less Rebellious, More
Tolerant, Less Happy—
and Completely
Unprepared for
Adulthood*

"Surprising."
—TIME

*and What That Means for the Rest of Us

The Real Differences between
Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X,
Boomers and Silents—
and What They Mean
for America's Future

generations

JEAN M. TWENGE, PhD

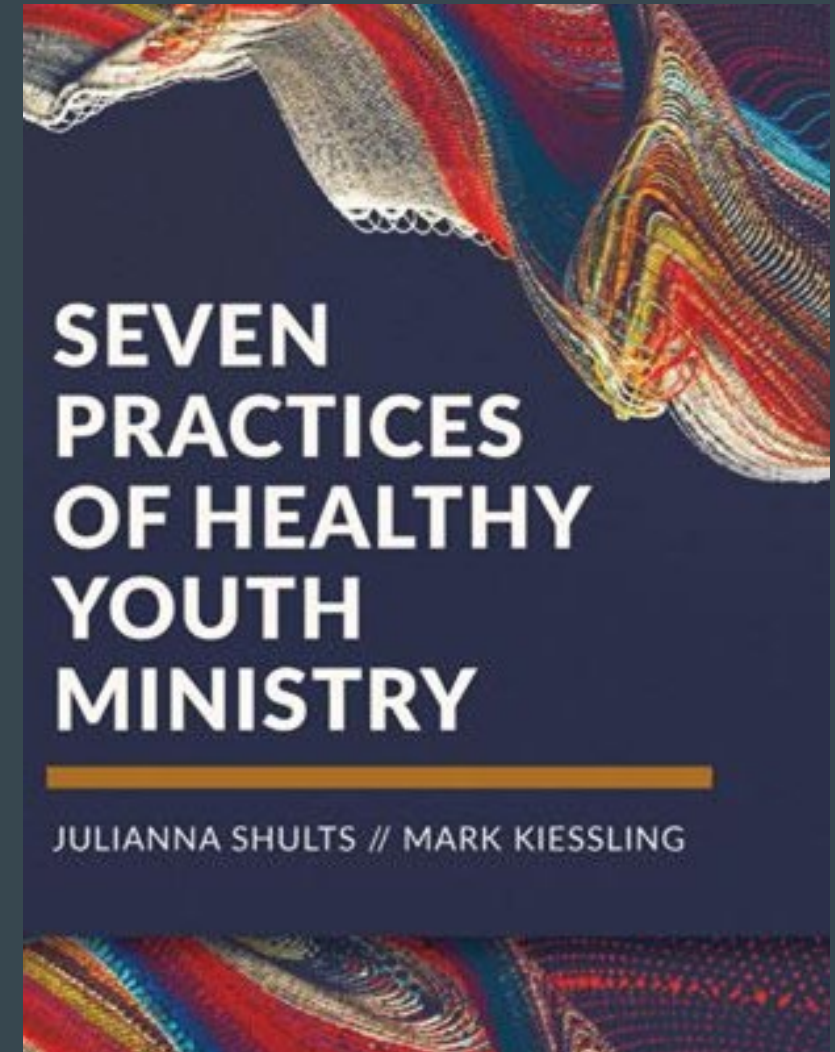
author of *iGen*

Ministry Suggestions from the Book

A vision for churches with youth:

Congregations Have . . .

- **Warmth, challenge, and grace**
- **Supportive adults**
- **Engaged parents**
- **Opportunities to serve and lead**

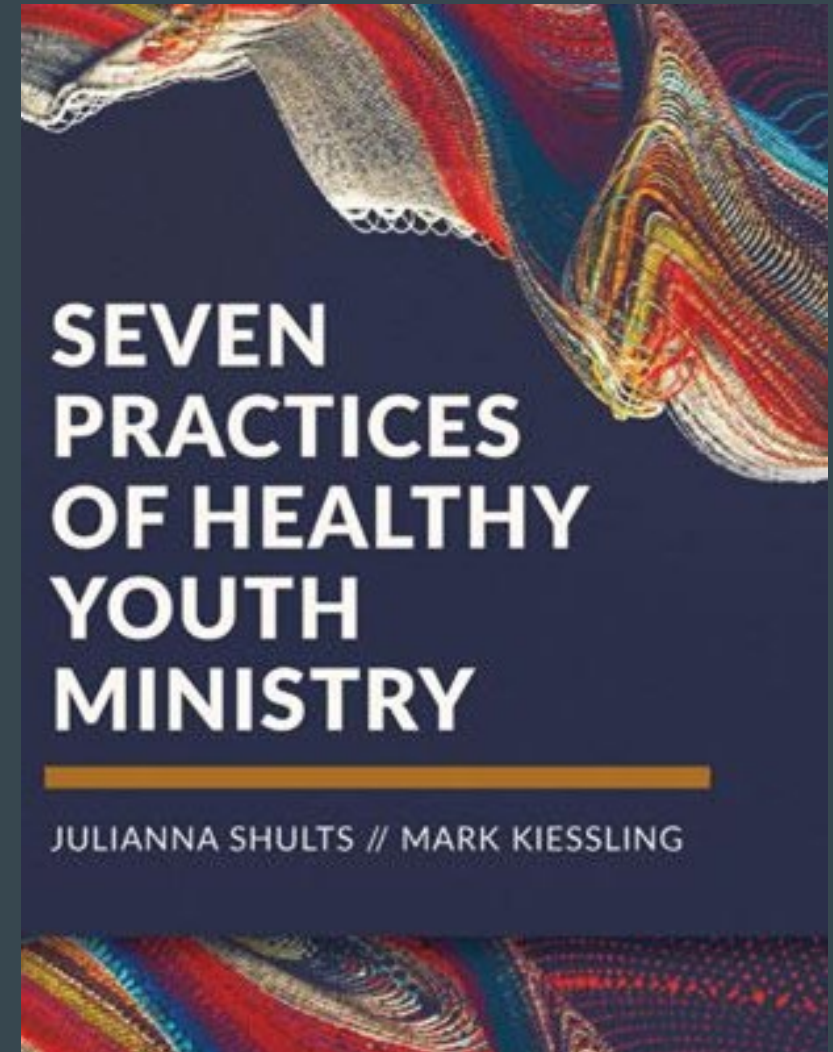


Ministry Suggestions from the Book

A vision for churches with youth:

Congregations help all young people . . .

- **Deeply understand their baptismal faith**
- **Develop a resilient identity in Christ**
- **Live out their unique vocation**



"Helpful, informative, challenging, and timely."

—Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research

THE
RISE
OF THE
NONES

UNDERSTANDING AND REACHING
THE RELIGIOUSLY UNAFFILIATED

JAMES EMERY WHITE

MEET GENERATION



UNDERSTANDING AND REACHING
THE NEW POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

JAMES EMERY WHITE

YOU LOST ME.

Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . And Rethinking Faith

David Kinnaman
Coauthor of *UnChristian*
President of the Barna Group

— THE QUEST FOR MASCULINITY — JEFFREY HEMMER —



REBEKAH CURTIS *and* ROSE ADLE



LIVING
BIBLICALLY



**MALE
&
FEMALE**

Embracing Your Role in God's Design

JONATHAN AND CHRISTA PETZOLD

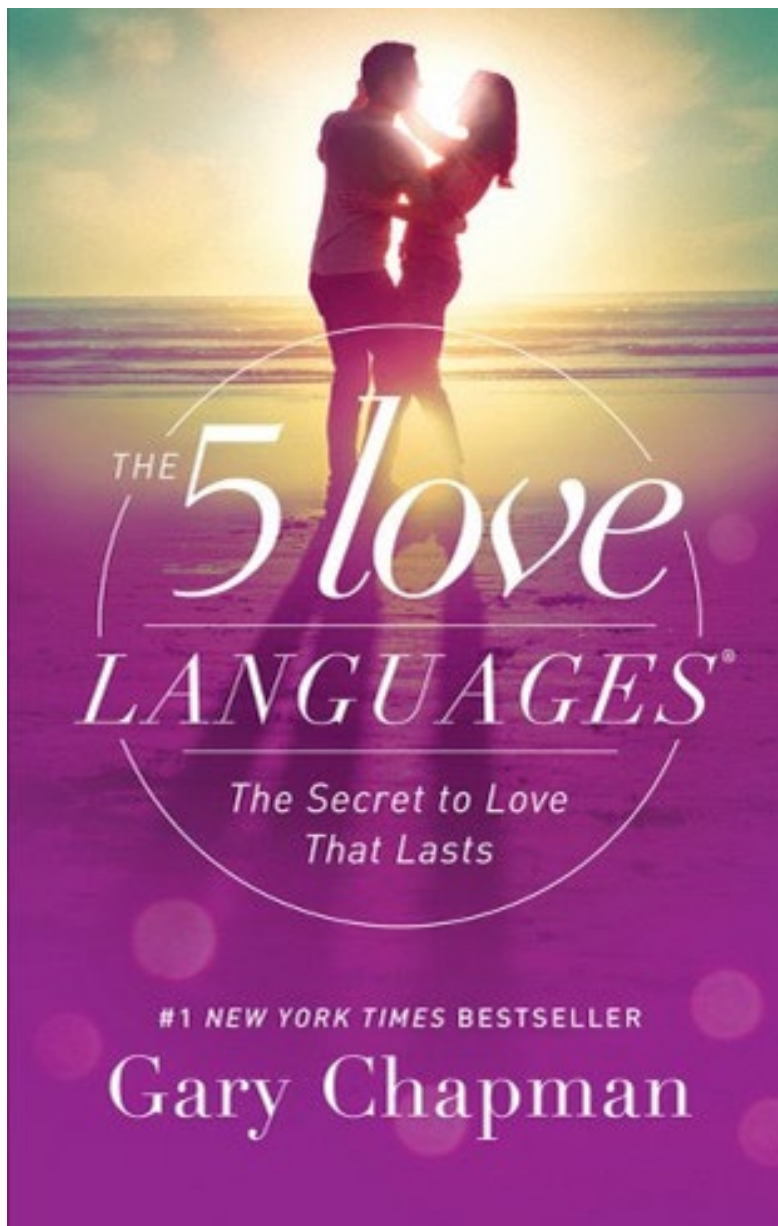
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TIMOTHY KELLER

with KATHY KELLER

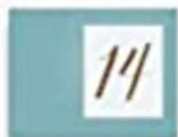
THE
MEANING 
OF
MARRIAGE

Facing the Complexities of Commitment
with the Wisdom of God

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PAUL DAVID TRIPP

PARENTING



GOSPEL PRINCIPLES
That Can Radically Change Your Family



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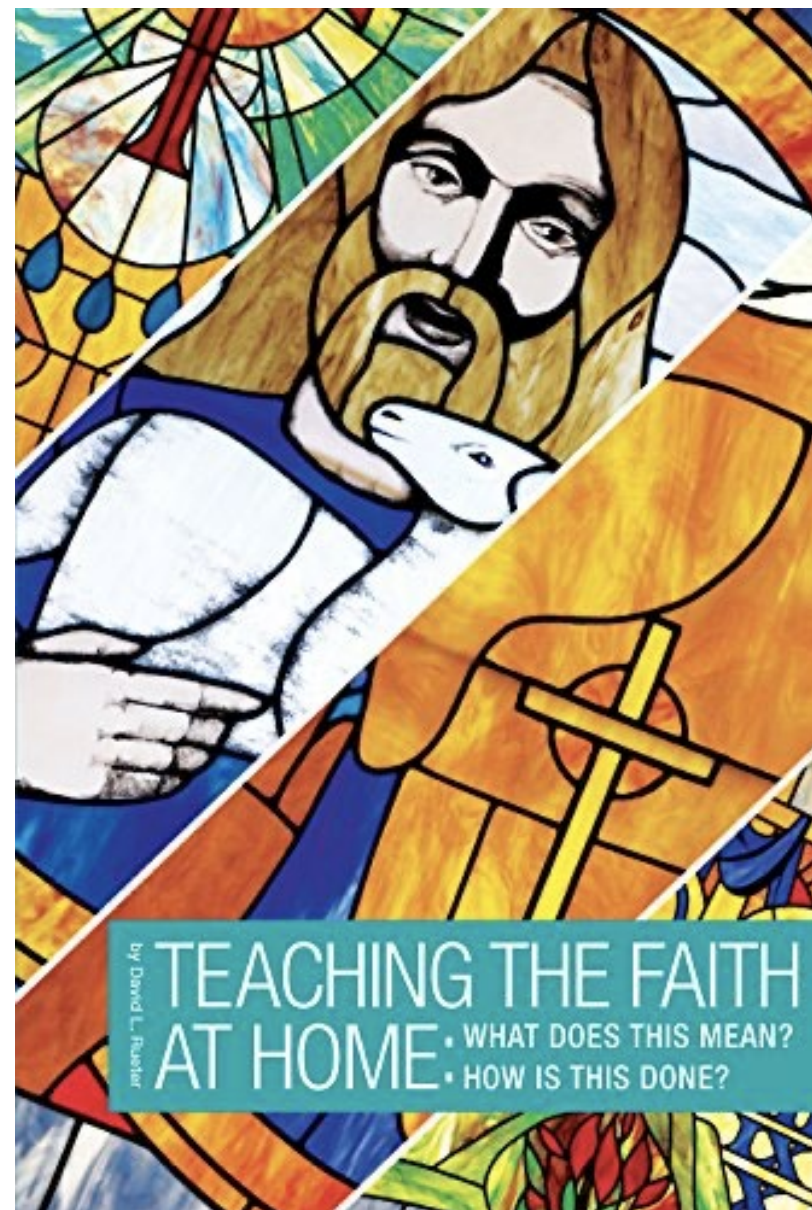


THE RISE OF THE MILLENNIAL PARENTS

PARENTING YESTERDAY AND TODAY

JAMES M. PEDERSEN

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FOSTER CLINE, MD

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Children

UPDATED AND EXPANDED EDITION

Responsibility

Parenting *with*



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Harvard Medical School



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A FOUR-WEEK PLAN TO

End Meltdowns, Raise Grades,
and Boost Social Skills
by Reversing the Effects of
Electronic Screen-Time

Victoria L. Dunckley, MD



HOW SCREEN
ADDICTION IS
HIJACKING OUR KIDS
— AND HOW TO BREAK
THE TRANCE

GLOW KIDS

NICHOLAS KARDARAS, Ph.D.

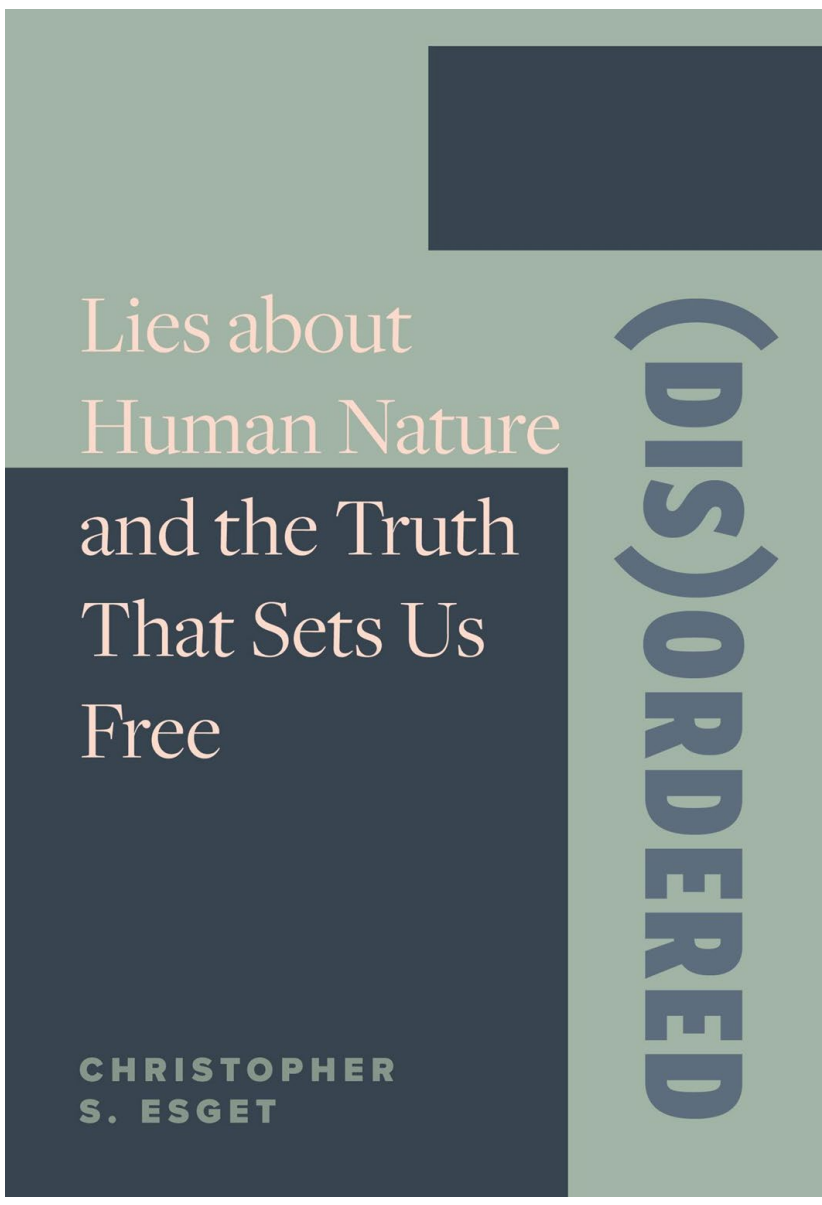
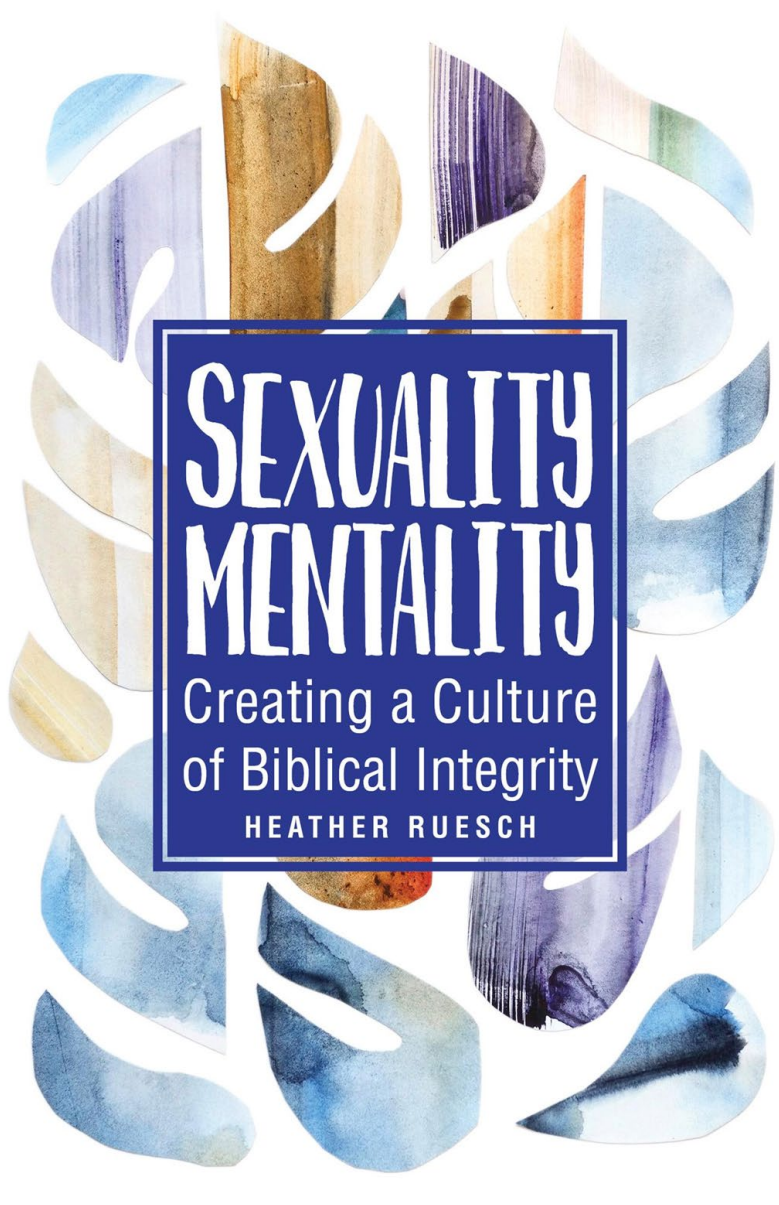
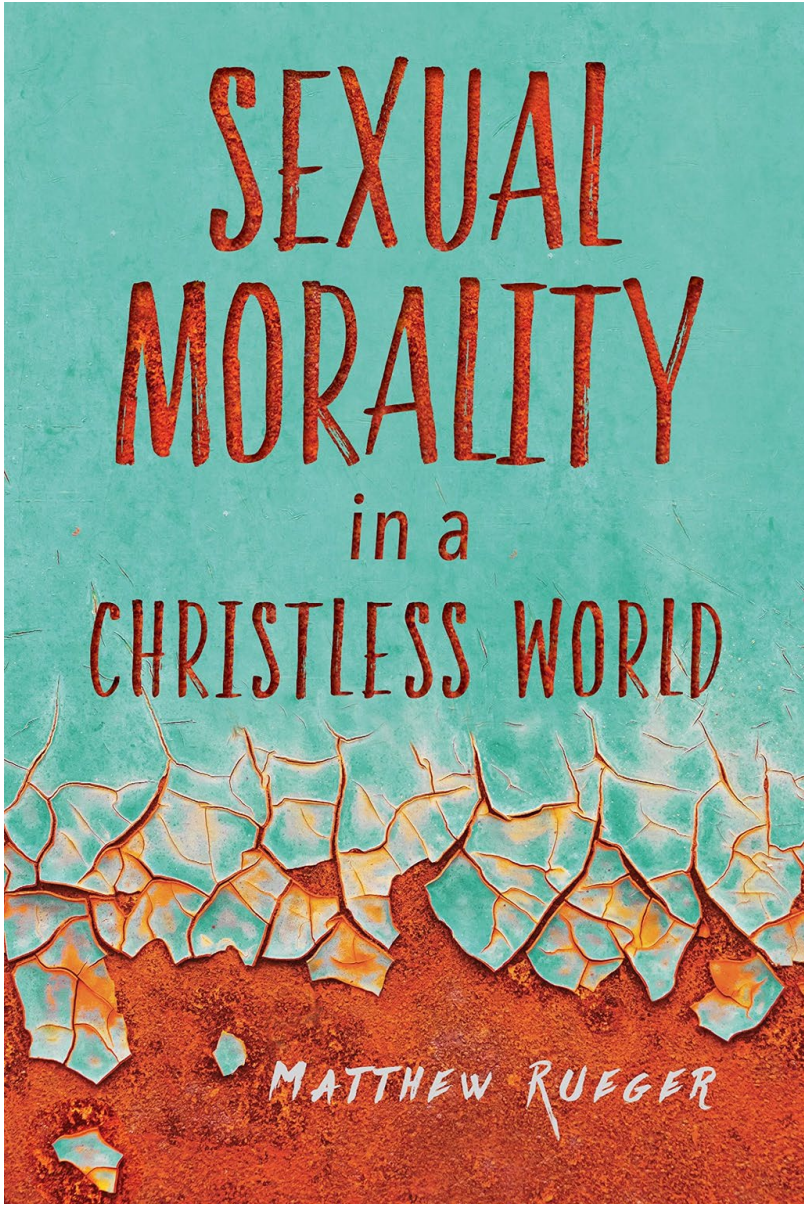


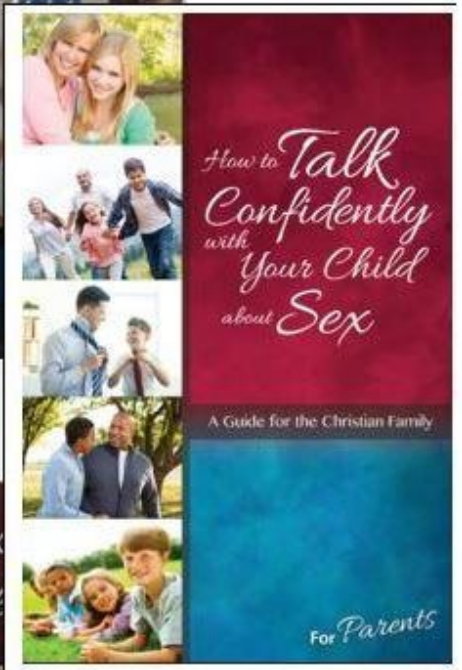
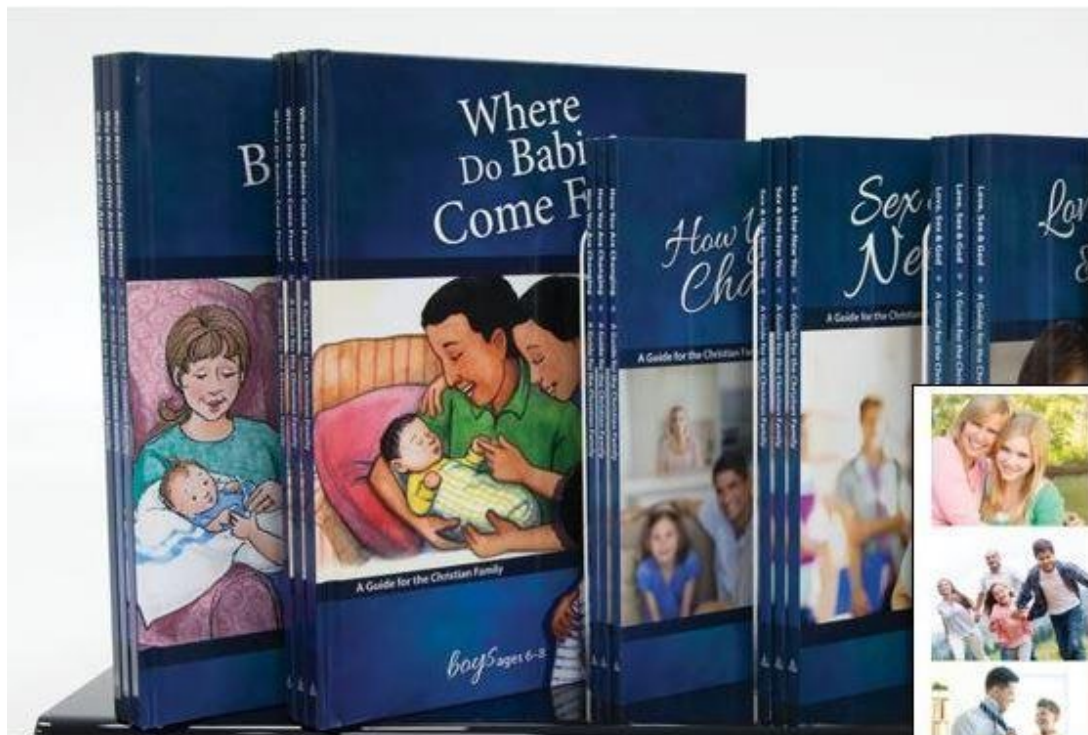
FAMILY VOCATION

God's Calling in Marriage, Parenting,
and Childhood

GENE EDWARD VEITH JR. AND MARY J. MOERBE









RAINBOW SAVIOR

Rev. William A. Monday

FORGIVE *Us Our* **SINS**

HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE LIGHT
OF GOD'S TRUTH



Scott I. Barefoot
and Richard D. Starr

GAY & GOD

*Loving Everyone God Made
and Everything God Wrote*

Mike Novotny

TRUTH OVERRULED



THE FUTURE OF
MARRIAGE
AND RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM

RYAN T. ANDERSON

SHERIF GIRGIS • RYAN T. ANDERSON • ROBERT P. GEORGE
NEW FOREWORD BY AUTHORS IN THIS EDITION

WHAT
IS
MARRIAGE
?

MAN AND WOMAN: A DEFENSE

RYAN T. ANDERSON

When
Harry
Became
Sally

Responding to the
Transgender Moment

FOR TEENS



WHO AM I?

Understanding Your Identity in Christ
Through Facts Not Feelings

Phil Huebner



WELCOME15