



BY GORDON BALS

AS KIDS, many of us played games that revolved around a “home base.” Whether it was “Hide and Seek,” “Tag,” or “Farmer and the Rabbit,” there was one familiar premise that ran through each of the games. You were only “safe” when you were at home base. There you could catch your breath and plan strategy with other teammates. In many ways those games were a good metaphor for the concept of family. Life, in a fallen world is difficult and, intrinsically, we know that a family should be a place of refreshment and training. Unfortunately, many families lack the ability to integrate the Gospel into their everyday life and as a result everyone is on the run with no place to be nourished and refreshed.

A family that nourishes its members can be described by at least one adjective: restful. Busyness, or what I will call consumerism, robs many families of the life they were designed to taste. Consumerism is the belief that life comes through ingesting an object or activity into our world. This can be eating a meal, buying something new, participating in an activity, or acquiring knowledge. The basis of consumerism is the conviction that life comes from outside of us and we must procure, work, or do something to stimulate that life. This contradicts two simple Biblical concepts. One is that Christ lives in us (Col. 1:27). The other is that we cannot stir up this life through our efforts alone. It is awakened by and through the movement of God.

A believer is to rest in the fact that the Lord is committed to protecting and nurturing the life He put in us. In this way, every aspect of life comes as a gift that we cannot earn (every good thing comes down from the Father in heaven...). Generally, we have to wait for and anticipate the life God will make known to us as He pursues us. Contrary to this, a consumeristic mindset subtly reinforces a self-reliant way of living that makes life dependent on our action (not the provision of a good Father). Just carrying the burden that we are responsible to provide life makes us tired.

As an example of this larger concept in everyday life, think about many of the birthday parties you have thrown or attended as a parent. They are full of planned activities in which each child is winning a prize or making some-

thing for themselves in addition to leaving with a party bag. Parties like this make me ask the question, “Whatever happened to the idea that kids love being together?” A good birthday party can simply be couple of interactive games (have you forgotten musical chairs) in which the children don’t receive anything, because the fun and challenge of playing the game is gift enough. Life, for children and adults alike, can come from being together. Parents that are not restful about God’s ways over plan, over control, and over stimulate their kids and themselves in a way that pushes the Lord to the margins of the family.

We rarely depend on the nature of how we relate to stimulate life. There are a myriad of examples: couples whose time together depends on a movie, TV, or some activity (same for family time); vacations in which the possibility of rest is drowned out by sightseeing, shopping, or eating out; or even church “retreats” that are packed full of teaching and activity. Instead of being still and knowing God, we tend to be noisy and busy as a church in a way that drowns out the voice and kindness of God. We are more affected by a culture of consumerism than we want to admit. Listen to Tricia O’Connor Elisara who says, “The culture of consumerism is not just possessing things, but doing so with such frequency, volume, and unquestioning routine, that those very things, as well as the values with which they are laden, actually possess us. Consuming becomes the central fact around which all of daily life revolves. Consumer culture warps our sense of identity by selling us on the notion that we are what we own. It legitimates our greed as it dispenses with the notion that being a person of virtue involves self-restraint and discipline of the appetites. Consumerism wars against our souls. It takes a tremendous amount of time and energy to be a consumer and possessor of goods.”

The pervasive lie, that we must do something to generate life, is killing one simple truth: knowing God (and being fed by Him) quite often comes as our lives are still. By and large, saying “no” to the god of consumerism may be the quickest way for a family to become more nourishing. We ought to linger around the kitchen table longer or participate in more socially interactive games like charades or cards. If we slowed down and were not so owned by consuming something, we might end being surprised by Someone Who wanted to provide for us. Quiet, still, and restful families create an atmosphere that nourishes the inner life of its members.

theNEWS at DAYMARK

It is hard to believe we are already into the fall season. With the coming of fall, Gordon and Julie's counseling loads have picked up a little bit. Pray for them - taking on several new individuals or couples at once tends to be an adjustment. Gordon is still working on his Doctoral dissertation - pray for him. He needs to finish by May. We are planning two new Daymark events next quarter (see below) that we are very excited about. The third quarter of this year (July - September 2003), our income was \$3,000 below budget. Since our counseling income is usually less in November and December (due to the holidays) we will need a very strong quarter of giving to help us through until January. It is quite common that many people give special financial gifts through the Holidays. We ask that you please consider Daymark's needs this quarter and respond as you are led. As always, we are encouraged and strengthened by your response. Last newsletter, we asked those who could to give spontaneously, and we were inspired by the response. We received a total of \$2,500 from more than a dozen people who had never given to Daymark. In addition, many of those who gave sent a short note, and we loved hearing from those whom we have counseled in the past. *We want to remind you that a gift of any size is a blessing to the ministry.*

UPCOMINGEVENTS

HOME BASE: *Growing a Family that Provides the Nourishment of the Gospel*

The seminar will be held in February or March in Birmingham (we are working on a date and place). You will get a flyer about the seminar with the January newsletter. The article in this newsletter is one taste of what the seminar will be about. Attending the seminar will help you to know how to "do" family in order to help counteract the ways of this world; how the marital relationship uniquely provides a foundation for a home base; and how to "teach" your children the Gospel through relationships and family devotions.

Theory and Practice of Helping Relationships

TUESDAY NIGHTS AT THE DAYMARK OFFICE STARTING IN FEBRUARY 2004.

For years people have been asking about a class to help them integrate the "model" of relating that Dr. Larry Crabb teaches. His way of thinking about relationships has impacted many people and has even spawned a little movement that is now being carried forth by those who have been trained/mentored by him, including John Eldredge, Jan Meyers, Dan Allender, and Kevin Huggins (among others). This class is designed to help you better understand this way of thinking, while you also learn how to "use" it in your relationships. It will be carried out like a college level course with assigned reading and writing. In class we will "flesh out" the theory through teaching and counseling role play scenarios. The cost of the 13 week class will be \$150, and it will be limited to 20 students. The cost must be paid up front in order to secure a spot. If you would like to do this class you can call or email Daymark for a registration form.

about DAYMARK

Daymark Pastoral Counseling is a non-profit organization designed to make counseling and teaching resources accessible to individuals, couples, families, churches and para-church organizations. We are devoted to helping others experience the redemptive power of the Gospel. Gifts or financial contributions made to Daymark are tax deductible.

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