

# THE VINEVILLE PAGE

Helping us all grasp the big picture of where we are and what our challenges are as we face the future.



Passing the Faith Along...Growing Spiritually Minded Children

Issue #3

**F**aith is the greatest gift we can give our children. Faith is more than knowing Bible stories and believing that Jesus is the son of God. It is more than being baptized and going to heaven. It is more than having a moral view of life. When our faith is true, our heart embraces the unseen and eternal world where God is known as Father. We understand that this world is shaped by human decisions, but ultimate control and power is held by One in the eternal realm whom we trust. Our soul is at rest because we understand our divine destiny in life—to grow into the kind of person Jesus was. The raw materials for growth are ever present: joy and sorrow; success and failure; hope and disappointment; good and evil; and, injury and forgiveness. We have come from God and in life, he draws us back to himself.

We cannot give what we do not possess. In the vast majority of instances, children will take their cue regarding things which are important from their parents. What we do is infinitely more important than what we say. A child is able to look at the priorities, passions, and commitments of their parents and come away with a clear sense of what their parents view as important. What do parents do consistently? What do parents talk about? How does a parent spend their free time? What do parents do with their money? What special routines are important to parents?

The cultural messages are very clear. Importance is tied to money, achievement, power, beauty, popularity and even sexual appeal. No matter how spiritually centered we may be, we recognize these powers exist. In our own way we all negotiate with these powers because we are citizens of this world. If we are spiritually centered, we balance these

powers with the Christian vision of life. In the Christian vision of life, there are deeper powers that we should routinely cultivate: prayer, reflection, worship, service, witness, Sabbath, involvement in the health of the church, and personal discipleship (spiritual growth). The key word is “routinely.” It is nonnegotiable that we will consistently deal with cultural powers. ***Our religious fate hinges on how consistently we will balance life in the world with life in the Kingdom.***

Parents who are not consistent in their participation in church teach their children that church is optional. Parents who are not involved in the ministries of the church will teach their children that ministry is unimportant. Parents who do not speak of their faith and consistently model prayer will teach their children that faith and prayer are not necessary for life and those children will find it difficult to find the spiritual power to neutralize our culture’s allure. Parents who do not attend worship with their children teach their children that worship is irrelevant to success and well-being in life.

The starting point of passing the faith is first for parents to cultivate a

vital faith. This involves experiencing prayer as natural and essential to life as breathing. It also means kindling a hunger for worship and God’s nearness which compels you to study and worship. Finally, it means being committed to building God’s

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family as the central vocation of your life (After all, creating the church was one of Jesus' priorities in order to extend his ministry into the future). To fall short of this is to diminish what we can bequeath as a legacy to our children. ***We may give them a form of religious faith with beliefs, but the real substance which draws them to God and comforts them in life's challenge is absent.*** In such a culture as ours, the powers that be will rob them of the gifts of God: peace, joy, life, freedom, goodness, trust, and courage.

The second point of passing the faith is consistency in matters of faith. Children take note, not only of whether parents are involved in the life of the church, but of casual conversation about people and leaders in church. They are attuned to attitudes of devotion, respect, and love. They are also attuned to derogatory comments, irritation, and disinterest. Children are given wings when we exhibit trust, demonstrate forgiveness and grace, and speak affirmatively of God's presence in people.

At Vineville, we encourage children to attend worship when they enter kindergarten. While children are still so very impressionable, we want them to hear the music of faith, see their parents respond to the touch of God, and learn respect for

the sanctuary and those who speak in Christ's name. We know they may wiggle, draw with crayons, whisper loud, interrupt your neighbors, and lay down for a nap, but we also know that in unnoticed moments, they soak up faith and experience the touch of God.

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I would not want my child to miss it. After all, faith produces wisdom, goodness, peace, moral clarity, and makes us open to the Spirit who would guide us. What is more important than that?

Our children must live out their days in a culture which is corrosive to the soul. A church like Vineville provides an alternative culture for them to find rest and see the values of God's kingdom in concrete forms. Vineville will be what you and I make it. Its power to heal and give life to strong and weak alike depend upon whether we value its importance as an outpost of God's kingdom and a refuge in the midst of our world.

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