

PARENTS **PARKids** CHRONICLE

Growing in Grace at Grandview Park

HARD THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD IN PARENTING _____ BY C.J. MAHANEY

C.J. Mahaney, President of Sovereign Grace Ministries, recently preached a two-part sermon at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland, on the book of Jude. Afterwards, C.J. received an email from a father who heard his messages. Here is the email and his response.

Hi, C.J.—

Thanks for your message from Jude on Sunday. It is always a privilege to hear God's Word through you. I am reminded of His grace to me through the truth preached by you over decades now.

When you noted how we often have hard thoughts of God and fail to appreciate His initiating love, I immediately thought of my example and communication about God to my kids. And when you asked at the end, "What are you most worried about?", I think it is that I will hinder my children from knowing that God not only rightly expects their obedience and submission—a bar they cannot possibly reach—but also that he loves them as a Father so deeply that He sent His Son for them.

I am afraid they do have hard thoughts of God and that's largely because of my own sinfulness (anger, impatience, anxiety), which I am eager to continue killing by the Spirit. But apart from that, the question I have is, how do we as parents insist that our children obey us in the Lord without cultivating hard thoughts of Him?

Grateful for any thoughts you would have on this.

John

John,

This a great question that I can't possibly cover fully in one email. But here are a few thoughts that I hope are helpful.

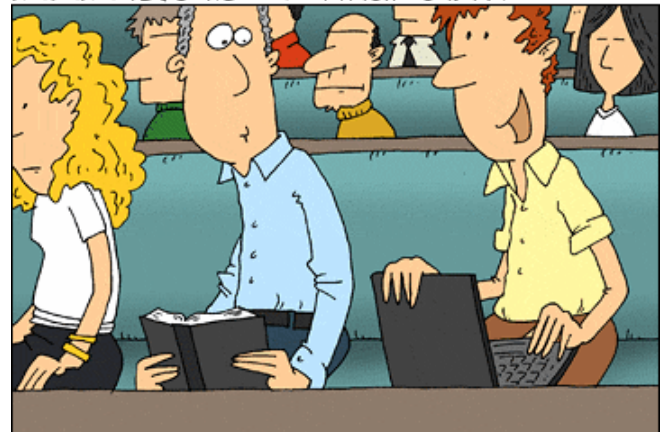
- You have the privilege of introducing them to God the Father and describing the ways in which he is different from you, different from all sinful fathers, and how in any way you are like him it's only because of grace that you reflect him. See Luke 11:11–13.
- Your honest confession of your sin to your children will protect them from having hard thoughts about you or God.
- Communicating your affection for them—and joy when you are with them—promotes both good and accurate thoughts about God.
- Initiate time with them at both planned and spontaneous times. Don't leave them with the impression that they get most of your attention when they disobey. Let them know you are so grateful for them and love being with them as much as possible.
- Bless your children with many gifts in many forms! See Luke 11 again. Study your children in order to discern what gifts would genuinely bless them and then purpose to surprise them as often as possible.
- Requiring appropriate obedience does not promote hard thoughts about God. This only happens when we do so in self-righteousness or anger. See point 2 again.
- Frequently preach the gospel to them (and not at them). Reveal to your children just how far God has gone to show his love for sinners like us.

My friend, if you follow the example of our gracious God, your children will not have hard thoughts about him. They will have accurate thoughts about him—and a deep love for you.

I hope these brief thoughts help, John.

C.J.

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"BRING FRIENDS TO CHURCH DAY" IS SUPER EASY FOR ME ...
ALL I NEED IS MY LAPTOP!

Without pretending to be experts on theological children's literature, we have sorted through recent theology books for younger children and compiled a short list of outstanding books. Other books are undoubtedly worthy of mention, but these are our favorites. What follows organizes them in three categories and ranks the books in order, beginning with our top recommendations.

Bible Story Books

- Sally Lloyd-Jones. *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. Illustrated by Jago. Grand Rapids: ZonderKidz, 2007. 352 pp. \$16.99.
- David Helm. *The Big Picture Story Bible*. Illustrated by Gail Schoonmaker. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004. 456 pp. \$22.99.
- *ESV Illustrated Family Bible: 270 Selections from the Holy Bible*. Illustrated by Abigniew Freus. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 424 pp. \$24.99.

Systematic Theology Books

- Bruce A. Ware. *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, forthcoming. 224 pp. \$15.99.
- John MacArthur. *A Faith to Grow On: Important Things You Should Know Now That You Believe*. Nashville: Tommy Nelson, 2000. 192 pp. \$15.99.

Other Story Books

- John Bunyan. *Dangerous Journey: The Story of Pilgrim's Progress*. Edited by Oliver Hunkin. Illustrated by Alan Parry. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. 126 pp. \$24.00.

- Starr Meade. *Keeping Holiday*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 192 pp. \$14.99
- Randy Alcorn. *Tell Me About Heaven*. Illustrated by Ron DiCianni. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 64 pp. \$19.99.
- R. C. Sproul. *The Prince's Poison Cup*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2008. 35 pp. \$18.00.
- R. C. Sproul. *The Lightlings*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2006. 40 pp. \$18.00.
- R. C. Sproul. *The Priest with Dirty Clothes: A Timeless Story of God's Love and Forgiveness*. Illustrated by Liz Bonham. Nashville: Nelson, 1997. Reprint, Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2008. 48 pp. \$15.00.
- Paul L. Maier. *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed the World*. Illustrated by Greg Copeland. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004. 32 pp. \$9.99.
- Kel Richards. *Gumtree Gully*. Illustrated by Graham Wade. Kingsford NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2005. 63 pp. \$4.99.

See the entire review of these books at http://andynaselli.com/theology/wp-content/uploads/2008_review_theology_for_kids1.pdf

To the above I would add and highly recommend the following set of 4 books for ages 4-8:

- Cheryl Fawcett and Robert C. Newman. *Kids Questions about God and Jesus, Kids' Questions about the Bible and Creation, Kids' Questions about Sin and Salvation, and Kids' Questions about Church and the Future*. Illustrated by Ron Mazellan. Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2003.

READ MY QUTPS

- "I'm going to graduate on time, no matter how long it takes." -- *University of Pittsburgh senior basketball player*
- "It would permanently hurt a batter for a long time." -- *Pete Rose, on the effect of the brushback pitch*
- "It's about 90 percent strength and 40 percent technique." -- *Johnny Walker, world middle-weight wrist-wrestling champion, on what it takes to be great*
- "We're going to turn this team around 360 degrees." -- *Jason Kidd, on being drafted by the Dallas Mavericks*
- "On what?" -- *Chris Eubank, when an interviewer asked him, "Have you thought about writing your autobiography?"*
- "We have only one person to blame, and that's each other." -- *New York Ranger Barry Beck, who started a brawl during a Stanley Cup playoff game, for which his team was penalized*
- "All I said what that the trades were stupid and dumb, and they took that and blew it all out of proportion." -- *Ron Davis, Minnesota Twins pitcher, commenting on reports that he had criticized team management for trading away top players*

DUMB SPORTS QUOTES

- "Me and George and Billy are two of a kind." -- *Mickey Rivers, on his warm relationship with Yankee owner George Steinbrenner and manager Billy Martin*
- "You mean now?" -- *Legendary Yankees catcher Yogi Berra, when asked what time it was*
- "Whatever is going to happen is going to happen when it happens, regardless of what happens." -- *baseball player Mike LaValliere*
- "He treats us like men. He lets us wear earrings." -- *Torrin Polk, U. of Houston receiver, on his coach, John Jenkins*
- "My sister's expecting a baby, and I don't know if I'm going to be an uncle or an aunt." -- *Chuck Nevitt, North Carolina State basketball player*
- "I think that the team that wins game five will win the series-- unless we lose game five." -- *Charles Barkley*

From *The Bride of Anguished English* by Richard Lederer (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 37-39.