

The Evangelist

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A Family Story

Once upon a time (isn't that how all good stories begin?) there was

a family with many members. As with nearly all families, this family had some kids and some older folks and some folks in between – all along the spectrum of age.

The children were cousins, who didn't see each other very often, but loved to play together when they did. They would spend nearly all the time they had, playing hide-and-go-seek, board games, video games, talking up a storm, and just generally having a rambunctiously great time.

Among the older folks, there was a patriarch of the family, a great-grandfather, who loved football, having played professionally way back before football had been spoiled by commercials and commercialism. Because of his age and his sports related injuries, he was usually required to walk with a cane or walker.

For this large extended family, Thanksgiving was the biggest event of the year. All the aunts and uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters, grandparents – all of them joined together to eat, to enjoy each other's company, and to watch football games on TV. Generally speaking, they just reveled in the pleasantness of the year.

Continued on page 3 ... But with the pleasantries and joy

It's amazing to think that the people at 12° 16' 0" N, 86° 3' 0" W, at 1° 56' 25" S, 29° 52' 26" E, at 1° 50' 31.88" S, 31° 39' 18.04" E, and at 40° 10' 57.94" N, 75° 1' 25.15" W (Santa Maria, Nicaragua, Gahini, Rwanda, Muleba, Tanzania, and St. John's) are all brothers and sisters in one big family!



If you're not sure how up-to-date you might be with the youth of the church, can you identify this list of text messaging abbreviations?

- no1 b4 me. srsly.
- dnt wrshp bad pix
- no 'omg's
- no wrk on w/end
- ps ok - ur m&d r cool
- no wasting ppl

- :-X only w/ m8
- dnt steal
- dnt lie
- dnt ogle ur bf's m8. myob.

ttyl, JHWH.



Baker Book Brief - *Rev. Ken Cook*

A review of The Danger Of Raising Nice Kids: Preparing Our Children To Change Their World by Timothy Smith

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9).

While [Jesus] was speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'. (Matt. 12:46-50).

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands,

love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (Col. 3:18-20)

As you likely have heard, 2009 is The Year of the Family at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church. Such a focus throughout this year is certainly timely as both marriage and the family have been subjected to an unrelenting siege in our culture over many years. Further, as the Scripture passages cited above mandate, every year is a Year of the Family for God's covenant people, the Church. With this in mind, it is a delight to recommend a new book, which is just now being added to the St. John's library. Although this volume only addresses some of the most crucial concerns relating to godly family life, parents will want to read - or buy their own copy of - The Danger of Raising Nice Kids: Preparing Our Children to Change Their World by Timothy Smith.

Smith has worked with children, youth and families since the 1970s. He is a Research Fellow with the George H. Gallup International Institute. He has authored 15 books, including The Seven Cries of Today's Teens, The Relaxed Parent and Connecting with Your Kids.

Many St. John's folks will find the title resonant of (the Rev.) Phil Lyman's preaching. From time to time he forcefully taught and reminded us from the Scriptures that, given God's holiness, the popular preoccupation with "being nice" evidenced among some elements of American religious society is not nearly enough. This truth is the essential basis for Smith's Christian counsel to parents. He notes that it is possible for our children (like us) to look nice on the *outside* because behavior is restrained, while on the *inside* the Holy Spirit is given little or no opportunity to form Christ-like character. The result is an

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What do Jesus' disciples look like?

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

... continued from page 1.

came a problem, an ongoing family conflict. The kids played very loudly, running around the house. But Great-grandpa wanted to watch the football games in peace. Every once in a while the kids would thoughtlessly go charging through the TV room chasing each other. He loved his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but being patient with them during during a football game – well, that was something of a challenge.

The kids were annoyed with Great-grandpa, too. They were, of course, annoyed with the fact that he kept telling them to be quiet. And on top of that, because of his walker, he took FOREVER to get to the dinner table! Once dinner was called, they had to sit at the table for what seemed like HOURS waiting for him to finish watching the last play, getting up out of the easy chair, and making his way to the table. The steaming turkey, the sweet potatoes covered with marshmallows, the delicious stuffing, and desserts on the side board were all calling out with an audible voice and Great-

grandpa (bless his heart) was letting it all get cold!

One October, shortly before Thanksgiving, the mothers and fathers of the families came together and asked: "What are we going to do?" The constant conflict seemed to steal the joy out of each year's reunion and was becoming a constant topic of conversation. Enough was enough!

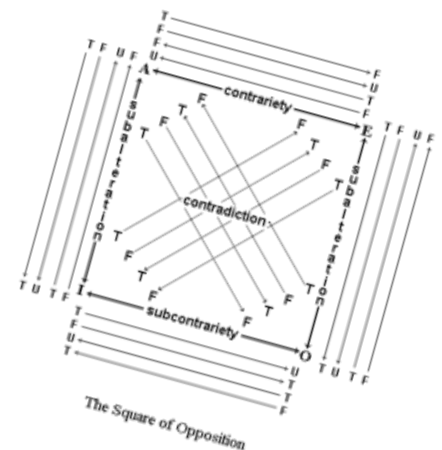
Their discussion came down to this: should they tell Great-grandpa to stay home next year? Or should they tell the kids to stay home next year?

...

Of course, this is an inappropriate question. This kind of leading question even has a name: it's called the informal logical fallacy of the false dilemma. This fallacy asserts that there are two and only two possible solutions to a given problem and often one of the two solutions is so repugnant that the other party must give in to the other solution. While it's not always intended to be misleading and manipulative, this tactic can often end up being used to confuse and leverage a topic and a person.

What does this have to do with anything? We have started a

new preaching series on Family. The series will cover a wide variety of texts and themes throughout Trinity season. From what it means to be a "man" or a "woman" in God's economy, to nuclear families, to the family of the church and even the family of the whole earth, we'll be covering God's perspective on what is one of the most fundamental ideas in all of Scripture and in all of God's thinking.



The informal fallacy of the False Dilemma can result in manipulative conversation.

The church is a family much like I have described in the little parable above. If it's a healthy and growing family, there will be all sorts of constituencies and groupings within it: young and old in age, young and old in

Continued ...

maturity (and we know that calendar years and maturity don't always coincide), newer members, older members, differing tastes and occupations, differing positions on theological and political topics – as well as having a wide variety of opinions about sports teams, manner of dress, degree and use of wealth, kinds of music (in and outside of worship), Bible versions, child raising perspectives, use of free time, smoking, the drinking of alcohol, finger-nail chewing, puppy raising, and vacation spots.

And each group will have excellent reasons explaining why they are right, correct, logical, and Biblical. Of course, that

means that the other parties in a dispute therefore must be wrong, incorrect, illogical, and un-Biblical.

If we can't use the informal fallacy of the false dilemma to our advantage – that is, if it is inappropriate to ask either Great-grandpa or the kids to stay home next year – what then is the solution?

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians writes: *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (4.1-3)

The *therefore* refers to the ground or foundation for this exhortation, which is found in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians



and particularly in 1.3-14. The manner in which they are called to walk is the manner of those who have the *calling* of Christ in their lives and the *calling* to act as Christ has commanded them to act. How has Jesus commanded us to act? *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.* (John 13.34-35)

The proper answer and solution for the family in the parable above – and for us – is that our beloved Great-grandfather is

urged to turn the TV up a bit and be a bit more patient with the games and noise of the children. He's urged not to react so quickly or strongly to the noise the children make and – if at all possible – to even try to enter into their games from time to time.

The children are urged to keep the noise down as much as they can, try to play in the basement, and for goodness' sake, stop running through the TV room! Oh yes, another thing: if it takes Great-grandpa 10 minutes to get to the table, then fold your hands, close your mouths, be patient, and wait!

Likewise, as the family of the church, let us understand that the “kids” may not dress to the same exacting standards to which we hold (and against which we rebelled in our youth). They like different kinds of music. They may have different priorities, especially when they step into leadership roles and responsibilities. The older of us need not to react quite as quickly

and strongly and maybe even try to enter into and learn to enjoy the use of different kinds of music, or be willing to consider the possible value of the different priorities.

The younger folks need to learn that the “Great-grandpas” of the congregation are not simply “stuck in their ways” – though that may be partially true – but that they have gotten their scars and wisdom the same way the younger generation will get them – by making mistakes and surviving to pass on the lessons to others.

If Jesus knows what He's talking about – and we strongly suspect that He does – this kind of conduct among ourselves (as families and the congregation of St. John's) may be the best form of evangelism one could possibly contrive to use.

Peace among ourselves. Truth demonstrated by our conduct. Friends and neighbors attracted to the Word of God. Relationship with the Father, through the atonement of Christ, by the power of the Spirit of Holiness ... hmm, maybe it's all worth the effort.

Continuing in Christ's affection for you all, I am and remain, your brother and pastor,

Mark

I implore you ... to walk in a manner worthy of the calling ... being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.



I bow my
knees before the
Father, from whom
every family in
heaven and on earth
is named ...

... that according to the
riches of his glory he may
grant you to be strengthened
with power through his Spirit
in your inner being, so that
Christ may dwell in your
hearts through faith—that
you, being rooted and
grounded in love, may have
strength to comprehend with
all the saints what is the
breadth and length and
height and depth ...



... and to
know the love of
Christ that surpasses
knowledge, that you
may be filled with all
the fullness of God.
(Ephesians 3.14-19)

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eventual “counterfeit maturity”, which reveals itself in ugly living that is devoid of Christ’s “victory over the world” (John 16:33). Smith calls for parents to prayerfully aim at shaping and influencing their children’s hearts and heart attitudes, rather than settling for control of external behavior. His vision for raising children may be summed up by the title of the second chapter, “Parenting as Discipleship”.

Many parents will experience some degree of regret as they read this book. A few brief quotations from the book will suffice to illustrate what I mean. “When we are hurried or under stress, we tend to hurry our children through childhood.” “We need to move beyond punishment and discipline to discipleship.” “If a parent is not available, that parent is actually contributing to the emergence of an immoral child.” But, thankfully, God does give repentance, even as he provides wisdom for those who ask (Acts 5:31, 11:18; James 1:5-8). As well, our author develops such a thorough biblical view of parent/child family life that one cannot help but have hope in God’s grace. In addition, he provides comic relief by means of stories from his own family’s up-and-down adventures and snapshots of his clay feet. While Smith aims at helping Christian parents prepare their children for the beginning of independent adult life by the age of 18, the dynamics he considers

are valid over an on-going lifetime. Late-blooming parents can grow with their children! These dynamics include “Clarifying Vision”, “Embracing Authenticity”, “Learning to Listen”, “Showing Empathy”, “Demonstrating Discernment”, “Courageously Setting Boundaries”, “Choosing Contentment”, “Loving Passionately” and more.



*May the God of
endurance and
encouragement grant
you to live in such
harmony with one
another, in accord
with Christ Jesus,
that together you may
with one voice glorify
the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 15.5-6)*

This is the calendar page.