



ECE News & Food for Thought

ECE News

The ECE is gearing up for spring! We will be learning about some of the wonders of God's creation by witnessing the hatching of baby chicks. We are also practicing songs that we will be sharing with the congregation on Sunday, March 25th (Palm Sunday) at the 10:30 service!

Upcoming Dates

Thursday, February 15th - Flower Bulb Fundraiser begins

Monday, February 19th - No School (Presidents' Day)

Thursday, March 7th-Friday, March 9th - Parent/Teacher Conferences

Friday, March 9th & Monday, March 12th - No School

Friday, March 16th - Spring Pictures

Saturday, March 17th - Dr. Seuss Family Fun

Sunday, March 25th - Preschool to sing at 10:30 service (Palm Sunday)

Food for Thought

Why There's No Such Thing as Hugging Your Kids Too Much

By: April Motl

Sometimes, when I tuck my son in for bed, I sit, watch him, and pray over him. He is rarely still, so full of energy that even in his sleep he manages to be busy. And in those quiet moments, I wonder what lies ahead of him. News shouts of changes to our culture and our world. While our days fill with learning numbers and letters, running barefoot in the grass, learning to be gentle with the cat no matter how excited one might be to see her, singing, books, messes ... lots of messes, I wonder what combination of things will pour into his heart all that he needs for the road ahead. How in the world can I prepare him for what awaits him? And I beg the Lord to guide me, to guide us as parents, for His glory and our son's good.



Regardless of the different parenting approaches I read in books and blogs, or the advice handed out to me in church or the grocery store, there is one simple principle I always return to: affection. Affection can be inserted into almost every situation to make it better—and both Scripture and science agree. Around the turn of the last century, “failure to thrive” was a puzzling syndrome seen in orphanages and child care facilities where thorough physical/medical attention was given to the children, but they failed to develop well or even died.

After scientists gave this some study, they found that, in monkeys, the need for touch and physical affection outweighed the monkey-infants’ drive to eat. More studies then proved that human children have a biological and neurological need for affection, just as real as their need to eat, sleep, or have diapers changed.



Affection changes the way brain pathways develop for general learning. Studies have even found that when children faced trauma and stress in their young life, the effects of the difficulties were tempered greatly by the affectionate environment they were raised in.

When I turn through the pages of Scripture, the Lord reminds me He said this all along:
“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

I can’t love my son perfectly, but I am a vessel of God’s perfect love. I have the privilege each day to introduce and bring him to the Father’s perfect love until he learns how to experience the Lord for himself. And when I can’t be there, the Holy Spirit is, so God’s perfect love is the love I know he needs saturated and stored up in his soul for all the unknowns ahead of him. It’s the anchor for all the strain that life will throw at him.

Five Ideas to Inject More Christ-anchoring Affection into Our Home Lives

1. Get God's Word and Love in Yourself

If I’m not centered in Christ’s love, the way I love my family is all off-kilter. Sometimes it’s so hard to pursue the Lord amidst the demands of early child-raising. I get it. Let’s all have a moment of shared internal signing as we wistfully think about those “perfect” devotions we’d like to have ... ok! That’s over! Real life now! The Lord meets His people. He is a God who has come down to us from the beginning. So if all you can do is lift your sleep-deprived little eyes up to Him, do it. Ask Him to fill you so you can pour into your family. He might not do it in the way you expect, but He is faithful, so pursue Him, expect Him, wait for Him, and hold your heart open

for Him. And while you are waiting on His filling, be wise about what all else you allow to fill your brain/heart space.

You can't spend ten minutes seeking Him in His word and then spend hours scattered throughout the day on Facebook or Pinterest absorbing all those messages and expect your heart to overflow with God's truth, love, and grace. It is God alone who "is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (2 Corinthians 9:8), so fix your heart to His above everything/everyone else.

2. Guard Your Time, Energy, and Attention

Turn off the devices. I regularly turn my phone to silent or private so I am not distracted by texts or emails when it's one-on-one time with my son. I also do it when I am getting tasks done that are precursors to that one-on-one time. If it takes me a long time to get the chores done because I am answering a bunch of people and I let it cut into time with my son, that is just as bad as being distracted when he's sitting there in front of me.

Limit your responsibilities. This has come exceedingly hard for me! I somehow had the notion that I would be able to slip that baby under my arm like a football and run quarterback-style through life. Yeah. Right. Kids require time. And it is sacred time! Privileged time! I wouldn't trade this time for any of the other jobs I could be doing, but it does indeed require me! So making sure I am not so strung out exhausted from trying to juggle the world is important to ensure that I am present emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally. I won't be that affectionate or peaceful mom I want to be when I am too dog tired or stressed out. So that means being careful with what I say "yes" to. Moses prayed, "So teach us to number our days that we may present to You a heart of wisdom" (Psalms 90:12). It is a good prayer for all of us especially in the parenting season because the days are long, these years are short, but their impact on our children is lasting.

3. Love with Your Words and Your Actions

Sometimes as parents we get so busy loving our family through providing for them, we forget to lavish them with affection. Scripture tells us, "...encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children" Titus 2:4. The original Greek word there for love describes an affectionate love. As parents we get the sacrificial, lay down on railway tracks kind of love for our families. But it can be hard to love them affectionately when they took their shoes off for the third time and you are late. Or when you've just cleaned the floors for company and precious feet track in mud.

These are the moments we are called to pour affection into them. Once they get out into the world, everyone else will be there to make them feel bad for every little thing; the way they are wonderfully unique down to the stuff they really will mess up on. So as parents we get to be the ones who look at the muddy footprints and not devalue them for the mistake, but simply teach them the wonderful art of being more careful and thoughtful, without making them feel rotten about themselves. Easier said than done, but it is our privileged calling. Our sacred space as parents.

4. Discipline with Love

Scripture tells us that God's "rod and staff comfort me" Psalm 23:4. The notions of discipline, God, and parenting in some circles have gotten thrown off balance in one direction or the other. God is not a God who delights in disciplining His children. He doesn't stand in heaven waiting to throw lightening bolts at the mortals. Nor does He take such joy in His children that He turns a blind eye to their wrong doing just because they are so darn cute! He is patient with us. And His correction is ever only strong enough to warrant the necessary change. It isn't as

if He disciplines as a means of vengeance (discipline and vengeance are two totally separate issues). In fact, being disciplined by Him is a mark of truly being His child (Hebrews 12:8). A shepherd's rod and staff were the mechanisms used to correct the sheep that were going astray. So God corrects us in ways that ultimately bring comfort to us. We pray that God would help us parent in ways where one day, our son might recognize our mistakes, but also see that the correction we gave him was meant for his good and growth and bring him comfort.

So search for God's face in how you discipline your children, My husband always says that he wants to discipline our son the same way God has disciplined him. And love has always been the motivating factor behind each time God has disciplined us. Discipline is meant to make us better, not bitter, not angry, not twisted, not groveling for approval, but better. Each parent, each child, and each situation is unique so there is no single perfect formula for disciplining your kids, but you can do it with love.

5. Give Them a Hug for Now and One for the Road

My husband, Eric, played his guitar one night and our son looked at me and said, "Mama, will you dance with me?" I was so tired! I'd shampooed the carpets that day and was beat! But I remembered the studies I'd read about affection earlier that week, so I got up and we danced! I mean, how long is the little man going to ask his momma to dance with him anyway? So dance with your little ones, snuggle a little longer as you tuck them into tonight, give them a squeeze for right now and an extra one for the road, when they are teenagers and don't know how to let you love on them the same. Hold them close because that one simple act, might change everything for the better inside them for the days to come.