



“Affects of Trauma & Spirituality for Children”

— By **Beth Grant**

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these’ ...

And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16, NIV)

Pictures of this moment in Jesus’ life were memorable to me as a child growing up in an American church. However, it was not until my husband David and I began Project Rescue to work with sexually exploited children in red-light districts in India that I began to realize there was probably more to the story than those images suggested.

While our world has changed dramatically since Jesus physically walked Middle Eastern roads, some forms of evil have changed little. Humanity without God’s redemptive work has commonly exploited the vulnerable—and especially children. Surely some of the children that Jesus welcomed and loved that day had stories to tell of their own of trauma—stories that Jesus knew. The victimization and traumatization of children in war, ethnic conflict, incest, natural disasters, prostitution and domestic violence are not new to the twenty-first century. And they are not new to Jesus.

During 20 years of Project Rescue’s work with sexually exploited children, the effects of trauma have become painfully familiar: fearful lifeless eyes, shame, a distorted sense of identity, a loss of dignity and evidences of exposure to dark spiritual power. For those who have suffered trauma, the most immediate need is a safe place. But for spiritual life and spiritual formation to occur, it must also be a sacred place where God’s presence is welcomed, worshipped and acknowledged with children daily.

My husband and I have been amazed at how quickly little girls born into brothels can be introduced to the One who loves them, created them and to whom they can pray. When they come into a Home of Hope, they see prayer around them morning, evening and in between as life “happens.” They are encouraged to pray along with caregivers. Within weeks of leaving brothels, they learn that God hears their prayers, too. Learning they, too, can pray and that God hears them is empowering and demonstrates God’s value for them. The most moving prayers that have been prayed for me have been prayed by little five- and six- year old

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IN FOCUS



Del Parson

All The Children

— By **Marissa Phelps**, CCTI Team
Member and Spanish Coordinator

Before birth children can recognize the love and excitement around them as their parents prepare to welcome them into the world. God is already at work revealing His love and purpose to these children through the love of their parents. This “first love” prepares the heart of a child to be able to accept and receive the love of their heavenly Father and His

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“Affects of Trauma & Spirituality for Children”

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girls. Their world from birth had been one of pimps, madams and sleeping under their mothers' cots at night while “bad men did bad things to her.” But now they knew they were daughters of a good God, created out His love for them for good purposes. They prayed with confidence, “God, bless this auntie. I am just a little girl, but I know you hear my prayers.”

Spiritual formation for traumatized children requires a place that is emotionally safe and where they can ask hard questions about the unthinkable things that have happened to them. I love the fact that our loving Heavenly Father is not threatened by difficult doubting questions from His children (the Psalmist David had lots of them!). Our integrity as participants in children's healing journeys means acknowledging when we do not have answers for what happened. Children's trust in God must be built on who He is—the God revealed in His Word whose ways are at times mysterious—not on how we as caregivers want God and life to be. Some things that children experience are incomprehensible and evil, and we are wise to acknowledge that with honesty.

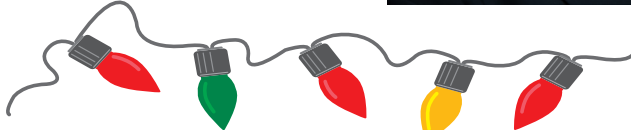
Simultaneously as caregivers with words and action, we communicate our personal trust in God's love, His Word and power to give young trauma survivors transformed futures. This liberating combination of unflinching honesty and trust in God provides traumatized children the freedom to question and the confidence to work through their trauma in a safe, hope-filled environment. Their healing from trauma, growing faith in God and long-term spiritual formation as daughters and sons of God depend on it.



About the Author

Dr. Beth Grant

Co-founder and co-director, Project Rescue, an international ministry to women and children in sexual slavery. (Hundreds of children who have come through Project Rescue's programs have become courageous young men and women who now work as teachers, nurses, social workers, designers, and ministers in red-light districts to those like themselves who are victims and survivors of sexual slavery.) Author of “Courageous Compassion: Confronting Social Injustice God's Way”(2014).



IN FOCUS

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invitation to discover the person He has created them to be. Only God can offer children a loving relationship where their needs of unconditional love and acceptance are fully met. Their parents and the community of faith must model and invite the children to experience God's love, forgiveness and His faithfulness as He reveals Himself to them.

George Barna, in his book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, says, “We can strive to give our youngsters all the advantages the world has to offer and motivate them to make the most of available opportunities and resources; but unless their spiritual life is prioritized and nurtured, they will miss out on much of the meaning, purpose and joy of life.”

The Spiritual condition of the child will determine his choices and shape his understanding of what is right and wrong. If children know and love God, they will filter their decisions per their Christian values. Their spirituality will affect all their decisions and will define their future. We must help children find Jesus, who offers them real love in an unconditional relationship. As children welcome God into their lives, they will find His unconditional love and acceptance giving them a new identity and purpose. Children are to be affirmed and reminded of their identity in Christ, as well as in their God given talents and gifts. God's plans for them will always be filled with hope and purpose (Jer. 29:11). ■



From 1987-2011 Dr. Stonehouse served as a Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, teaching in the area of Christian Discipleship, with a special focus on children and their spiritual journey. She has written on this topic, and two books are referenced in the footnotes of the article for those who want to explore the ideas further. A student introduced Dr. Stonehouse to “Children in Crisis”, edited by Phyllis Kilbourn. She states that it “opened my eyes to the plight of the world’s children.” Since 2011 Dr. Stonehouse has been privileged to teach in the Holistic Child Development PhD program based at the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in the Philippines.

Trauma’s Impact on a Child’s Spirituality

— By Catherine Stonehouse



By God’s creation design, every human being is created in the image of God.¹ Among other things, this means that every child is born as a spiritual being, with the potential of sensing God’s presence, knowing God, and responding to God. However, the potential of the child must be developed.

Advances in neuroscience have given us amazing insights into the development of the brain during childhood.² At birth, the infant’s brain has more neurons (cells) than an adult brain. However, the neurons in the infant’s brain are not organized to function. They are a mass of potential to be developed, and that development takes place as the baby senses the environment and makes meaning of what they sense. Babies sense the difference between a loving, gentle, calming sound of voice, and a harsh, threatening voice or sound. They sense the difference between a loving, confident touch and an uncertain or uncaring touch. They sense the emotions of those around them like love, peace, anxiety, anger or disinterest. For 10-12 years, beginning before the infant understands words, children are absorbing “quickly and largely unconsciously” the information from their environment that allows them to survive.³ They are learning from those around them what they value, whether they can be trusted to love and care for the child, or whether they should be feared.

As noted above, from the beginning of life children have the potential of sensing the presence of God. They sense a Great (transcendent) Presence, with no words to understand that Presence. During the early months and years of life, they seek to understand the Presence and are developing their first image and expectations of God. That image of God is strongly influenced by the adults who care for them. If the “powerful” adults the child depends on are loving and provide what the child needs, he or she assumes God is loving, provides, and can be trusted. But if the child is surrounded by violence, deprivation and neglect, in many cases their God becomes someone to be feared and who cannot be trusted. This first image of God, developed before the child understands what is happening, has a long-lasting impact on his or her spirituality. This is what I call the impact of *environmental trauma*.

Children who are growing up in an environment that is violent and among those who cannot be trusted to provide are in desperate need of time with adults who demonstrate God’s holistic care and who can be trusted. Children need to experience the love, grace and faithfulness of God through relationships with Christ-like adults who give them a truer image of God. ■

1 *Genesis 1:26-27*

2 *Ten Things Every Child Needs for the Best Start in Life, Video available for free download, provides additional insights into the development of the brain during early childhood.*

3 *For expanded discussion consult: Hofstede, Geert et al, Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind (New York NY: McGraw Hill, 2010) pages 4-5, 8-9.*

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES



Dedicated to children who hear their Father's voice

Living Water

— *By Caleb Wilson*

Elijah and his family were building a sand castle on the beach. Elijah was packing sand to form walls, but it kept toppling over. “Why isn’t this sand staying together?” Elijah asked. “I have enough sand and I have packed it down, but it keeps falling over,” Elijah complained. “Here,” said his Mom. “Take this water, get the sand wet, then build the walls,” Elijah’s Mom advised. “Wow!” said Elijah. “This wet sand packs down and stays strong! That water made it strong!” Elijah exclaimed. “Yes, it does,” said his Mom. “We are like the sand, without Jesus’ living water, our sins would be too much for us and we would topple over, but with it, He will make us strong in Him,” Elijah’s Mom explained. “I guess this is another example of how much Jesus loves us and how much we need Him,” said Elijah. “I am glad you understand,” said his Mom, smiling. ■

Isaiah 28:16 “Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”



About the Author

Caleb is a 10 year-old home school student in the 6th grade. He recently moved with his family to the foothills of VA, where he has enjoyed learning all the new areas to explore. Caleb loves to play baseball and going to the beach with his family. Caleb is pictured with his 5 year-old brother, Jadon, where they enjoyed seeing this sand castle on their family beach trip this year. This trip inspired Caleb’s idea for this devotional.

Here’s an encouraging example of how God is using a 15 year-old from Liberia to reach his own generation!

www.endviolenceagainstchildren.org/high-time-end-violence-children/



Acts 8:30b *Do you understand what you are reading?*

— *By Esther Buff*

As I was reading this scripture recently, it touched my heart. The fact that the Ethiopian went to worship in Jerusalem and was reading the Word of God does not mean he understood the spiritual message. How common this is among children! How many children attend worship services, Sunday schools, clubs and camps but do not understand? Many children even memorize part of scriptures very well, but they still do not understand the message. Why? Not because they are stupid or don't have ears. As children's ministry workers, we are tempted to think that when we have taught them the scripture, we have done our duties and kids must understand. Well, the story in Acts shows clearly that is not always true. The Ethiopian needed personal attention. Praise God, Philip obeyed the Holy Spirit and had a one-to-one session with him. I love that!

There are two main reasons why children do not understand spiritual things. One, the gospel is not explained in ways that are appropriate for their age group. This is the reason children's workers should attend basic child evangelism trainings. Two, the broken or traumatized hearts of wounded children cannot contain it. It's like a broken vessel, and the biblical messages just run out at the bottom. When children are hurt or live in chaotic circumstances, their mind is just on surviving. They are so preoccupied with tough questions in their inner world that new things from the outside do not penetrate. It is very common for our children in South Africa to battle with questions like, "How am I going to explain to the teacher that after school I have to work and can't do the homework?" "How am I going to feed my younger hungry siblings tonight?" Navigating this takes up so much energy that even when you tell them to pray for their needs, they simply can't. Peter Scazzero writes it very nicely in his book ***The Emotionally Healthy Church***, "It is impossible to grow spiritually while emotionally wounded." This is so true and important for us to know. If not, we can get easily discouraged thinking our children are not serious in their Christian walk.

When we teach the Word of God, it is our responsibility to see that the word really ministers healing to their hearts. A good way to do that is not just tell Bible stories, but address the feeling people might have had in that story and link it to the very feelings children go through. Children can identify with the hurting people in the story, and that opens the door to their hearts. When you give the invitation to see them alone for counseling, you can change their present and future for good. It is my prayer all children's workers would attend a trauma counseling workshops. Children do not grow up in happy, care-free families. In our recent camp, 32 children out of 67 wanted to see our sister Lerato for inner healing. The need is huge, but because they were helped, they now can grow spiritually, mentally, emotionally and socially. Isn't that what we pray for? ■



Esther Buff is from Switzerland and is married to Urs Buff, leader of Lighthouse Children's Ministry. They are blessed with 4 grown children and 5 grandchildren and work with WEC South Africa. They came as missionaries to South Africa in 1986 to work in a Christian radio ministry but soon realized that God sent them for the underprivileged children in Africa. They began by training Sunday school teachers and a camp for kids and further trained on how to help traumatized children. The Buff's passion is for children to be reached with the gospel and to minister to them in an holistic way so that the children can reach their God given potential and fulfill the purpose God has for them.



JOYS OF THE *Season*

*Best Wishes
and
Merry Christmas
to
All of You
From
The CCTI Team
December 2016*





us two sacks of rice that a farmer shared from a good harvest.

Children have a whole faith in God that needs to be nurtured and developed! But they also have areas in which they need to grow.

My journey with the children challenges me to demonstrate the great love commandment of God (Mark 12:30-31). Oftentimes, I would ask God to continually impute in my heart “divine love” so that the children would see and learn God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s compassion, God’s tenderness, and God’s forgiveness through me.

In one of my sessions, a girl asked, “How am I to believe of God’s love when my mother left me to my step father who repeatedly abused me?” It took her three years to see all of who God is and has freely forgiven her step father.

Loving others is another great truth. At first I could see their selfishness as they hid food out of fear that they might not have for the next meal. These children, who literally have been deprived of their needs, had the tendency to keep things for themselves. The selfless life of children’s caregivers is an antidote to their selfishness. As we modeled the unselfish love of Jesus, the children have learned to give and share what they have.

Obedience is another area that has been a struggle for many children. Just as in other homes, structures and boundaries are in place at the center, but children who used to live on their own with no regimen in place and specific duties to do have difficulty in learning obedience. These children have been used to living their lives with no clear authority.

Whether in centers or in homes, parents and caregivers must choose to love, selflessness and patience so that the children whom God has entrusted to us will grow in their trust in God. ■

Transformed by God Through the Children

—By *Pastora Tess Chua*

My understanding of children was enlightened when I heard about a girl who said, “We hear adults say that the youth is the hope of the father land, but I say—we are not just the future but also the present. We are also looked upon as weak, but we have the strength that endures throughout the day. Moreover, we are also considered as the object of their expenditures, but adults have not realized that we are the resource that cannot be outnumbered.”

Children show us great examples of faith and spirituality. Among a number of examples, one time the boys at the Center ran out of rice for supper. At five o’clock in the afternoon, the boys prayed with me, and we asked God to send rice. While we were still praying, a jeep stopped in front of our gate to give



About the Author

Reverend Teresita S. Chua is the Pastor of the Free Methodist Church of the Philippines. Additionally, she is the President of the Philippine Free Methodist Social Ministries and Director of the Ahon Community Care Center. “Pastora Tess”, as she is beloved called, has a huge heart for the children in her community and has been trained with CCTI to help reach the children with God’s love.



Making it easier to
bring healing and
hope to children
in crisis

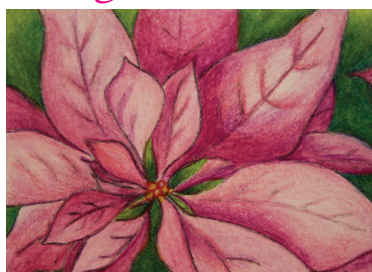
Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis

NEWS
EVENTS
RESOURCES



*Resources recommended by CCTI
for working with Children*

Merry Christmas



Colored Pencil by Kathy Walker

Books

Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions

By Barna, George
(Baker Books, 2016)

Father Heart of God

By McClung, Floyd
(Harvest House, 1985)

Leading a Special Needs Ministry

By Stonehouse,
Catherine
Joining Children on
the Spiritual Journey:
Nurturing a Life of
Faith
(Grand Rapids MI:
Baker Academic,
1998)

Websites

www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/spiritual-growth-forkids

www.keysforkids.org

www.projectrescue.com

Videos

Ten Things Every Child Needs for the Best Start in Life

<https://vimeo.com/24786384>



For Information On:

• **CCTI Curriculum—**

**Offering Healing and Hope
for Children in Crisis**

• **Other Resources**



Crisis Care Training International is a
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