

FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions . . .



Bulletin

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Happy New Year!

THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

BY JIM DALY

THEY SAY “BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER.” BUT DO WE get to decide how much something is worth?

I've always been fascinated by the TV program *Antiques Roadshow*. People from across the country bring their collectibles in for appraisal in the hope that they have a hidden treasure on their hands. Many leave disappointed, of course. But more than a few discover that the dusty old trinket from their attic is actually valuable!

Those are the moments that make the show so much fun. Someone usually brings in a painting splashed with bizarre colors, or an odd-shaped figurine. I always think, “Why would anyone want something like that in their home?” Then the appraisal comes, and it turns out the item is worth a small fortune.

That's when I'm reminded of one of the core principles of our Christian faith: *Value* is the result of qualities beyond what we see at first glance. This is why Scripture emphasizes the profound worth of every human being. People don't deserve dignity because they're the right height, shape or color, or even because they're able to contribute to society. It doesn't matter whether someone is young, old, yet-to-be-born or has special needs. Human beings have immeasurable worth simply because it's endowed them by their Creator.

I have made some mistakes in raising my teenager. He knows I'm only human, right? I don't really have to say I'm sorry, do I?

ANSWER:

You do. Nobody likes to apologize. It's tough to get those words out, even if they're the only way to move beyond the wreckage of conflict and start healing. Why is that difficulty multiplied when we need to apologize to our own kids? See if any of these reasons apply to you.

1. Asking forgiveness is an admission that maybe you don't always get it right. You're afraid this will cause your teen to doubt all your decisions, or to find further excuse to defy you.

2. It can be humiliating to admit you're wrong. The truth is that it takes strength

to acknowledge your faults and can help your teen relate to you.

3. You want to model perfection for your teen. But models of perfection can discourage kids who feel like they're messing up constantly.

4. You fear that if you admit you're flawed, your teen won't respect you anymore. Actually, kids say they respect their parents *more* when they apologize.

When it comes to asking forgiveness, the hardest part is taking the first step.

1. *Look into your teen's eyes.* Don't glance around or dust the furniture while you're talking. Find a quiet place and make eye contact.

2. *Define the wrong; don't leave it vague.* Name specifically what you did or said that you shouldn't have. For example, “I'm sorry I called

you a ‘stupid kid.’ That was insulting—and untrue, too.”

3. *Say those difficult words.* “I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?”

4. *Be quiet.* Your teen might respond by granting forgiveness. He might be stunned and say nothing. If he's still angry, he may say, “No.”

What should you do if you get a negative response? Pat him on the shoulder and say, “I love you.” Then walk away—not angrily, but knowing that what you did to hurt your teen may take time to heal. Allow him that time.

(Adapted from *Sticking with Your Teen: How to Keep from Coming Unglued No Matter What* by Joe White with Lissa Halls Johnson)



Tough Questions from Kids

How do we know who to pray for?

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

We should pray for whomever we care about, and we should also pray for people in need, for pastors and missionaries, for government leaders and for ourselves. It is always good to pray for ourselves. We can ask God to teach us, to give us wisdom each day and to make us grow in our faith.

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HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND

It's never too early to educate children about the sanctity of human life—to help them understand that each person, born and preborn, is valuable. Through age-appropriate activities and discussions, teach your children—from toddler to teen—that every life matters.

Young children are naturally curious about newborn babies. We can encourage the same fascination toward preborn babies, as well. Help your child understand that the baby in a mom's tummy is a real person and that God loves babies yet to born just as He loves each of us.

Kids love learning what their bodies can do! Teach your child about fetal development to illustrate that even before birth, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” with remarkable abilities. Help children develop a deeper understanding of why life is sacred by teaching them that each person, born and preborn, is created in the divine image of God.

Explore your home with your child, using as many of your senses as possible. (Eat a cookie; listen to the noises outside the front door; etc.) Explain that preborn babies explore the “world” inside Mom by moving their arms and legs, listening to voices, even tasting what Mom had for dinner! Point out how blessed we are to have many ways to learn about the world around us, and help your child memorize Psalm 139:14: “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”

Have a contest to see who can create the best imaginary pet. Give everyone Play-Doh and set a timer. When the timer rings, let your children explain their creations. Make encouraging comments, such as how carefully they worked on their creatures. But then ask each child, “Why isn't your pet alive?” Remind your family that God is the only one who can give life. Tell your kids that God knew what He was doing when He formed them, and that they were “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Teach the words *fearfully* (awe and reverence) and *wonderfully* (amazing and marvelous).

—Focus on the Family staff



A GREATER PLAN

“Would you like to meet your birth mother?”

Though the moment took place several years ago, I can still remember the question. I had come to Focus on the Family to share my story and record a broadcast about it.

“I would love to,” I replied, “but I continue to trust that it's in God's hands, and if He intends for it to happen, it will, in His way and in His time.”



Sure, those were my words, but if it were possible to see inside me at that moment, my heart would have admitted that I didn't think such a meeting was actually in His plans. The struggle to even locate my biological mother had been difficult enough. She was estranged from the rest of her family, and their response indicated that they would not be passing on my messages.

I needed help—help trusting that God was working good in my life, and that His plans were, indeed, always greater than what I had in mind.

I was 14 years old when I first learned how I had survived a saline infusion abortion. This particular procedure involved delivering a toxic salt solution into the amniotic fluid

surrounding my preborn body in the womb. The intent was to first poison me inside my mother, then to induce premature labor—labor that would ultimately expel my deceased body from her womb.

At least, that's how it was supposed to happen. And the hospital staff indeed thought I was dead when they set aside my body. But a nurse apparently heard me whimper, realized I wasn't dead, and saved my life.

Learning the truth was a horrific, live-changing experience. But looking back on the years that have passed since I first heard the story of my birth, I now appreciate who God made me to be, survivor and all.

My identity is in Christ, through Christ. None of the circumstances about my life will change that.

That's an important lesson for us all. Indeed, I'm the first to admit that I never expected my life to turn out this way. It's not the life I would have chosen for myself, but I'm forever grateful that God's plans for me were so very different than anything that I could or would have imagined.

—Melissa Ohden