

Identity Formation - What Every Child Needs (Part 5)

8. Recreation

1 Timothy 6:17

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

You can have fun. You can be a child. You can laugh freely. You don't have to take yourself seriously all the time. Often playing together is a tool for emotional bonding and vulnerability. In many families authority can bring about the feeling that one cannot express themselves by being humorous or by telling jokes. How many of you laughed and joked around with your parents? This can transfer into the world of work and prevent people who haven't grown up in a relaxed environment from feeling comfortable in their workplace especially when faced with a CEO, MD or other authority figure. It is important not to reject the people who are trying to mentor you because you have been rejected in the past. Relax, recreation is important. Recreational companionship between husband and wife is also important. You don't want to be the spouse that doesn't have a vision for their social life. The one who is always waiting for their spouse to come home. Are you creating an atmosphere of rest around you or are you always high octane about everything? Is everything always on 100% for you?

How you are tends to pass on to your children. If you are a workaholic your children can easily feel guilty when they are having fun. What were things like when you were growing up? How did this impact your view of recreation? I know some people who lie to their extended family when they go away on holiday. There is guilt associated with feeling pleasure. The bible shows that rest can be a family culture. It is not limited to just a few people in the family.

Exodus 20:8-10

8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 "Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

We must be careful of the other extreme.

Prov 21:17

Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.

If God Himself rested, why do we think we don't need rest? Why do we frown upon recreational activities?

Gen 2:2

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

If Jesus and His disciples rested, why do we think we don't have to? Mark 6:31-

32

And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) 32 They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

God can lead you into times of rest and refreshing.

Ps 23:2-3a

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul;

Sometimes we over spiritualize things. This verse is not always symbolic but is also very practical.

God is a joyful God. It is important that our families are characterized by His qualities.

Zeph 3:17

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

When there is no laughter in the home it is a sign that something is not right. What are the benefits of recreation for children?

Less computer game and screen time and more outdoor play is key.

Studies have shown that kids who spend more time outside might be happier and more relaxed. Time outdoors can even improve short-term memory, concentration and cognitive skills.

Sadly, a lot of children are reluctant to go outdoors to play even when the weather is good. We have a generation of sedentary kids. It's up to us parents to facilitate outdoor play for our children. There is a lot you can do outside ranging from sport to cycling to photography etc Children learn a lot through play.

Indoor activities range from family movies to quizzes and board games and in my household dancing and rapping competitions. I have grown out of certain games that my kids still want to play with me and wife (Zulu Warrior and Tickle Monster).

Work-rest balance is a function of choice

What are some practical things you can do to create work-rest balance?

A. Create Boundaries with Work

- Do you have healthy boundaries with your work?
- Are you able to set limits?
- Do you have task and energy boundaries with your work?
- Are you able to say no?
- Can you create your own space?

Reflect on how this looks practically in your life. You are responsible to mentor the people around you in how they should relate to you.

What are the practical habits and rituals that help you to set boundaries?

There are practical things you can do such as switching off your gadgets and only checking them at a certain time of the evening. It's important to also switch off from work mode and switch into something else. We have different rituals for this that range from starting to cook, going to gym or showering and changing into our home clothes.

Do you have a vision for yourself outside of work?

B. Plan Your Leisure

In order to ensure that you have work-rest balance it is important to plan your rest time and respect the appointments you make with yourself, not just work related. We need to plan our leisure time just like we plan work-related endeavours. When something is not on your schedule or timetable you have decided it is not important to you. Part of this planning is clearly defining the nature of the rest time. For example, is it a holiday for you and your spouse or is it for the kids? Clearly define what work is and what rest and play are.

If these are not clearly defined you will be like me and not think you are working because you are passionate about it and enjoy it.

C. Make sure rest is really rest

They say that holidays can end up being just watching your kids in a different location. Some people go on holiday but spend all the time cooking and doing chores. We see this even when it comes to physical training for races during holiday time. Some people are more worked up about their training than when they are at work. Think of the relaxed training alternative.

D. Identify your type of work-rest balance Daily

top-up

Weekly top-up

Monthly top-up

Annual top-up

Of course there are pros and cons to each of these. I like to encourage people to embrace all three. During the course of the day, identify what things energize you and fill your tank. Try to do these things intentionally. What are the things that drain you? Try to avoid these or change the meaning you attach to them. Try not to go on holiday only when you are in the minus numbers already. Many people do this and when they return from holiday they are back to zero and then need a holiday from the holiday.

Some people are busy for three months of the year in a very extreme way and then the other nine months are more relaxed for them. Some work late hours during the week and then the weekend is their family time.

9. Age appropriateness

We live in a society that is growing in humanist ideas with regards to Children's rights. This has become so strong to the point of superseding the authority and rights of parents. Of course this is not biblical. However, when we examine scripture it is clear that the Bible has always upheld the importance of protecting the dignity of the vulnerable. Embedded in the law were measures to protect children.

Deut 10:17-18

17 *For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.* 18 *He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.*

Ex 22:22-23

22 “Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. 23 If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.

Developmental stages need to be respected. Children can behave like children. In many families, irresponsible parents force their children to grow up too quickly. When children have to look after themselves and their siblings, emotional development is hindered and those children can experience drastic consequences.

Siobhan Freegard (co-founder of a parenting website) said that girls are made to worry about their appearance and weight whilst boys are pushed into being tough and "macho" behaviour at too young an age. Siobhan Freegard blamed a "toxic combination of marketing, media and peer pressure". "The pace of modern life is so fast that it is even snatching away the precious years of childhood," she said. "Children no longer want to be seen as children, even when as parents we know they still are." "There needs to be a radical rethink in society to revalue childhood and protect it as a precious time - not time to put pressure on children to grow up far too fast," said Ms Freegard.

What is the impact of growing up too fast?

“The most common general effects of it (growing up too fast) all are poor self-care or even self-harm, workaholism, trying to take care of everybody else, people-pleasing, self-esteem issues, constantly trying to doing more than you are physically capable of, having standards for yourself that are too high or completely unrealistic, feeling toxic guilt and false responsibility, chronic stress and anxiety, lack of closeness in relationships, codependency, staying in—or even unconsciously seeking— abusive or otherwise toxic social environments.” Darius Cikanavicius, Author, Certified Coach.

Cikanavicius describes it this way: What is frequently called “growing up too fast” or “being mature beyond your years” is simply neglect and abuse. This is a euphemism because we are talking about a type of childhood trauma.

Parents attribute unfair responsibility and unrealistic standards onto their children. Consequently, the child is expected, for example, to perform a task without anybody actually teaching them how to do it, and is punished if they fail.

Role-reversal is part of the outworking of growing up too fast. It means that the caregiver assigns their role onto the child and therefore the child is seen as somebody who has to take care of the caregiver and possibly others.

The outcome of this is:

- 1. Believing you have to always be strong**
- 2. Seeing vulnerability and admission of gaps as a weakness**
- 3. Placating and Feeling empathy for those that hurt you before self-care**
- 4. Being independent instead of interdependent.**

Another common example of age inappropriateness is child labour. According to laborrights.org: Children who labour intensely are often smaller than those who are allowed to play and grown naturally. They are also at a higher risk for illnesses such as respiratory illnesses and are exposed to harmful chemicals that can also affect their physical development.

They also experience isolation and depression as a result of not spending time with other children their age and their family.

Age appropriateness as a value will determine when you focus on preparation and when you focus on protection. We must protect the moral innocence of our children.

10. Spirituality

Mark 10:13 -16

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

You are allowed to develop your relationship with God without being ridiculed or shamed. This is the development of your identity as a spiritual person. Many people today have been stunted in their spiritual growth because they were mocked about it in their formative years.

There is no Baby Holy Spirit.

There is far too much at stake for you not to walk in our purpose! Don't believe the lie that you can waste your youth away and only get into your purpose when you are older. Some of the greatest churches and organizations today are led by young people.

"Give me four years to teach the children, and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted". Lenin

90% of all professing Christians come to Christ before they reach 30. 75% before the age of 25.

Hence the Youth culture represents the largest mission field.

Most of the world is relatively young.

6 out of 10 people on the planet are under 25 and this percentage is increasing everyday. Of this number nearly half are in middle school to college age-group.

What have Young People done in History?

William Booth

Founder of the Salvation Army, started preaching in the slums of London at the age of 15.

Charles Spurgeon

Arguably the greatest preacher of the 19th Century started ministering at 19. He attracted such large crowds that before 30 he had built and was packing out the 5000 seat Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

Jonathan Edwards

Entered Yale in 1716 at the age of 13 and by the age of 21 was pastoring one of the most influential churches in the American Colonies. His famous sermon "Sinners in the hands of an Angry God" helped spark the Great Awakening that brought 10s of thousands to Christ.

Amy Carmichael

She was 28 when she left as a Missionary for Dohnavur, India. She served for 56 years without furlough in one of the most dangerous areas of the world.

Louis Braille

In 1824 he was 15 years old when he developed an ingenious system of reading and writing by means of raised dots. Today, in virtually every language throughout the world, Braille is the standard form of writing and reading used by blind people.

John Wesley

He was 26 when he started the Holy Club at Oxford, sparking a revival on the campus that later spread through England and USA.