



MONDAY'S MEAL

SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT FOR THE LONG DISTANCE RUN

Training Your Teens To Open Up

by Lou Priolo

Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy.

Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..." Hebrews 10:24

One of the most common communication difficulties we encounter in counseling is people who are passive rather than active in the communication process. That is, they sit passively by, expecting those with whom they are supposed to be conversing to take all of the initiative. Rather than volunteering all of the data necessary for the dialogue, these inactive individuals expect their counterparts to drag out of them all but the most basic information.

Revelation is a prerequisite to any relationship.

Have you ever stopped to consider that if it were not for the Bible (God's revelation of Himself to man), we would not know enough about Him to be saved, let alone to have an intimate relationship with Him. We might know through general revelation (that which may be generally known about God through His creation) that God exists, but it takes special revelation (the Bible) for us to know how to be saved, how to glorify Him, and how to enjoy fellowship with Him. To the extent that God reveals Himself to you and me, we may have a relationship with Him. To the extent that we do not comprehend His revelation, our intimacy with Him will be adversely affected. *Revelation is a prerequisite to having a relationship.*

The same principle holds true in all relationships (cf. John 15:15). To the degree that two people reveal themselves to one another, they will experience relational intimacy. Since marriage is the most intimate of personal relationships, the revelation between spouses is to exceed the revelation of oneself to any other person (except the Lord, who knows us more intimately than we know ourselves; cf. Psalm 139: 1-6) .

But how important is the revelation of child to parent? Someday, your teenager will be required to open up to that special someone to whom he or she has wed. He will have to "pull back the curtain" (that's really what revelation means) of his heart and let another person see what's inside. If he is in the habit of pulling the curtain open with his parents, who have a biblical need to know certain things that are going through his mind, he will be that much more prepared to do so with his wife (and your task of doing his premarital counseling will be that much easier).

Now, what about his current relationship to his parents? If you followers of Jesus Christ, you have been given the responsibility to bring him up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Since the Bible (the source of that discipline and instruction) covers every area of life, to obey this passage properly, his parents must talk to him about all kinds of things—things that are easy to discuss and things that are difficult. More importantly, it is your responsibility to teach him not only how to act and speak like a Christian, but also how to think and reason like a Christian (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:11). This means that you will have to get into your counselee’s head (his heart) and that if he wants to cooperate with God’s program, he must let you have access to it. “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Proverbs 20:5, *ESV*).

I would like to give three ways in which you may encourage your teenager to cooperate with this program. First, help them get used to the idea that you will sometimes have to ask personal questions. You might explain it something along these lines:

It’s our job to ask questions! They are the best means we have to get the information out of your heart. We are not being inordinately intrusive or curious; we are just trying to do what God has us them to do. So, when we ask you to open up, don’t let pride, selfishness, fear, impatience, or laziness cause you to lock down. Kindly avoid the shoulder shrug and the one-word retorts. Instead, try to be thankful for parents who love you, and answer their questions as sincerely (and as honestly) as you know how.

The next suggestion has to do with encouraging them to give you the information you need *without having to ask for it*. The operative word is “initiative.” There is probably not a better way for you to earn our trust (and the freedom that comes with it) than to voluntarily give us the information we need to do our job. Please don’t wait for us to ask you why you are “feeling down,” or “not hungry,” or “not interested in going with us to wherever.” Don’t make us have to guess or interrogate you. Come to us. Tell us what’s bugging you. Let us see what’s inside. Open your heart to us. Ask for wisdom and prayers—maybe even for our help.

My final suggestion is to unpack 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 with them. Encourage them memorize the passage. Meditate on it yourself. “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—/ *speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also*” (*NIV*, emphasis added). And please don’t forget to be a good model of someone who follows Paul’s example yourself—open up to your teens.