Soundbites Regarding Our Partnership with Parents

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1. Recent studies on religion point to the importance of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. Parental involvement in a child’s faith formation increases not only a child’s identification with their faith as they grow, but the commitment to and practice of that faith as they reach adulthood.

2. In their letter, *Follow the Way of Love*, the U.S. bishops tell us that the family is the heart of our society and a sign of God’s presence in this world.

3. Children need to see us “being Church” together. Christian Smith and Melinda Denton ask, “Do we practice the kind of church we want our children to have?” (from *Soul Searching*)

4. Deuteronomy 6: 5-7 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

5. Psalm 78: 4-7 “We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done... he commanded our ancestors to teach their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Parenting really is at the heart of discipleship.

6. Mother Teresa said “ Each person’s mission is a mission of love…begin where you are, with the people closest to you.” Again…parenting really is at the heart of Jesus’ command for discipleship.

7. Parents are the primary influences on the faith formation of children and young people. They are the primary “impact people” for better or worse. “If we truly desire to be more effective in seeing the lives of our students transformed into the likeness of Christ, the greatest resource we have is the greatest influence in their lives - their parents. Our goal is to come alongside parents to help them pass on the faith to their children… We should never underestimate the power of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. If spiritual formation is the key – and we believe it is – parents are too valuable to leave out of the equation. We need to bring parents into the circumstances and situations of their children, affirming and helping to re-establish parental roles in the spiritual formation of our students.” (Jim Burns and Mike Devries: *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, p.17).

8. “If parents aren’t integrated into kid’s faith development, it’s a miracle if their young people continue in the life of the church after confirmation.” (Ben Freudenberg: *The Family Friendly Church*, p.20).
9. “The best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities.” Christian Smith with Melinda Denton: *Soul Searching.*

10. Kenda Creasy Dean (in *Almost Christian*) talks about one recurrent theme from Smith and Denton’s National Study on Youth and Religion: “Parents matter most when it comes to the religious formation of their children.” “By and large,” Smith and Denton concluded, “parents get what they are, religiously.”

11. From Kenda Creasy Dean’s *Almost Christian*:

   “America young people are, theoretically, fine with religious faith – but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive long after they graduate from high school. One more thing: we’re responsible.”

   “Tending the faith of young people may just be the ticket to reclaiming our own.”

   “The religiosity of American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parents’ religious devotion (or lack thereof) and, by extension, that of their congregations.”

   “Since the religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astonishing clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adults who love them, lackadaisical faith is not young people’s issue, but ours.”

   About youth ministers, she says: “We are the ones charged with “handing on” the good news of Jesus Christ to the teenagers on our watch, but the reports from the front are not encouraging.”

   “Yet these young people possess no real commitment to or excitement about religious faith. Teenagers tend to approach religious participation, like music and sports, as an extracurricular activity, a good well-rounded thing to do, but unnecessary for an integrated life. Religion, young people in the NSYR concurred is a “Very Nice Thing.” What we have been less able to convey to young people is faith.”

12. According to a 2007 survey by the Barna Group, parents must have an authentic and vibrant faith to provide meaningful spiritual guidance to their children. In other words, the old saying, “Do what I say and not what I do,” isn’t going to cut it. If we really want our kids to have a vital faith, we need to model it as parents. Like so many other things in life, it starts at home.