

A Lesson by the Bathtub

Sometimes, you can gain an important lesson giving a child a bath.

John Ortberg Jr. agrees. He is an evangelical Christian author, speaker and senior pastor of Menlo Church in Menlo Park, California, a Presbyterian church with more than 4,000 members.

He was giving a bath to his three children. Johnny was still in the tub. Laura was out and safely in her pajamas. He was trying to get Mallory dried off.

Mallory was out of the water, but doing what had come to be known in their family as the Dee Dah Day dance. This dance consists of running around and around in circles, singing over and over again, “Dee Dah Day, Dee Dah Day.” It was a relatively simple dance expressing great joy.

When Mallory is too happy to hold it any longer, when words are inadequate to give voice to her euphoria, she has to dance to release her joy. So, she does the Dee Dah Day dance.

On this particular occasion, her father was irritated. “Mallory, hurry!” he prodded. So she did. She hurried. But not as her father intended. Instead, she began running in circles faster and faster, chanting “Dee Dah Day” more rapidly.

“No, Mallory, that is not what I mean!” said Ortberg. “Stop with the Dee Dah Day stuff and get over here so I can dry you off. Hurry!”

Then Mallory asked her father a profound question: “Why?” Why did she have to hurry?

Ortberg suddenly realized he had no answer. He had nowhere to go, nothing to do, no meetings to attend, no sermons to write. He was just so used to hurrying, so preoccupied with his own little agenda, so trapped in this rut of moving from one task to another, that here was life, here was joy, here was an invitation to the dance right in front of him – and he was missing it.

So, he got up, and he and Mallory did the Dee Dah Day dance together.

Maybe you are like me – struck by Ortberg’s realization that life, precious times of it, filled with joy, are right in front of us, begging for attention and yet ignored by our preoccupation with the busyness of work or plans. Moments such as ...

- A quiet time with a spouse in front of flames dancing among the logs in a fireplace.

(more)

- Listening closely to a child learning to read a book you gave her as a present.
- Filing in your memory banks the wonder of a toddler encountering Santa Claus for the first time.
- Watching a son struggling to master the art of bicycle riding.
- Praising the look of your daughter in a new dress she wanted you to buy for her.
- Helping your young son bait a hook on his first fishing trip.
- Reflecting on your blessings as the entire family encircles the table at dinner time, and the laughter as siblings banter with each other over the day's happenings.
- The pride – and some sadness – you feel as you prepare to walk your daughter down a church aisle to give her hand in marriage to some lucky young man.

These and so many other experiences surround us and march away to a rapid drumbeat. We need to notice them. And embrace them. They are the treasures of life.

He has made everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter