

A Handbook for Parents and Church Workers: Facilitating the Transformation From Childhood to Men and Women of God

Susanne Meza-Keuthen

William R. Parker Jr.

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Stories and metaphors grab our attention. That fact is taught as well as demonstrated in *A Handbook for Parents and Church Workers* with its parable about “the great green greasy river” and stories of “Joe Banana” and “Amy Johnson.” William R. Parker Jr. and Susanne Meza-Keuthen share their wisdom gained from many years of experience teaching and counseling youth.

The *Handbook* full of wisdom philosophy and theology opens by discussing the need for a real relationship with God and living daily by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. General discussion of relational and cultural issues is followed by principles and specific techniques for overcoming or avoiding problems. Parker points out that many of today’s troubles come from cultural change not spiritual decline: “What we are seeing in our present culture is I think a not so gradual conversion from religious legalism to secularism.” The *Handbook* is a call to go against the flow and bring change to society by modeling genuine relationships for today’s children. “Do we really want to do things abnormally and not be like everybody else?” Parker asks. “That of course is between you and God but the decision you make will affect your children since they are looking at your ways not your words.”

In a chapter on relationships Parker notices the difference between authority and leadership. If we follow the leader we will do what he has done but if we follow his example we may do something quite different based on the same principles he used: “If I follow the great explorer’s example then I must go somewhere that neither the great explorer nor anyone else has ever been.” In this sense we don’t need our children to follow us except as we are role models of following God’s lead. He reminds readers of the need for integrity in keeping our word in respecting those we would influence and in allowing children the freedom to be themselves.

Practical areas cover topics such as study habits discipline and romance. Parker even includes a chapter on “classroom management” which is an excellent list of techniques for anyone in a teaching position. Tips include a variety of ideas from building relationships with the kids to neutralizing troublemakers and getting help with a large class.

The book unabashedly advocates being real in faith as well as in relationships. However in his zeal to avoid cliché and make his points plain Parker sometimes falls into the mistake of interrupting the flow of thought with explanation or interpretation. This tends to obscure some ideas instead of clarifying. Also the habitual shout of bold print *plus* underlining is unnecessary and distracting. Despite these minor flaws of form many parents and Christian youth workers who are willing to be real will find plenty of useful ideas in *A Handbook for Parents and Church Workers*.

DAVID GEORGE (October 6, 2008)

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