

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
February 2003

National Conference

June 26th – 28th, 2003
San Antonio

Proposed Topics

1. Celebrating Holidays: How to incorporate the holidays into real life teaching.
2. Practical Life Cycles: How to integrate individual practical life exercises into a cycle of activity. Each giving meaning to the exercises that precede and follow.
3. Real PE: Not just playing games but focusing for the child on those activities that contribute to his own well-being.
4. Nutrition: Healthy minds need healthy bodies. Helping children (and parents) to see the nutrition connection.
5. Discipline: Getting your children to say yes to right attitudes, right motivations and right actions.
6. Grace and Courage: THE two most significant words of life. Understanding their interaction changes the outcome of life for children and adults.
7. The importance of the prepared environment: One of the bedrocks and hallmarks of Montessori. And when done well gives multiple blessings and advantages.
8. How Jesus comes to your classroom: He comes in more than Bible verses and Gospel songs. Making Him welcome in all of His manifestations brings great blessings to our children.
9. Respect for the child: The bedrock of Montessori, seeing the child as God sees him.
10. Praise and worship: Children easily enter into God's presence. Creating a time and place for worship.
11. Music: The harmony of all creation expresses itself in music. Children naturally sing. This seminar will help extend their experience.
12. And more

This year, as was requested, we will add seminars that focus specifically on pre-school and elementary needs. We will have a dual track for a portion of the conference and will address such topics as: Classroom management, record keeping, hands on Bible, geography, science and writing.

If you have a topic that you would like to see addressed or that you would like to present please contact us.

The conference begins at 10:00 A.M. Thursday June 26th and runs through Saturday night.

Conference registration includes: two continental breakfasts, three luncheons, morning and afternoon breaks and Saturday evening banquet. The cost of

the conference will be \$325 (\$300 if paid by May 1st or \$275 if paid by March 1st.)

The conference will be held at the historic Crockett Hotel across from the Alamo. Lodging costs are \$98.28 (tax included) for either single or double occupancy.

The national conference is more than just a seminar. It is a time to connect with others who share your passion and vision for nurturing children. It is a time to be encouraged, stimulated and renewed for the tremendous call and opportunity that God has placed in your hands. Some of the greatest people I have met in God's kingdom have been part of The Christian Montessori Fellowship.

A Baker's Dozen

Of Montessori Benefits for the child Character Building

There is nothing more important in education than character building – not reading, not writing, not math – but character building. **Character is the ability to do what is right whether I want to or not or anyone is watching or not.** Character is trained. It IS an education all of its own. If you help establish character in a child's life what is it that he won't accomplish?

Character is the engine that joyously pulls the train of life.

And when spiritual training is added to character training the child understands that he is the steward of his own gifts and talents. The child now possesses both the motivation and the capability of achieving his God given goals.

You can frighten a child into learning, you can punish him to learn but when he becomes the steward – the captain of his own ship – he is now set on a course of joyous discovery. Is being an explorer easy? Of course not! If you want ease you stay in your living room. But if you have the challenge of a world in front of you the obstacles become part of the exciting “game of life”.

There are two main things in a Montessori environment that enhance character building. Learning to make wise choices and finishing what you start.

I'm sure you are familiar with the classic interview of the successful businessman when asked about his success.

“I owe it all to making wise choices.”

“How did you learn to make wise choices?”

“From experience.”

“And how did you get your experience?”

“From making poor choices.”

The only way to train children to make wise choices is to allow them the freedom to make choices. Most of us had a traditional education where we were not accorded the opportunity to even make choices. The problem with allowing children (and people in general) to make choices is that they might make the wrong choice. What many educators and parents don't understand is that making wrong choices is an education in itself IF you allow the child (or adult) to deal with the consequences of choice.

Unfortunately you see it all the time where parents don't want their children to have to face the consequences of their poor choices but that precisely is the real

world. Where Montessori classrooms excel is in the ability to safely make wrong choices. You are not allowing children to put themselves or others in danger but you are allowing children the ability to learn from their own experience what is a good choice.

Which brings us to the second strength of a Montessori environment – letting children finish what they start. I used the word “letting” in two senses. One is to allow the other is to make. In traditional classrooms we were not allowed to finish what we started 1. If we ran out of time or 2. If we had messed up the first time. And both of those are hindrances to developing character.

Character is exemplified by finishing what we start. And because we both allow **and** make the child finish what he starts we begin to develop character.

A significant educational difference of the Montessori philosophy is: **Learning is the constant and time is the variable.** Most of us grew up in systems where time was the constant – we had a week to learn something and then we took the test. No matter what our level of accomplishment was – 100 or 80 or 60, we moved on. Some things we never got to learn, some things we never had to learn because we moved on.

The weakness in the traditional system is we never have to confront the consequences of our actions – poor choices, failure to achieve, failure to finish. The only consequence we had to deal with was the large consequence of failing the year. And ironically character is made up of the small consequences and how we deal with

them. Most of us wouldn't consider killing somebody but gossip is an assassination as well. Scripture calls them the “little foxes”.

Let's not confuse finishing with perfectionism but learning to handle all the small details of life. When you are in an environment where you are expected (and followed through on) to finish what you start you begin to develop the foundation of real character.

The 10 P's of Ministry

6. Pain

Pain is a part of life and therefore assuredly a part of ministry. We don't have to be masochists and go looking for pain – it will find us. Proverbs shares that as surely as sparks from the fire fly upward so is man born to trouble.

The most glorious experience of life – birth - is accompanied by pain. And again the scripture tells us that the pain of travail is forgotten with the new birth for “joy comes in the morning”.

In our classrooms and schools we are giving birth – spiritual birth, emotional birth, intellectual birth. And it is accompanied by pain. If we realize that pain is part of life – and growth - we should not be taken totally by surprise. I say totally because pain when it comes will generally be a surprise. It will come when you least expect it and often from directions you don't imagine.

Thankfully most of us don't live in constant physical pain. That kind of pain belongs to another whole dimension of life. But when pain comes we need to deal with it. Physically, we sometimes can take an aspirin and move on. Other

times we need more intervention – medicine, therapy etc. And occasionally pain leads to life and death situations. So it is with the pains of ministry. Some are more severe than others. But there are at least four kinds of pains that regularly make themselves known in ministry – betrayal, failure, loss and misunderstanding. And whether we are innocent or guilty of the causes of the pain we still suffer. There is a certain kind of suffering when we are guilty and have brought it on our selves. And yet it seems that it is harder to bear pain when, Job-like, we are innocent of the causes of our pain.

Betrayal is not necessarily a very common pain in comparison to the others but enough people have suffered it in ministry to know its devastation.

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Failures, both large and small, add to the burden of pain. Loss, whether of friends or opportunities, brings its own sadness. Misunderstandings are probably the most common of pains and are the ones that need to be healed as quickly as possible before they lead to greater complications.

The challenge of pain is to not allow it to become depression, which incapacitates us but to turn pain into an instrument of God's grace and healing. Most of the pains I've suffered are redeemed by the tenderness of heart and spirit that comes when you let God exchange them for you. But even that is a painful process.

Contact us

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