

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
July – August 2005

National Conference 2006

July 27 – 29

San Antonio, Texas

Put the dates on your calendar now.

Regional Conferences

Charlotte	September 17
Ann Arbor	September 24
Chicago	October 1
San Francisco	October 8
Green Bay	October 15
Kansas City	October 29
Honolulu	January 7
Phoenix	January 21
Shreveport	January 28

Good Grief!

Charlie Brown (of Peanuts fame) is well noted for this common phrase. I'm sure we all use it at one time or another. If we stop and think about it we see it as an oxymoron. "Good" we understand but grief does not fit into that category. So why are we having this semantics lesson? To prepare you for your next "Good Grief!"

Personally, we'd all rather avoid any situation that would call out for a "good grief". But we can't avoid them – even if we are saints. Because the grief doesn't always come because of our actions.

You have chosen a marvelous profession – even more than a profession – a calling. You have chosen to nurture children. You have chosen the most tender and compassionate way of

nurturing and educating. So why should you be subject to any grief at all? That is a timeless universal question for which there is no satisfactory answer. What I can share with you are ways to turn your next "grief" into something approximating a real "good grief."

I had a wonderful young teacher who had three or four years of public school experience before she began teaching with me. It was within six or eight weeks of the start of school when she ran into her first "buzz saw" of a parent. It left her devastated and in tears. If you have any longevity in the classroom you know exactly the kind of parent I'm talking about. They let you know (in words, if not attitude) that they pay tuition, they can go elsewhere and they have certain expectations for their child (and by extension – you).

What they don't tell you (or maybe don't even know themselves) is that their expectations are unreasonable, are not in the best interest of their child and their child IS the center of the world. Have I left anything out? Oh yes, they pay your salary. You are expected to do what they want.

There is enough grief in this scenario to last a lifetime but you don't have a lifetime. You need to resolve it as quickly as possible to turn this grief into something good. The first good that will come of it is that it will drive you to prayer - for yourself, for the parent and for the child. Not that you haven't already been praying but this does focus and gives immediacy to your prayers.

The second good that comes is when you realize that you will have to educate the parent about the benefits of what you are doing (and the benefits of not doing what they are asking). You will also realize that it is good to educate all of your parents about the benefits and procedures of a Montessori education long before issues arise.

The third good that can come from this grief is the realization that no matter how good a job you do you still need to communicate that to the parents. We don't like to blow our own horns. (If we did we would be entertainers and politicians instead of teachers.) We don't send a lot of paper work home so parents have no constant way of judging the effectiveness of the education. Further, If we fail to communicate the principles, practices and philosophy of Montessori to the parents all the good that we do will be undone by well meaning but uninformed parents.

The fourth good that can come from dealing with this "grief" is that when you nurture parents they too can become normalized and develop a mindset that will want them to keep their children in your environment under your care.

The challenge for us is not to become discouraged even when we have good reason to be – which very much can be a definition of faith. Scripture says that the rain falls on the just and the unjust equally but sometimes the "unjust" rain seems to fall on us unequally. At those times you need to be sure of who called you to this wonderful ministry of nurturing His precious lambs.

The fifth good that can come from this grief is that it reminds us that Jesus was also called "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) Do we want to follow Paul's lead in Philippians 3:10? "I want to know Christ

and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings." WWJD (What would Jesus do?) is more than a bracelet abbreviation. Even as a question, it really is a good answer to begin to turn our "griefs" into hidden blessings.

Good Grief! Part 2

Don't tell me there's more! Unfortunately – yes. I'm not sure which is the hardest to bear the griefs that you don't deserve or the ones you do. At least with undeserved grief you get to hold onto a little bit of self-righteous suffering. But what happens when we do fail? How do we redeem that into goodness?

Nobody likes to be wrong. It would be wonderful if we could be perfect but the nearest that we may come to that is in how we deal with our imperfections.

Sounds like another oxymoron – our imperfections lead us to perfection. It is how we deal with our failures that allows us to redeem them.

We have four choices when faced with failures.

1. Ignore them
2. Deny them
3. Excuse them
4. Confess them and change

Acknowledging our faults and failures does not take away from our dignity, competence, professionalism or authority. It speaks to our integrity and to our commitment to the truth and what is right.

The only thing to do when you make a bad decision is to turn around and make a good decision instead of compounding the error by trying to defend it. When we handle our responsibilities with humility (It is not about us anyway) we honor God even in

our mistakes. Humility is good for the soul but not for the ego. Souls last through eternity, egos are temporal.

The Secret of Childhood

Numbers in parenthesis are page numbers from Ballentine Books edition.

Chapter 21

Pampered Children

“Another class of children living in unusual social conditions are the children of the wealthy.... Children of this kind are not attracted by the paths of a garden, the beauty of flowers, and magnificent surroundings.... If they are rich and are already satiated with elaborate toys, they rarely respond at once to the stimuli offered them.... Miss G wrote, ‘The children showed no real interest in the various materials. They passed from one object to another without lingering over any of them.... In many instances the movement of the children was aimless.... In a few days that nebulous mass of whirling particles (the disorderly children) began to take on a definite shape. They started to take interest in objects which they had originally despised as silly toys. As a result of this new interest, they began to act as independent beings.’” (143-144)

“The battle is finally won when a child finds something, some particular object, that spontaneously arouses his intense interest.” (144)

“As soon as children find something that interests them they lose their instability and learn to concentrate.” (145)

“Mlle. D. further reports: ‘...The children seemed to be too occupied with their work to carry on aimlessly as they

had done before....An atmosphere of work was created in the class. The children ... now showed the need they had for a kind of inner discipline. They concentrated their efforts on exacting tasks and experienced a real satisfaction in overcoming difficulties. These precious efforts produced an immediate result upon their characters. They became their own masters.’” (146)

“There are spiritual difficulties connected with material prosperity which explain why the words of Christ strike home in every heart: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit! ...Blessed are they who mourn!’

“But all are called and all, if they surmount their difficulties, can answer the call. The phenomenon of “conversion” thus belongs to childhood. It is a question of a rapid, and at times, almost instantaneous change that comes always from the same source. I would not be able to cite a single example of a conversion taking place without an interesting task that concentrated the child’s activities. There are wide varieties of conversions that have occurred in this way....and all have advanced together along the path of disciplined work, making progress through the outward manifestation of an inner energy which has found a means of expression.” (147)

“What is to be particularly noted in these child conversions is a psychic cure, a return to what is normal. Actually, the normal child is one who is precociously intelligent, who has learned to overcome himself and to live in peace, and who prefers a disciplined task to futile idleness. When we see a child in this light, we would more properly call his “conversion” a “normalization.” Man’s

true nature lies hidden within himself. And this nature, which was given to him at conception, must be recognized and allowed to grow.” (148)

“From the depths of his nature, the child repeatedly pardons the adult and strives to flourish despite the latter’s repressions. He is engaged in a constant struggle against forces that would submerge his normal development.” (148)

Chapter 22 **The Spiritual Preparation of the Teacher**

“The first thing required of a teacher is that he be rightly disposed for his task.” (149)

“A teacher must prepare himself interiorly by systematically studying himself so that he can tear out his most deeply rooted defects, those in fact which impede his relations with children.” (149)

“We must see ourselves as others see us.” (149)

“He must begin by studying his own defects, his own evil tendencies, rather than being excessively preoccupied with a ‘child’s tendencies,’ with the manner of ‘correcting a child’s mistakes,’ or even with ‘the effects of original sin.’” (149)

“A good teacher does not have to be entirely free from faults and weaknesses.” (149)

“We must be taught and we must be willing to accept guidance if we wish to become effective teachers.” (149)

“We can conquer our evil tendencies in two different ways...The first way is by struggling against our known defects. The second way is by repressing the outward manifestations of our evil tendencies. External conformity to accepted standards of conduct is important since it makes us reflect and become aware of our faults.” (150)

Social relationships help to preserve our moral equilibrium.” (150)

“We soon find that our individual efforts have need of the help of others.” (150)

“When we are criticized for our faults, we find it easy to excuse them. But in reality we are not defending ourselves but our mistakes”. (151)

“Teachers ... should strive to rid themselves of their basic defects composed of pride and anger.” (151)

“(Children) do not understand us, they cannot defend themselves from us and they accept whatever we tell them. They not only accept abuse, but feel guilty whenever we blame them. (151)

“A child does not understand injustice with his reason, but he senses that something is wrong and becomes depressed and deformed. A child’s unconscious reaction to the malice of thoughtlessness of adults finds expression in timidity, lying, errant behavior, crying without apparent reason, sleeplessness, and excessive fear, since he cannot grasp with his reason the cause of his depression.” (151)

“If a (child) does show some resistance (to the tyranny of adults), this will rarely

be a direct, or even intended reply to an adult's action. It will rather be a vital defense of his own psychic integrity or an unconscious reaction to oppression." (152)

"A child owes respect to his elders, but adults claim the right to judge and even to offend a child." (152)

"(A teacher) must examine himself and forgo this tyranny. He must rid his heart of pride and anger. He must learn how to humble himself and be clothed with charity." (153)

"On the other hand, this does not mean that we must completely abstain from judging a child or that we must approve of everything that he does or that we should neglect the development of his mind and feelings. Rather, a teacher should never forget that he is a teacher and that his mission is one of education." (153)

What Does Love Mean?

Out of the mouths of babes

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss" Emily - age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." Bobby - age 7

Lingering Echoes

Comments from the 2005 Conference
(You really ought to have been there!)

"It is such a blessing to gather in unity as Christians and Montessorians and discover that the two are one."
Don Barber, Newfields, NH

"Every year is like a breath of fresh air, but this year has been so uplifting from day one. I know I will leave here a better teacher from being able to attend. I cannot imagine a summer without this conference."
Mary Book, Shreveport, LA

"I have really enjoyed the input of every teacher and assistant. It reminds me of the scripture that says 'Every joint supplies'"
Wendy Meadows Spartanburg, SC

"It is wonderful to hear how important our job is."
Raquel Sweeney, Milford, NB

"It is so refreshing – like going into the atrium from the "busyness" of the classroom (or the world) into a very special place where we learn new things and are reminded of old and experience God's and each other's presence."
Carolyn Ely, Lewisville, TX

"We were blessed coming in and blessed going out! Refreshed and renewed in spirit, filled to overflowing with new ideas, creative ways to teach the children and enhance their classroom environment. I experienced the love of God and for God with my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. What joy and fun!"
Cindy Creel, Shreveport LA

“I always go back to class renewed and refreshed. When I go to the conference it is like coming home and seeing family.”
Tom Leming, Dallas, TX

“Looking for Christian Montessorians is like looking for needles in a haystack and I have found a whole bunch of needles.”
Lorrie Hiatt, Crystal Lake IL

Learning Our Lessons Well

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to 'honor thy father and thy mother' she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

Charlotte September 17
Christian Montessori School
At Lake Norman
14101 Stumptown Rd
Huntersville, NC
704-400-8150
Sonya Curry

Ann Arbor October 24
Go Like the Wind Montessori
3540 Dixboro Lane
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734-747-7422
Doug Collier

Chicago, October 1
New Beginnings Christian Montessori
151 E. Briarcliff Rd
Bolingbrook, IL 60440-3070
(630) 783-9174

Patty Stephens

San Francisco October 8
TBA

Green Bay, October 15
Creekside Christian Montessori
133 S. Superior St.
De Pere, WI 54115
920-330-0148
Lisa Barrett

Lawrence, KS October 29
Sunshine Acres Montessori
2141 Maple Lane
Lawrence, KS 66046
785-842-2223
Susan Mozykowski

Head's of Schools Seminars The Ten P's at the Heart of Management

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For more details, visit us at

www.crossmountainforum.com

Educational Principles Of Montessori 11. Self-Correcting

One of the attributes of Montessori education and materials is the superior learning that comes from self-correction. There is decidedly a different understanding of lessons when we get to discover the “right” answer instead of being told.

The principle of self-correction is very much like a jigsaw puzzle. The puzzle gives you at least three ways to determine if you are on the right track. There is the picture on the box. There is the correction of color on the piece itself. And third, there is the correction of the pieces fitting together.

Self-correction is more than pieces not fitting together. It becomes the resolving of a mystery. The reason most people hate history is that teachers have failed to put the mystery into history. Why do we not turn the TV off after 55 minutes of a program? Because we want to see how things turn out. We are caught up in the mystery. Since history is already “complete” in the sense that we know the end result, we need to find other avenues to put the mystery into play. Children’s favorite question “Why?” is not often addressed when educators are only interested in putting the “right” answers in the right boxes. The teaching of history can be changed by exploring the human element. The human element is always a mystery. Why did people do what they did? Or didn’t do what they should have? History can also be taught like a puzzle. Which piece fits where. What actions preceded other actions? What actions caused other actions. How would an alternative history look? How would the world be different if _____ (fill in the blank.)

Given, that we like mysteries so much (consider myths and legends) why do we also like fairy tales equally as much? Because we want things to be resolved satisfactorily in the end, (they lived happily ever after.) This same feeling applies to our work when we start a project. We want it to turn out satisfactorily. We want to complete it. We want to master it.

Self-correction (and having the time to self-correct) allows us this great pleasure. Self-correction is really a big “I want to do it myself.”

Membership

The ministry of the Christian Montessori Fellowship is made possible by your support. First, by you membership. Second, by your attendance at regional seminars. And third by your attendance at the national conference. Your support brings blessings to people all over the country and the world as we seek to encourage Montessorians to continue the good work they have started and to become even better in their vocation.

Your support also helps spread the good news of this way of teaching and living to many who have never considered Montessori but know that there has to be a better way to teach.

Before school gets started again in full swing will you please take the time to send in your membership for the year 2005 – 2006.

We not only need your support (and prayers) but also appreciate it deeply.

Regional Conference Cost and Registration

Seminar Fee	\$150
Early Registration (Three weeks before Seminar)	\$125
Membership discount	\$25

Name _____

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Registration may be paid by check or credit card.

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