

Days of Hope



Passionately communicating the love of God to hurting kids in a gentle way

Broken Programming By Jon Wells

Children arrive on this planet with a million questions in need of answers. *Who am I? What am I worth? How should I be treated? How should I treat others? What kind of words are best? How can I get what I want? What should I do when I am angry?* From day one, the mind of a child is learning; experimenting and developing answers for all of these questions and more.

Internalization is a simple process wherein a child observes external cues in her environment and translates those external realities into internal rules for living. Internalization is evident among all of the kids we serve in residential care. Some of our kids arrive with very poor self care; their hair is unkempt, their clothing disheveled. They don't bathe regularly and sometimes resist basic hygiene regimens. These children grew up in a place where mom and dad did not give baths, clean clothes, or comb hair. They did not teach their child that basic hygiene is important, and the child internalized some basic rules about self care that are very hard to unlearn.

Other kids enroll in residential with very distinct attitudes about drug use. Some display timid and fearful hiding tendencies. Some experience extremely low self

esteem, literally living out a self-hatred that was internalized early on. Some kids arrive with no sense of appropriate boundaries, constantly touching other people without permission. Many of the kids who have boundary issues have internalized the ugly lessons of sexual abuse. Other residents experience high levels of anxiety, having learned early on that the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place. They internalized a chaotic and dangerous environment at home and the result is a hyper vigilant survival response.

All of these youth have assimilated specific rules or beliefs about themselves and the world:

Charlie is a horrible person, an animal who deserves to be hurt.

Angel is a stupid kid, she is not cut out for school.

All women should be disrespected.

William is totally helpless; a powerless victim who cannot help himself.

Sarah is ugly- deeply repulsing.

Adult men only want sex from you.

NoShawn only gets his way when he fights, or threatens to fight.

No one is going to take care of Leanna, she cannot depend on anyone.

These are just a few of the damaging lessons learned by the kids we encounter in residential treatment centers. These internalized rules are especially dangerous because they are often considered immutable, they are commonly woven into identity, and they are subconscious.

When I identify and confront one of these internalized beliefs, a child often refuses to let them go. These immutable beliefs are set in stone; they were learned the 'hard way' by the youth who now lives them out. Asking a child to let go of these deeply held assumptions is like asking them to say the sky is not blue.

Many of these internalized lessons are integrated in to the identity of the child- they speak to who the child is. These residents have internalized messages that they are fat, stupid, lazy, ugly, worthless, powerless, or annoying. They then put action to the identity they have been given. This creates a deeply rooted self-fulfilling cycle.

One final insidious aspect about these internalized rules is that they are often subconscious- a child may not be aware that they are living out a script that they learned early on. The daily behavior of these youth is driven by these unwritten laws- and yet most of the kids haven't taken the time identify the harmful rules that they have internalized from abusive environments. They don't acknowledge the power that an internalized lesson might have over them.

The beauty of the Gospel is that it brings the authority of the Creator to challenge the broken assumptions that so many of us cling to. It gives me a balanced perspective on who I am, and shows me a healthy way to interact with others. It is a beautiful moment when a child clearly sees the broken rules he has internalized, and discovers that God does not agree with these rules. The Gospel offers something better!

I would challenge you to reflect on this universal dynamic. To parents I would ask, what is your child internalizing from his environment- what foundational truths are you weaving into her identity?

Beyond parenting, what truths did you internalize early in life? What lessons were assimilated into your internal world? Ask God and safe people to help you explore your own internalized rules. You may be surprised what you find out.

Volunteers Needed!

We are currently recruiting volunteers to help us bring a **Girls' Night Out** event to the Piney Ridge campus in Waynesville, MO. We are looking for 25 women who are willing to come and spend a few hours ministering to girls at this facility. This will be the first event of this kind that Days of Hope will provide at Piney Ridge. Already we have had a number of women express interest in participating in this incredible evening of ministry. If you are interested in volunteering, please fill out the volunteer form on our website!

www.daysofhope.net/volunteer.html



Questions Kids Ask

By Aaron Jeffers

Does God plan everything?.....

I mean everything?!"

This question was asked by a young man really having a rough time being in residential placement. My brain fumbled to offer an answer somewhere between man's free will and God's control. I felt the Holy Spirit tug at my heart that none of these theological lectures would answer this young man's question.

So I told him, "I'll have to get back to you on this one. I don't know how much of the stuff that happens to us is in God's control and how much is of our own making. But I know God has a plan for your life. See you Tuesday, bud."

Later, Jon and I discussed the young man's question. Jon asked, "Do you know what the kid's really asking?"

I nodded and said, "Uh-huh, but I want to hear *your* take."

"He's saying that if God plans everything, then why is God the author of all the bad stuff that happened to him. If God planned for that stuff to happen, that makes God the villain in his story."

Whew. Yup, Jon's right, but in my heart I'm thinking, "What in the world do you do with that?"

I'll never forget my apologetics professor in college, who taught us how to defend the truth of the Gospel. The number one hard question to answer was, "If God is so good, why do bad things happen to good people?" The week he started teaching on this question, his son tragically died in a car wreck, leaving a wife and two kids. It was just like a full-frontal assault of Satan on this man. You could see the question- *Why God?*- tattooed on all our faces for the rest of the semester.

The bitter reality is that we're all born into a foxhole. We're broken and wounded by just being in the flesh on this planet, and we have an enemy that has no mercy on women and children. Does God want people to go to hell, kids to be molested, and parents starting their children on heroin? Of course not, but it happens. This simple spiritual reality is that we all face an enemy. We also have a God who is a perfect gentleman that does not force himself upon anyone, and loves us with unfettered tenacity.

God has a plan...a rescue plan. He truly desires all men to come to repentance, but not all men do (read 1st Timothy 2:4). He's provided and paid for all of us to be completely rescued from the dominion of darkness, but we have to receive it by faith. The choice is ours, but none of us would have made that choice if it wasn't God's plan. My Old Testament professor said, "God is so sovereign (in control) that He built freewill into the system." Another aspect that many don't look at or acknowledge is that we are called to help the helpless, show mercy, live out compassion, and take a stand against evil. Edmund Burke said it well, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Maybe if more believers would respond to the pain of this world.



Guys Service
Easter 2015

Easter 2015

We had a great turnout on Easter Sunday morning at the Great Circle campus in St. James. Days of Hope provided two services, one for the boys cottages on campus and one for the girls cottages. We enjoyed worshipping together and sharing with the kids about God's plan to rescue each of us. Following the second service, Aaron and I packed up and drove down to the Meramec Wilderness Learning Ranch where we were able to spend some time with autistic kids who were attending a respite weekend at the Ranch.

What great opportunities to share the Gospel!

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Visit us Online!

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We are currently scheduling speaking engagements for the summer and fall. If you are interested in inviting one of our chaplains to come and share with your church, class, or community group, let us know!