

=THE HOLY SPIRIT=

Lesson 8

Play

INTRODUCTION: A child at play is the child rehearsing for his future life. Actually he is using his powers to prepare himself for the activities of adult life. He is unconsciously instructing and educating himself to take his place in an adult society. The girl who “plays house” is rehearsing for her role as a wife and mother. The boy who “plays store” is rehearsing for his role as a merchant. The child who “plays school” is rehearsing for his role as a teacher. Such is also the case when a girl makes doll clothes and plays with her toy iron, dishes, pots and pans, broom, sweeper, etc. The boy is doing the same thing when he plays doctor, bus driver, truck driver, construction engineer, and the many other vocations for which a boy is rehearsing when he plays. Just as a little kitten plays with a ball or a leaf in the yard in order to prepare himself to catch mice, even so does the child play in preparation for adult life.

Brother Hyles has talked about remembering when he saw his first grandchild for the first time. His daughter, a new mother, was so proud as she showed her child to Brother Hyles. He said his mind went back to the time when his daughter was a little child. She always loved dolls. Every Christmas she wanted some kind of a doll. As she cared for the doll she was preparing herself for this day, for today she has “dolls” of her own who will have a better mother because her mother played with dolls as a little girl. It is not hard for those of us who are adults to see ourselves, our actions, and our behavior as in a mirror when we look at our children. They are preparing themselves to be like us as adults.

Because play is so important in the life of a child, the choice of what he plays should be directed by the parent.

- I. EACH CHILD SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PLAYING GAMES THAT DEVELOP HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND COORDINATION. A child should have full opportunity to gratify his impulse to swing, run, jump, tumble, wrestle, swim, climb, etc. Of course, in our urbanized society this is not easy, so parents in the city must work extra hard to see to it that children have the opportunity to develop their abilities with physical exercises as they play.

Brother Hyles once saved the life of his sister because he had developed physical coordination while playing as a child. They were walking across the street together in South Bend, Indiana. A car was coming toward them which they could not see because of the sun. Brother Hyles saw it in time to jump. While he was in midair, he grabbed her and pulled her away from the car so as the car hit her she was being pulled away. This made the impact much less. She was taken to the hospital, X-rayed, and found to be in good condition all because he had learned to jump in midair and relay the ball to second base, pass the basketball as he was in the air, etc. There is no doubt that the coordination he learned, playing as a kid, saved his sister’s life. Many accidents in automobiles, boats, etc., occur because of people whose minds and muscles have not been properly coordinated through play in their youth. Often sudden emergencies paralyze a person’s ability to respond because of a lack of proper coordination which could have been developed in childhood.

- II. THE PARENT SHOULD INSIST THE CHILD PLAY GAMES THAT INVOLVE TEAMWORK. Such games would include less opportunity for individual excellence and more opportunity for the excellence of the group. The child should participate in such group games as basketball, hockey, football, baseball, tennis (doubles), etc. These develop both self-sacrifice and cooperation. They teach the child that he must work for others as others work for him. Especially is this important in the lives of children around the junior age; that is 9, 10, 11 and 12. They are taught loyalty to the team, submission to authority and respect for the law. They are taught obedience to the leader, responsibility of the individual to his teammates, etc. Esprit de corps is developed, and the child prepares himself to work with others in life. This is so necessary. Here he learns to rejoice when others do well, he learns to be responsible for the sufferings of others, he learns fairness and justice, unselfishness and cooperation.

There are other ways the child can learn this. Being a member of the debating team, a dramatic club, or any other unit that requires cooperation and teamwork can accomplish the same purpose. This is very vital in proper rearing of children.

This is one reason for the rise of the hippie movement in the recent generation. It is one of the reasons for the increase in anarchy and the decrease in patriotism that is so prevalent.

- III. THE PARENT SHOULD DIRECT THE CHILD IN PLAYING THINGS THAT PREPARE HIM FOR FUTURE LIFE. This has already been mentioned, but much stress should be given child's "play-work," so work can continue to be play and can become enjoyment to him instead of drudgery.

Brother and Mrs. Hyles' daughters had play irons, cooking sets, dishes, pianos, etc. When one daughter was a little girl, she would ask for a "pian-la-la," which was the term she used for piano. She would bang away. She became an accomplished pianist. She was rehearsing before she ever owned a real piano.

Another daughter became a cheerleader at our Christian high school. She was working as part of a team, and she was being taught to work for the team as well as to cheer for others. This transferred in later years to adult life, giving her an unselfishness that is so necessary to a full life.

Boys can have toy lawn mowers, hammers, saws, etc., that will prepare them for useful service as adults and teach them to enjoy work.

- IV. THE WISE PARENT WILL NOT ONLY TEACH THE CHILD TO PLAY, BUT WILL TEACH HIM TO DEVELOP QUALITIES FOUND IN THE PROFESSION WHICH HE IS IMITATING. For example, when a boy "plays soldier" this presents the parent with a tremendous opportunity to teach him qualities about a soldier that he should possess, such as obedience, cleanliness, courage, chivalry, punctuality, good health habits, etc. The girl who "plays nurse" should be taught that all nurses should have compassion, promptness, good health, courtesy, kindness, and other qualities. Not only is the girl rehearsing for future activities, but she is rehearsing qualities that she should possess as an adult. When a little boy "plays policeman," the wise parent will seize upon this opportunity to teach the boy that he should possess the conduct demanded for a good policeman—courage, neatness, politeness, etiquette, strength, helpfulness, chivalry, etc.

- V. THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PLAY THINGS THAT ARE EDUCATIONAL. Games that teach life and the way to live it are desirable. When Brother Hyles was a boy he loved baseball. He followed every baseball team in the country, both major league and minor league. He became acquainted with geography. He even learned mathematics as he would figure out batting averages. He knew where the New York Yankees were. He found on the map the locations of such cities as Cincinnati, St. Louis, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Cleveland, and Boston because he was interested in the athletic teams. In his play, he was being educated.

- VI. A CHILD SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PERSERVERE AS HE PLAYS. A child who is building a model airplane should finish it. A child who is building a model car should be required to complete the project. The little girl who is playing like she is ironing must be required to iron all the doll clothes. The girl who washes the dishes must wash them well and finish the job before she quits. Hence, perseverance and determination are taught, and both are so vital in the training of a child to become a successful adult.

One of Brother Hyles' daughters is left-handed. Because of this, many tasks were not easy for her. Especially was this true when she was a little girl. Over and over again Brother Hyles would teach her that though a task was hard she should finish it. Even in playing a game she learned perseverance. One of the reasons she is such a lovely lady now is because in many areas she played right as a little child.

- VII. THE PARENT SHOULD BE WHAT HE OUGHT TO BE AND WHAT HE WISHES HIS CHILD TO BE. Remember, the child plays what the parents do. A little boy asked his daddy for a quarter so he could play store. The daddy gave him only a penny, whereupon the little boy replied, "Dad, it's store I want to play, not church!"

Once Brother Hyles was driving down the street and saw a little crowd of kids gathered around. A little girl was up on top of a box “preaching.” She was screaming, “You’d better get born again or you’re going to Hell when you die!” Then she took a little dog, raised her right hand and said, “In obedience to the command of our Lord and Master, and upon a public profession of your faith in Him, I baptize you, my \_\_\_\_\_ [Brother Hyles was not sure whether it was a brother or sister], in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Then she took the dog and put it down in a little puddle of muddy water and raised it up. Do you know why she did that? She did it because she had seen her pastor do it through the years. Children play what we do. Let us be careful what we do. The child whose father smokes will no doubt have candy cigarettes. How sad! Remember, they play what they see us do.

- VIII. THE PARENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO HAVE A BUSY SCHEDULE OF PLAY. This is especially helpful as the child grows to adolescence. It is so important that he have a busy schedule. It certainly helps in keeping him clean and pure. When Brother Hyles was a boy, he would go to school, come home and throw his paper route, then hit the vacant lot. He would play baseball, basketball, or football according to the season until it was just too dark to see any more. Then he would go home, eat, and go to bed. Because he was busy and played games that were active, he kept out of a lot of trouble. Proper play is a powerful factor in making for purity. Without the legitimate vent of strenuous expression, the development of the energy of passion finds vent in bad forms of expression.
- IX. THE PARENT SHOULD SET TIMES OF PLAY. In other words, he should schedule playtimes. This is teaching the child through games to rehearse for life by having a schedule and being disciplined.

CONCLUSION: Because play prepares the child for the work of life, play should be encouraged and directed by the parent. Care should be taken to disallow any games that lead to vices. Brother Hyles always outlawed the use of dice in the playing of a game. Sometimes this has been a problem. However, in playing a game like Monopoly, we used a spinner with numbers from one to twelve. This is just as acceptable as dice and does not familiarize the children with something that has been so long associated with gambling. Brother and Mrs. Hyles also led the children not to play games that are played with cards so they would not become accustomed to playing cards. The question comes up often concerning a child’s playing with guns. Brother Hyles always allowed his children to play with guns. He taught them the proper use of guns and discouraged their pointing them at people and carelessly shooting. He explained that a gun is for protection, for hunting, etc. Of course, each parent will have to use his own discretion and God-given wisdom as he makes such arbitrary decisions.