

ACSI Parent Page: Let Your "Lifesong" Sing!

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As a young child, he had no idea he would spend 30 years as an early childhood teacher. Tom loves teaching, listening to, and singing Christian praise music; gardening; reading biographies and children's literature; riding bicycles; and vacationing in Lakeside, Ohio.

A contemporary praise and worship song entitled "Lifesong" (Casting Crowns 2005) reminds me about what should be my daily focus as a Christian. Whether it be in the role of husband, father, teacher, or friend, I pray, "May the words I say and the things I do make my lifesong sing [and] bring a smile to You." In other words, may everything I do and everything I say—may my whole life—be a song of worship to you, O Lord!

For years, I have been concerned about the pace that we daily subject ourselves to and the effect of that fast pace on our Christian walk. Can we slow down a bit? Is this possible? Is it a worthwhile endeavor? If so, why and how? In a book first published in 1981, David Elkind (2001), a noted psychologist, gave a serious warning about the effects on our children when we or our society hurries them through the natural stages of human development. I was very concerned about my role as a first time parent at that time, and I was determined not to let these negative effects creep into the life of our first child and our family. After our family increased by two more children and after Dr. James Dobson and Gary Bauer also gave warnings (1990), there was much more written about the negative effects on our children as we race through life, if we are not careful.

The following are among the characteristics of our twenty-first-century lifestyles:

- busy jobs with long workdays (many times, for moms and dads)
- divorce at all-time high levels (resulting in many single-parent households)
- high rates of inflation and unemployment
- lack of close contact with extended families (partially because of our highly mobile society)
- high emphasis on competitive organized sports at a young age
- explicit and potentially harmful media offerings available 24-7

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So then, how can we combat these lifestyle situations and societal pressures? Obviously, there are not simple solutions to complicated issues. However, consider committing to some activities, such as the following, that may safeguard your family against some of these negative influences:

- pray with your family to scale down, to simplify, and to slow down in order to spend more time together
- allow your children to participate in youth sports but on a more limited basis
- focus your family's efforts on more lifelong pursuits, such as bowling, biking, tennis, and hiking
- eat together at a table in the kitchen or dining room, away from the TV
- or weekend trips
- cook together, work together, read together, play together, and pray together
- allow certain days that have "nothing" on the schedule so that you can read, relax, and talk
- have game nights for playing board games, cards, or some other type of game
- plan times for the whole family to hike together, bike together, go camping—get outside and get away from technology
- plan family vacations together, even very simple overnights

In *The Hurried Child* (2001, 213), David Elkind prescribes play as an antidote to hurrying. Maybe we need to remind ourselves daily about the importance of play in a child's (and adult's) life. We need those times without an agenda—time to play, to laugh, and to slow down and have fun together. As Casting Crowns sings, "I want to sign Your name to the end of this day, knowing that my heart was true." Let's slow down and let our lives demonstrate our love for our Lord by the way we spend our time with our families. In other words, let's sing a "lifesong" that brings a smile to our God. After all, if our children are our treasures, then let's show that we value them by giving the gift of time.

I urge you...to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

—Romans 12:1, NIV

References:

- Dobson, James C., and Gary L. Bauer. 1990. *Children at Risk: The Battle For the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.
- Elkind, David. 2001.
- The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press. Sound Recording Casting Crowns. 2005.
- Lifesong. Lyrics by Mark Hall. On the album Lifesong. Franklin, TN: Reunion Records.