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Presentation Transcript
Spiritual Growth and Human Development 01
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We have learned recently that our mission is to make disciples, and that disciples are drawn to healthy congregations. Why would God send new people to sick environments? He doesn't. Disciples are drawn to healthy congregations. Now, spiritually healthy congregations, we've learned, are in part composed of spiritually fervent people. Right? You've heard us talk about that. Spiritually fervent people have a strong relationship with God. That's what makes them spiritually fervent. And all adults who are spiritually fervent start out as children, don't they? Rearing our children with a relationship with God in mind helps fulfill the reason for our calling. Does that make sense? If God calls people to healthy congregations, and healthy congregations are made up of spiritually fervent people, and all people start out as kids, then, if we help our kids have a relationship with God early on, then we're contributing to congregations that are spiritually strong – congregations that God would like to call people to. So, when we talk about our children, and helping them develop a relationship with God, that really is one aspect of doing the work of God, isn't it? For that reason?

Now, I believe that God has provided us – and “us” would be parents, pastors, youth workers, congregational members – a powerful way to help children develop a relationship with God – a powerful way to help them develop – to grow spiritually. And I believe that those of us in the Church have overlooked that powerful way almost completely, except perhaps in the area of Bible education. So, let's understand that.

I have two grandchildren, and I was impressed with something about them when I went to visit them. I thought about what would it take for them to develop a relationship with God? What could I say to them that might help? And I thought of saying, “Fast and pray.” When you're looking at an eleven-month-old child, and you say, “Fast and pray,” to them, does that help? No. No, it doesn't. Another thing I thought about saying was, “Study your Bible.” Well, that wouldn't work either, would it? How about something a little more simple like, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?” No. That's not going to work either, is it? Why? Why won't that work? Well, one answer would be: They're not ready for that stuff yet. It's real hard to read your Bible when you can't read. Or when you can't talk, you can't pray yet. Or do unto others as you would have them do unto you: that doesn't work when you don't

know how you would like people to do unto you yet. Or even understand cause and effect so much.

So they're not ready. So how are they going to get ready to have a relationship with God? What is the process by which they will mature to the point that they can develop a relationship with God? Now, I used the word "mature." So when we say they're not ready, they're not mature enough yet to have a relationship with God.

Let's notice something about living things. Let's turn to Mark 4, and verse 26.

Mk. 4:26 – *And he said, The kingdom....* Have we heard this scripture before? Yes, we have. *He said, The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night, and rise up by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, and he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.* So this scripture tells us that the Church is like a plant. "See the lilies, how they grow." How do they grow? Well, they grow in stages, don't they? Plants grow in stages. You don't see the leaf sticking up out of the ground first. You see the little bit of the head of the stalk. You don't see a lily popping up out of the ground. You see first a little sprout. All living things grow in stages. A butterfly lays eggs, and caterpillars hatch out of the eggs, and then there's either a cocoon or a pupa, and then there's a butterfly finally – stages of growth and development. Humans develop in stages too, don't they?

So what are the **stages of human development**. Well, I dug out one of my textbooks, and I found the stages of human development – and different experts vary a little bit on how they kind of divide it up. But the book I looked at said that infancy was from birth to two years old. And toddler-hood was from two to four. And early school age was from four to six. And middle school age was from six to twelve. (Now that's an unfortunate use of terms, because we have middle school now. It's not talking about middle school. It's just a division that they've made between kids in the six to twelve year old category.) And they said next after that was early adolescence – twelve to eighteen. And then later adolescence was eighteen to twenty-two. So there are six stages right there.

Now, when we got back from our visit to the grandbabies – or while we were there, actually, visiting them – they wanted to crawl around and explore. They weren't thinking about the nature of God. They weren't studying their Bibles. They weren't praying and fasting. They were crawling around and exploring things, touching things and looking at things. But mostly they wanted to put things in their mouth. And mostly the thing they wanted to put in their mouth was the red fuzz off the carpet. Well, everybody knows that's what babies do. Now, we don't want to do that. We're not crawling around on the floor after church putting fuzz in our mouth. Been there, done that. We did that when we were between infancy and two years old. That is an example of development and a developmental stage. They go through a stage where they explore their environment. And one of the ways they do it is they try to put everything in their mouth, or touch their tongue to it – you know, the end of the dog's cold nose – they want to lick that. They want to squeeze their food and feel the texture of it. And they want to put everything in their mouth. So the environment is explored thoroughly. And they go through that in a stage.

And while we were out there, I was on the couch and my grandson, Ethan, crawled up to the couch and he wanted to get up. So I lifted him up, and then he crawled up on me up on the back of the couch – so he could look out the window. He was watching the dog, the birds, cars go by, and he was just enthralled with this. And you could just feel the energy coursing through his little body when he's trying to climb up there. So when I was out there in California, visiting my grandson, he crawled up on me and you could just feel the energy that he was expending to get up there. And I watched him. He was lying on his belly, and he reached up on this crib thing, which would be, for you and me, about as high as the top of that piano, and he pulled himself up to about his knees with one arm, and then he managed to stand up. Think about doing that fifty times, because that's about how many times he did that in a couple hours time – up and down and around, and more carpet fuzz, and back up, and like that. So incredible energy is expended at each stage to learn the things that we're supposed to be learning at that stage.

Okay, let's back track a little bit and recap here. Humans develop in stages. Each stage is characterized by new development and learning. Learning occurs according to their development. What is actually happening is, when we're born, we're blank sheets brain-wise. And we have just enough brain there to learn the stuff we need, and no more. But after we've developed that, then we're capable of learning up to the next stage and so our brain develops more. And then we jump to the next one after that. So each stage of development lays the groundwork for what's to be learned in the next one. Right?

Now, if you don't learn what you're supposed to learn at some level, then you're not able to learn what comes after that very well. So, they talk about developmental crises in each stage. And the crisis is around the knowledge that you have to learn in each stage in order to progress.

So humans develop in stages. Each stage is characterized by new development and learning. And learning occurs according to development. And then incredible energy is expended to learn what we're able to learn at each stage.

So what can we learn about helping young people – or infants. Let's start at the beginning – from newborn to two years old. Knowing what we've learned here, what can we learn about helping young people develop a relationship with God from these four points?

Well, okay, here comes the point. It's always good when the speaker has a point. Right? Here it is. If we help children learn the things of God as they are developmentally ready, *then a relationship with God can happen naturally* – easily – just like plants grow when you scatter seed on the ground. It happens all by itself. It's like trying to teach a four-year-old calculus. If you're not ready for it, you're not ready for it! But there *are* things that people can learn from birth to two about God that prepares them for reading the book of Isaiah later.

So the point is, if we teach people – or kids – the things of God as they're ready for them, then children and young people will expend incredible energy to learn them by themselves – naturally. There's that *“all by itself” principle*.

Why is that again? Well, because all our energy, as humans, is going to hard-wired learning drives that *God* has built into us. Now, we talk about God a lot. We're worshippers of God. We're supposed to respect God. So this is an area where we can get aligned with what He's already designed, and use it to help our children develop a relationship with God. Ethan and Peyton don't care about the nature of God. They just want to taste those little balls of carpet fuzz. They don't care because they can't care. They're not ready for that yet. They haven't learned the stuff they need to learn to do that. But there is something that they can learn between birth and two.

When will they be ready for the nature of God? Well, I think that comes to different people at different times. I heard about a young lady at the Feast this year that was baptized when she was fourteen. I've met other people that were baptized in their 80s. We're all on our own schedule – or maybe God's schedule. Okay. But we are going to answer the question: What can kids learn between birth and two about God?

If we were to turn to another page in the text book that I used to prepare this presentation, you would see a section on the developmental tasks of infancy – from birth to two. And one of those tasks would be *sensory motor development*. They get up and fall down a lot. I notice the kindergartners on the playground are always falling down, because their bodies haven't grown up to fit their heads yet. So they're top heavy. Infants are even more that way. And you see Ethan reaching out, and he's trying to navigate his hand over to that carpet fuzz. And once he gets it, he's real happy. Then it starts going toward his mouth. But it took a while to figure out how to make that happen too. So they learn to do that. And their brain is being wired to do that while they're practicing this stuff – over and over again they learn that.

Second thing they learn is they begin to learn *cause and effect*. When I cry, Mom comes. And lots of other things as well. They also start developing *emotions*. When babies are first born, they do not have the brain wiring to have emotions yet. They have enough to cry when they're hungry, wet, unhappy, but other emotions, right in the beginning, are not there. So they begin to develop the ability to have and express emotions.

I remember years ago in the Church, when they started getting angry, we thought that that was just them becoming carnal. But actually, what that was, was them being able to have the emotion of anger, or frustration, or whatever.

And the fourth thing they say that happens to kids between birth and two years old is they *develop a sense of connection to their environment*. They're in this warm human dark place, and then they come out into this whole big world, and they're trying to find where they fit in that. Putting the fuzz in the mouth is kind of a metaphor for becoming at one with your environment actually. So that's what's going on with them at that age.

So far, so good. But still no answer to the question, "What can an infant learn about God?" Well, would you be surprised if I told you that *the most important thing that we ever learn about God we learn as infants*? I'm going to prove it to you. Let's look in Hebrews 11, and verse 6.

Heb. 11:6 – We call this the faith chapter, right? *But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God* – so this is talking about when a person first comes to God, right? – when we start to develop a relationship with God. *...it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* So we must trust that God exists, and that He is a caring, generous, good God who's going to take care of us, and reward us if we seek Him. If you think about what the book of Hebrews is all about, Paul is telling these people that they're spiritually immature, that by now they ought to know more than they know, and that this is square one of Christianity. And they need to go back to square one and start believing and trusting in God. Okay, let's keep that in our mind – that *trust in God is square one.*

I want to take you to another place for a minute in your mind. Let's go to prison. Prison is filled with all kinds of psychopaths. And our prison population in the United States – and I think, western culture generally – is the most tested, analyzed, examined group of people in the world. They're trying to figure out why they're like they are so they can keep other people from going there. And they used to think that the one thing that they all had in common was low self-esteem. But then they tested them and found out that they have high self-esteem. There are no guilty people in prison. They were all messed around by lawyers, or somebody framed them, or whatever. They all think they're great! So what is the one thing that they have in common. Well, after all this research, they found out the one thing that all anti-social people have is the inability to trust. Somehow, they never learned that in the first two years of their life, because that's when babies learn that. That's when that is put in us.

Humans develop the ability to trust in the first two years of life. The way the text book talks about that is as a crisis. They see the developmental crisis of infancy is between trust and mistrust. If a child does not learn to trust in the first two years of life, then life is never going to be the same for that person, because trust can be learned easily and naturally – all by itself – at that age. And if a person is able to accomplish that task as an infant, then life is going to be a good thing. And the world is going to be a good place. And when things happen that are bad, we keep trying because we believe that there is goodness in the world.

We talk about “as the twig is bent, so grows the tree.” That's a metaphor that people used to use to talk about how when something happens to us in our youth, or our infancy, then we're kind of formed that way for the rest of our life. You bend the twig, the tree's going to grow crooked. Well, medical science has given us a whole new way to think about this. When we're infants, experiences – things that happen to us – are stored in our brain and the way that happens is our brain actually wires them into memory. There are all these millions of miles of neurons – that's the gray matter – they're all little nerves – and they make Electro-chemical connections to one another. And that network is what forms the memory. And that happens in the place in the brain where memory is saved. And the more the same type of thing happens, the less apt the brain is to add to that memory. If a baby cries and Mom comes for fifty times in a row, there's all that idea of cause and effect, and “when I cry, Mom comes,” is wired into the brain. But after a while, it stops doing it because it's already there. The brain says, “Oh, I've seen this before.” And pretty soon it even begins to predict, “If I cry, Mom will come.” Now that's the mechanics of it, and they leave out the thing about the spirit – you know, the spirit in man. But they do know that that gray matter up there isn't just Jell-O. It has a

purpose. And they know what the purpose is. It's to help with this memory thing we're talking about.

So the brain is predisposed to early memory. It likes that. It goes to that first. And that's a two-edged sword. If early memory is positive, then babies are predisposed to have a trusting outlook on life. And if it's not positive, then they're predisposed to be distrusting. You know, "Mom never comes when I cry, so why bother." Or "she only comes sometimes, so I better cry really hard." And both of those are distrusting outlooks on life.

If parents are inconsistent, neglectful or abusive to an infant, then an infant's early experience of caregivers is going to be distrustful. And when these children turn into teenagers and adults, you can treat them with kindness a hundred times in a row, and if you blow it on one-hundred-and-one – you get a little short with them, or don't meet their expectations – they're going to believe, "See, I knew that you were like that. I knew you were not to be trusted." Because that's how they look at life – because of what happened to them a long time ago. They don't trust easily because early memory carries more weight than what has happened to us five minutes ago.

Now, in the first two years of life, a child is hard-wired to trust parents. It *wants* to have that experience. And if it doesn't meet that experience, then that child is wounded for life, and it is a true crisis and a tragedy. It becomes hard to believe that God is going to take care of us.

I used to work in a teen offender's detention facility while I was doing an internship, and every week I would sit in on a group with some of them. And you could tell ahead of time what they were going to talk about, because it was the same thing week after week. They would talk about how they were always being mistreated by everybody, and how bad life was, and how everybody was trying to keep them down, and how manipulative and deceitful their girlfriends were, and how rotten the cops were, and blah, blah, blah. And that was their outlook on life. And that happens when you're not allowed to learn to trust in the first years of life. Most of those kids were abused. And a lot of them were neglected. And because they thought about life that way, for them, it had come true. They made sure it came true.

On the positive side, when an infant is cared for with love, and is cared for consistently, they learn to be positive and trustful of caregivers. And then that's carried through life as well.

Now, nobody has been 100% abused, or 100% cared for. I saw my grandson and my granddaughter fall down and bonk their heads at least a dozen times while I was there. You can't protect them from everything. And no parents are mind readers, so we don't always know what's going on with them. So, we're talking about a continuum here – not total perfection, or total failure. We all are on that continuum somewhere. And we all have good things going for us, and we all have problems, too, in this area. But some people tend to be more on the trustful side than others, and we know why that's true now. It has to do with our experience in life between birth and two.

Now, when a child's mind is developed enough to conceptualize God, the trustful feeling that is felt toward parents get transferred to Him, and to teachers, and to the police, and to the drill

instructor in the Marine Corps. It just comes with you. And it's attached to every authority figure that you meet. And if you're distrustful, then it goes that way as well.

Let's turn to Psalm 22, verse 9.

Ps. 22:9 – *But you are He who took Me out of the womb; you made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.* There. Wow! Isn't that what we just talked about? It is, isn't it? *I was cast upon you from birth. From My mother's womb you have been My God. Be not far from Me, for trouble is near: For there is none to help.* You'll notice, in verse 9, the "Me" is capitalized. This is actually a prophecy about Christ. It's what He said to Himself when He was on the cross – "when trouble is near," there was none to help Him." And isn't it interesting that even Jesus, as a human, needed a good, faithful caregiver so that He could have faith and trust God, to sacrifice Himself, and save all of us? Very interesting. So the Bible does connect trust of mother with trust of God. And when we get tough, we do go back to early memory for our view of life and of God. It's the way God made us. And if we have good parenting, then we are naturally inclined to trust God, and if not, then it's going to be a struggle all of our lives. In the world we live in, most of us don't get everything we need when we're little. If we are fortunate enough to have good caregivers, we're certainly going to get slammed when we go to school. It's the kind of world where it's not perfect.

So, if you think about that, what we come to is that being a parent is the most awesome responsibility that God has entrusted to us, because we have the ability, as parents, to influence the lifelong walk of those that are our children. We can make it easy for them, or we can make it hard. Sometimes people do that – are neglectful, or abusive – out of ignorance, or because they were abused before themselves, and don't know any better way, or are still angry from it. But whatever the reason, it still affects the child.

Let's go back and think about our developmental crisis in infancy between trust and mistrust. The book says that the process of developing trust in infancy is called **mutuality**. What is mutuality? Well, it's characterized, in my mind, by a mother and an infant gazing into each other's eyes. She's loving the child and the child is absorbing that love. Babies come from the womb looking for a face to lock in on. They tell us that they can't see that well, but they can see well enough to find Mom's eyes – and Dad's. You know, "Ah, there's Mom. That feels so good! And she loves me and we're together..." The point of it all is that human beings are relational creatures, and the connection between people – between mother and child, or father and child – that mutuality that occurs between them – is what creates the trust. You can pick any area of health. When kids are surrounded by familiar, friendly faces, their heart rates go down. They have less arrhythmia. There's less ADHD. Just pick anything – anything. Less asthma. We are relational beings. And when we have connection – mutuality – with others, especially early, then that's good for us, because we're designed for that. They found a five-year-old, who had been kept in a basement all his life, and they did a brain scan on him. He'd been completely deprived of relational interactions – and his brain was smaller. The ventricles inside the gray matter were much bigger. There was a lot more empty space there. He was very delayed developmentally. He was sickly. A major component to human mental, emotional and physical health is mutuality of relationship. If we want our children to know

how to trust God later, then we must help them learn to trust us in infancy. And we do that through this process that's called mutuality.

I've talked to many people over the years who tell me that they have trouble having faith in God – you know, that He'll find them a job, or that He'll find them somebody to marry, or whatever. And they've likened that, in most cases, to how their parents treated them as children. One lady even said, "I have trouble with the concept of God as the Father because of the way my father treated me." Very sad. And when that happens in infancy, it's very hard to overcome. If a child is loved and cared for, then trust becomes a part of that outlook.

We have a little girl at our school right now who was brought into this country by her parents, and then her father and uncle were put in prison, and her mother died. I'm not sure how. And they were part of a porn and prostitution ring. And she's seen all kinds of pornography and the poor child has no sense of boundaries. She doesn't know when she should shake your hand or give you a hug. We don't know what's happened to her. And her [adoptive] mother, who's also a school counselor, came to my school to talk about her. And she asked me, "Well, what chance is there that she can overcome all of this?" She's very manipulative. She told her mother – her adopted mother – if she didn't give her her way, she would accuse her of abusing her sexually. So she's very smart. She's learned how to manipulate to survive in her world. And that's one good thing that she has going for her. We figured if she learned how to be manipulative, we can also teach her how *not* to. But we don't know.... The big IF, as I was telling her mother – adoptive mother – is how early did all this start? The earlier it starts, the less chance that child will have of becoming a normal human being. There are all kinds of statistics on that. If you take a child out of that kind of environment before one year old, the chances are real good. It goes to 50-50 by two, 75 per cent, I think, by three, and if they're not out of there by four, we don't know. So we don't know if she started at three or four, or whatever, with all of this. We just don't know. But that is going to be a lot of the story right there.

Have you ever people talk about the abundance mentality? That comes from trusting. And the scarcity mentality? The ability to think that there's lots for everybody. That's when that's developed. You know, we talk in our seminar – our evangelism seminar – about dipping fish out of somebody else's aquarium – stealing people from other churches. And we do that because we don't think there are any people out there that God wants to call, so if we're going to grow, we're going to have to get them from the limited supply that exists. And that's not really what the Bible says, is it? It says, "the fields are white with harvest." There's way more people than we can *ever* ever reach! So do we trust God, and believe that, and act that way? Or do we just think, "Well, you know, we better not go visit any of the other churches around here, because our congregation might get smaller, and maybe if we invite some of them to come to a picnic, some them might start coming with us." And we get that sort of a tight, self-centered, "we might lose," or "we could win" kind of an attitude. That's not what God's all about. And it's not what trust is all about. God will take care of us. And there are more people out there to be called than we can ever reach.

I was talking to a man not too long ago who said he was fed up with organized religion. And he said that he'd noticed that every time somebody left one of the big groups – and he was

talking about ministers – they all form their own little empire. And I imagine, with a few notable exceptions – that’s probably true. Where does the empire-building deal come from? Well, the desire to control your environment is a trust issue. If you don’t feel safe, you want to control things so you do! That’s where that all comes from. And so empire building.... It’s goes back to that. We’re predisposed to be that way when we’re infants. But if we already trust, then control isn’t that much of an issue.

Okay, let’s get down to where the rubber meets the road. How do we help build trust in infants? Well, there are three things that we can talk about. One is *nurturing*. That’s both physical and emotional. Taking care of them, changing them, feeding them, dressing them – all that stuff. And then there’s the emotional side of it – playing with them, the eye contact, touching, hugging, playing and doing things with them. All the things that we do to communicate love at every level. That’s nurturing.

The second thing we can do is to *provide structure*. Human beings need structure. It was very helpful to you to know what time church was supposed to start today, wasn’t it? You probably don’t think about it, because it’s always at the same time, but that’s good, because you know to be here when it starts. So you don’t miss things. A lot of people, when they hear the word structure and boundaries, they think about trying to control your kid. And the idea behind that is so you won’t be inconvenienced as a parent. But the kind of structure we’re talking about – the kind of structure that helps children develop – is designed with two things in mind. One is to protect them – keep them safe. And the other aspect is that the structure allows for them to explore in whatever way they need to. I love to watch the way my daughter and her husband deal with our grandchildren. They’re twins. He gets up in the morning. He goes downstairs. He gets them up. Of course, they’re already in the crib bouncing around with their knuckles on the top rung. And he changes them. He dresses them. And then he sticks them in the highchair and he sticks a bottle in their mouth. And while they’re drinking that, he gets their pabulum, or whatever they feed them, and they eat that. And you can see them, while their sitting in their chair waiting to be fed, their feet are kind of bouncing up and down, and they’re rocking, and they know what’s coming! No big surprises all day long – except when they fall down and bonk their head. And I can just see how absolutely helpful it was to them to know what’s coming next. The day is structured. Part of the structure – after we have breakfast, Dad goes up and starts taking his shower, because he’s got to go to work. And Mom comes down, and she kind of takes over – kind of like tag team. Tag, you’re it. He goes upstairs. She comes down. Then she starts cleaning them up from breakfast, and getting them ready for the day. And they...maybe they watch a *Baby Einstein* video, and they like that. And then after that, they’re out of their highchair, and so all the barriers go up so they can’t climb the stairs, or go in the kitchen and touch the hot stove, and they’re allowed to crawl around and explore their environment. They do that for a couple of hours. I think almost every day includes a trip in the car somewhere – where they get to do something they haven’t done before. So they’re exposed to some new stuff – all that brain wiring starts happening for them – or continues to happen. So structure, schedule. No surprises. Needs met. All that creates safety and security and trust, right? When they’re bouncing up and down in that highchair, they’re trusting they’re going to be fed shortly. And that expectation is met every day.

And the third and final thing that we can talk about – and this is sort of a psycho-babble word, but it's something I know I never thought about when I was a young parent – a word that sounds a little bit challenging, but isn't really that challenging at all – *attunement*. What is that? Well, they have learned that parents who are attuned to their children's inner state do a lot better with these other two things than most people. An example that I heard that really kind of snapped it into focus for me was the concept of here's this infant, he's made great effort. It's hard for him to crawl, because he hasn't learned to do that too well. And he's just finally picked up the piece of red carpet fuzz. All his effort is working on getting that carpet fuzz in his mouth. And all of a sudden Mom or Dad comes up and grabs him, and yanks him up and sticks him in a highchair. You know, talk about a whip saw! That happens when adults are not attuned to our children – to where they are – their mental state and what they're thinking about, how they're feeling. People who have the ability to do that are really, really good parents.

Now what do we call that in Bible talk? We call that the love of God – where we think about the things of others more than we think about our own stuff. And the ability to understand what other people are going through. So, very important – these three things: the nurturing, structure and attunement. Those are the things that we can talk about in our language today to show how children can be helped to develop trust between birth and two, and that gets translated into a relationship with God easily and naturally at some point down the road. A child learns that so easily between birth and two because it's hard-wired into them. And if you haven't learned it, when you're 25 it's very difficult to learn. It's not impossible, but it's very much harder. So the point of the presentation is at each of these stages there's something that can connect to God that's learned very easily at each age, and if we help our children learn those things at those ages, it just happens all by itself.

If you think about the next stage – toddler-hood – two to four – or early school age – four to six, or six to twelve, or twelve to eighteen, or eighteen to twenty-two, what are young people able to learn about God *easily* at each of those stages? Do you know? Do you know what they are? How would pastors, parents and congregations contribute to each child in the congregation? If you think about each of those ages.... When you're an infant most of your connection is with Mom and Dad. And so it's very hard for people in the congregation to have a direct effect on an infant, because we're not the main caregivers. But as those children start getting older, we start seeing more of them at church, don't we? And they're able to interact with us in a way that they weren't before. And so we become a part of their lives too, don't we? And pretty soon the congregation becomes a part of their thinking and their experience. And what do they get from a congregation? Is it the things that they need at whatever age they're at to help them? Well, we've only had time to cover one of these stages, but there's something important that can be learned at each one of them. And as time goes by, we are going to take time to explore each stage of human development. And we're going to go beyond the list that we talk about today into the adult stages too. You see, all of us are in a stage of development right now, and will be until the day we die. And so what has God hard-wired into all of us that we can learn easily and naturally? Well, it's there, but we need to learn about it so we can help ourselves – and others – to grow spiritually.