



The Blessing of Ashley

Ashley Verlage, a normal toddler, found herself diagnosed with Primary Pulmonary Hypertension at the tender age of three. An oxygen tank became her constant companion, yet never seemed to limit the life that she and her family lived. Ashley played with her sister, became an avid reader, took piano lessons, rode her bike, was an honor student at school, attended church with her family and even went tobogganing! Her life was lived with great enthusiasm.

Near the end of her life, Ashley went to church in a stroller because walking around became tiresome. She greeted people, attended Sunday School with her classmates and always got caught up with her friends. Ashley never saw life as a burden and did not express anger at her condition. She simply lived her life the way she thought Jesus would want her to.

At the age of seven, Ashley asked Christ into her life and her faith encouraged her parents and those around her. She would have dreams of heaven and tell her family about the flowers and the peace that she saw there. She even stated the night before dying, that she was not afraid to die.

Finally, at the age of nine, after a trip to Mexico, Ashley fainted one day as she got ready to go to the doctor's. She never woke up. At that moment, her Mom felt surrounded by a cloud of peace. There was no panic, no screaming, just a sense that God was taking Ashley and that He was very present with the rest of the family. Immediately, friends from the church came and began to walk with them through this grief. There have been days of crying and a sense of great loss, but Ashley's life continues to speak volumes. Ashley demonstrated happiness in spite of limitations, acceptance, peace, great perseverance and a sense of "do not feel sorry for me." Her family is influenced every day by her heritage, her influence and the memories she joyfully left behind.

Ashley's Mom, Johanne, when asked how people within children's ministry can be of assistance and support, encouraged us to treat handicapped children as normal as their handicap will allow. Include these children in activities and in discussions. Ashley's disease did not affect her thinking processes and she brought unique contributions to many conversations. Above all, do not let tubes and unusual medical equipment stop you from getting to know the little person behind it all. Allow children like Ashley to be a blessing to your ministry.

HOW TO DRUG PROOF YOUR KIDS

"How to Drug Proof Your Kids" is an education, prevention and intervention program developed by Glenn Williams of Focus on the Family Australia. It is a seminar designed to equip parents with the tools and knowledge they need to steer their children away from the harmful use of drugs. Facilitators are now being trained to provide this innovative program to schools, community groups and churches. For more information, contact:

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Sex?!

Carol Wiebe, Unionville Alliance Church, Unionville, ON



We have to deal with sexual issues in children's ministries? Well, we need to be prepared! Children have this knack of asking delicate questions at indelicate times and then, as our boys and girls mature earlier and earlier, they need answers from God's point of view.

A new series, "Learning About Sex," takes an age-appropriate approach to discussing sex with children. Titles include:

- Why Boys and Girls are Different** (ages 3 – 5) – Carol Greene
- Where Do Babies Come From?** (ages 6 – 8) – Ruth Hummel
- How You are Changing** (ages 8 – 11) – Jane Graver
- Sex and the New You** (ages 11 – 14) – Rich Bimler
- Love, Sex and God** (ages 14+) – Bill Ameiss, Jane Graver
- How to Talk Confidently with Your Child about Sex** (parents) – Lenore Buth

Today, our boys and girls are also receiving information on alternative lifestyles through the media, their peers and the educational system. New Direction for Life Ministries is a Christian website designed to assist youth who may be struggling or who may have friends who struggle with same sex attraction. This website, www.freetobeme.com, offers perspective, direction and support.

Coping for Kids

Marilyn Rempel, Harvest Hills Alliance Church, Calgary, AB

Children are often the forgotten mourners. However, anyone who is old enough to love is old enough to mourn the loss of a loved one.

Coping for Kids is a peer support group that creates a safe place where bereaved children can mourn together and can share feelings and memories of the loved one they have lost through death. The group provides information, encouragement, support, understanding and compassion. The agenda includes fun and laughter, and, of course, snacks.

Coping for Kids meets once a week over eight weeks. The children take advantage of opportunities to verbalize their grief and participate in creative activities that help them mourn constructively and naturally.

Coping for Kids is a ministry of Coping Bereavement Support Groups of Ontario, an organization devoted to providing hope and help to mourners in Jesus' name.

For more information, contact: Coping - Phone: 877-554-4498 or 519-650-0852 Fax: 519-650-1949
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