

**Theme: Values**

**Question:** What value do you hold most important? How do you try to live that value?

Teens and parents in conversation

# HomeWord



Volume 7, Number 1



## Teen Talk

by Abby Stoddard

There are many values I hold dear, but love is my most cherished value. Love is the strongest human emotion and can do unbelievable things.

There are many different kinds of love—love for family, love for friends, love for material things, love for a spouse, and so on. All are good and wonderful, and bring happiness to others. Love ties the world together. Even the smallest bit of love, like a friendly

**Love is my most cherished value.**

smile, can make someone feel important. I think that Jesus' law of love, Love your neighbor as yourself, is equally important. Every human being is made in God's own image, which means each person has the ability to love and to be loved by others. No one can be robbed of this ability. The sick, the disabled, the dying, and the healthy all have the power to love and be loved.

Jesus is the ultimate love giver, and he taught others how to love. I try to follow the Scripture teachings about loving your neighbor; when I follow even the smallest rule, or try just a little bit, I feel enlightened.


Love is also a great guide for decision making. When I am not sure what decision is best, or which way to go, I try to determine which choice is most loving to others and to myself. I get a better perspective on who is affected by this decision, and how it will impact the future.

In my Christian Living class, we did a project on abortion. When I first started the project, I thought I was pro-choice. However, as I listened to the points my teacher brought up in class and after a lot of reflection, I decided that I am pro-life. My teacher kept saying that love is one of the only things you can depend on to remain constant when you are making decisions. I came to the conclusion that there is no way Jesus would promote abortion and that the choice of life is always right.

God's love is the ultimate love. When I make a bad decision or sin, I am left with a sinking feeling in my stomach. Even when it's hard or when I do not think it will help, I pray and talk to God. My theology teacher at school tells us that when ▼

## Parent Talk

by Kat Hodapp



I know that I have read a profound book when certain stories or symbols continue to resonate within me months after I have finished it. Recently, I read *Everyday Sacred*, by Sue Bender, and as the seasons change, I find myself reflecting again on the central symbol of her book—gratitude.

In the Buddhist tradition, there is the cherished old story of the begging bowl. Each day, a monk would go out with nothing more than an empty bowl in his hands. Whatever was placed in his bowl would be his nourishment for the day. Whatever he received, no matter how little or how great, he received with gratitude.

Do I start each morning with open hands, an open mind, and an open heart? Do I recognize the simple gifts that grace my life? Is my attitude one of gratitude?

In Japanese, the name given to the begging bowl is *oryoki*, meaning "just enough." What a contrast to the echo of "more, more, more" that surrounds us in our materialistic world!

The color-coded calendar of family activities and my cluttered, paper-strewn office challenge me to remember the simplicity of the begging bowl.

My life may be busy, even crazy at times. Yet, in the middle of the busyness, I can be grateful for the gift of time. I know there are many time management techniques, systems, and approaches that advocate planning. They can be helpful tools and are necessary for many people. I can schedule and plan with the best of them, but I don't find the gift in the *moments I capture* in the car, when I can really listen to Ellie tell me about her love of music theater. I can give my undivided attention to Anna as she recounts volleyball practice, play by play. I can ask Joseph questions about his day in first grade and the activities in Spanish class. I can affirm my husband for spending countless hours transforming our yard into something beautiful. Those moments translate into a steady storied stream of connection, which I certainly reverence and name as gift. ▼

**Is my attitude one of gratitude?**

## Teen Talk *continued*

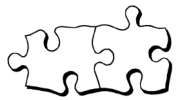
we choose not to love, we turn away from God. I try to turn back to God with prayer. She also tells us that God's love is unconditional. God will always take us back.

Recently, we participated in the sacrament of Reconciliation at school. Afterward, I felt like a great burden had been lifted from my shoulders. Since then, I have tried to make all my decisions loving; it is not as hard

as you may think. The rewards are tremendous, and love always breeds more love.

You can always depend on love. Love endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and love never fails.

*Abby Stoddard is beginning her sophomore year at Pius X High School, in Milwaukee.*



## On Bowls



A bowl, whatever its shape, is open. Open for possibilities.

### Story of Three Bowls

I heard a story about three bowls.

The first bowl is inverted, upside down, so that nothing can go into it. Anything poured into this bowl spills off.

The second bowl is right-side up, but stained and cracked and filled with debris. Anything put into this bowl gets polluted by the residue or leaks out through the cracks.

The third bowl is clean. Without cracks or holes, this bowl represents a state of mind ready to receive and hold whatever is poured into it.

Sometimes I am that first bowl, so busy being "productive" that I don't notice when the very thing I want presents itself. Sometimes I am the second bowl, with such a fierce judging voice that focuses on what's *not* working that I'm unable to see or appreciate all the things that are going well.

And sometimes, wonderful times, I am the third bowl, able to be present and absorbed in what I am doing, whatever it is.

(Sue Bender, *Everyday Sacred: A Woman's Journey Home* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], pages 12–13. Copyright © 1995 by Sue Bender. Permission applied for.)

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Write to *HomeWord*, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320  
E-mail: [lkehrwald@smp.org](mailto:lkehrwald@smp.org); phone: 800-533-8095

## Parent Talk *continued*

Simple joys can be extraordinary nourishment for the day. Listening to music. Writing in a journal. Taking a walk in the brisk, cool evening. Baking an apple pie. Petting a scruffy dog or purring cat. Burning a cinnamon spice candle. Nourishing one's soul does not have to be expensive. Time and time again, I comprehend how less is more! The begging bowl reminds me to be grateful for those ordinary, simple gifts.

The monk who carried the bowl truly trusted God to provide for his needs. While I outstretch my "bowl" each day, others are doing the same. We are called to be the hands and voice of Christ to others. And so I am aware of how my words and actions can nourish the people I encounter each day.



## On Kindness

What does it take to be kind to one another?

In school, I was a magnet for sharp arrows of "teasing." I responded by withdrawing into myself, many times crying silently. Some of those cruel remarks remain with me to this day. How can you prepare for a sudden caustic comment or subtle insult? You can't. The burden is on the other person, the one whose unkindness cuts and wounds, to refrain from causing pain to you.

Not so long ago, I had the chance to right an old wrong. I had hurt a young man whom I dated in high school, broken his heart, and my callousness had remained with me for years. I didn't know where he was, or where he lived, until I bought a computer and launched myself onto the Internet. I found my friend's address, and gathered all my courage; I wrote to him and apologized, explaining some of the background circumstances. Several weeks went by, and I had given up on his reply. Then, the phone rang . . . We have now enjoyed our renewed friendship for three years. His wife is a lovely person, and I carry on a regular correspondence with her as well.

As I gaze at the begging bowl, I see the image that represents what I am so grateful for—the circles of family, friends, and faith that nurture, nourish, and challenge me. The round eucharistic bread and cup that we share each Sunday remind me that all are blessed at the great feast of life. *Oryoki*. Just enough.

*Kat Hodapp, a development editor at Saint Mary's Press and theology teacher at Mercy Academy, lives and thrives in Louisville with her husband of fifteen years, Jerry, and three children, Ellie, Anna, and Joseph, who are constant reminders of God's grace!*

—Barbara Poole, *HomeWord* contributor