

Life in the Middle Years

Summary Points - Visit 2 - Chapters 3 & 4

1. You know that old saying: “You are what you eat.”? Well, equally true is this fact: “You are what you think.” What we put into our mind affects the chemistry of our brain and as parents, what you put into your children’s mind affects the chemistry and construction of their brain, which in turn impacts their thought-life and emotions.
2. The words and expressions you gained from your parents, and the diet of words your children hear from you, will significantly contribute to the shaping of their thought-life and can produce memories that hide in the shadows of their mind.
3. In the field of neuro-science, it has been long suspected and now confirmed that the moral quality of our words will profoundly and deeply impact the higher learning centers of a child’s brain. This in turn, influences the child’s relational perceptions—not just how they see other people (siblings, parents, friends) but how they view themselves.
4. A life-giving home environment is a lifestyle, cultivated by parents that promote the life-giving character of God, while actively avoiding language, attitudes and behaviors that assault or detract from God’s character.
5. True Christ followers have a dual residency—a temporary, earthly one, and an eternal residence in the City of God. Having a dual residency also means that our life is continually being challenged by the influences of two opposite and competing cultures—the culture of life and the culture of death.
6. Virtue and vice are contrasting life and death concepts. Virtuous words have value, communicate worth and potential, and promote beauty and life, because they are connected back to life. Vice words promote failure, corruption and defeat, because they are connected back to death.
7. Vice and vice words are the opposite of virtue. They are common words that flow out of the culture of death and sow discouragement, failure, corruption and death. They are accusatory words and speak of a person as they are, not as they can be. So instead of pointing children in the direction of life, death words shackle children to the culture of death.
8. When parents draw their vocabulary from the culture of death, they are reinforcing in the mind of the child, the validity of the death symbols. Death messages are validated in the mind of the child, and from one child the message is passed to a sibling.
9. The human brain! It is not only the most complex organ in the human body, but it is also the most complex structure of creation. The brain consists of a network of 100 billion uniquely suited nerve cells called neurons.
10. The growth of each neuron is tied to the repetition of experience and this can play to our advantage or disadvantage, depending on the type of the stimuli received through the five senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight.
11. Incoming sensory data travels across a network of neurons to the cerebral cortex where it is translated into meaningful information. However, on its way to the cortex, the data passes through the Thalamus region of the brain where the sensory message is cloned into a second message.

12. The Amygdala detects and responds to threats by separating threats into specific categories and subcategories, including physical threats.
13. The Amygdala also scans sensory messages for anything that can hurt us emotionally and will respond to emotional threats as if it were a physical threat.
14. Amygdala can also search the memory for similar pain inducing triggers associate with humiliation, rejection, feelings of inadequacy, feelings of shame, not being accepted, not able to achieve, or not fitting in intellectually or socially.
15. The chemicals that are used to protect us from physical harm, as in the case of the snake in the pathway, can become toxic when the Amygdala calls for protecting us from reliving a hurtful memory.
16. Embedded within the nature of death are death words. They injure children, even if no intent to cause injury is present. Words that belittle, berate, shame, insult, humiliate, threaten or attack the dignity of a child become the property of the child's memory.
17. Emotional memories have a shelf life. Replaying the bad memory keeps the toxic thoughts alive, and the brain chemistry has to continually respond to it.
18. Life words that flow out of a life-giving home environment not only calm the mind, they create protective barriers and bring a type of organized harmony to the emotions and intellect, while reducing the toxic influence of stress-filled memories.