

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Jesus declared, "Thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes ... No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ... Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
Matthew 11:25-30

It would be easy to read these words of Jesus as asserting that we are all born with an intuitive knowledge of God, and that learning a particular theology or religious tradition is at best a waste of time and at worst serves to mar our innocence and make us arrogant and prejudiced. Children, especially, often do have deep experiences of the presence of God, and insights into God's nature, which may be violated by those who try to impose on them a glib or narrow formulation of religious truth. We can all probably cite examples of young children, uneducated adults, or mentally disabled persons who had a truer and purer understanding of God's ways than many educated churchgoers and not a few ordained clergy.

Paul, however, in today's Epistle, warns us that natural intuitions of God's ways are not adequate, any more than a fine and learned knowledge of the Law is adequate. Neither one will overcome our built-in self-destructiveness and hostility to God's work in our lives, our fatal tendency to work against what we love most. The danger of intuitive or "natural" religion is a kind of sentimental complacency; but the dangers of narrow and arrogant sectarianism and religious pride are greater, and we must avoid them like the plague as we seek, in humility and awe, to train our children in faith. It is our job to open to them a *story*: the story of God's dealings with his people, so they may find a framework through which to understand and name and respond to the powerful sensations of God's pull on their lives. We believe that Jesus Christ lived out that story for us, and brought it to its happy ending in a way that we could never do. In knowing him, we have a norm, a model, and a test for our own intuitions of God's ways; in loving him, we learn to know and love God.

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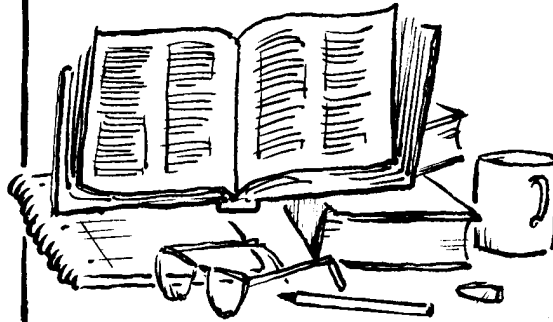
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Jesus said, "Thank you, Father, that anyone who is trying to love you can know you."

MATTHEW 11:25



Jesus said that anybody can study the Bible till they know a lot about God. But the important thing is to love God.



None of us can perfectly love and obey God. It's too hard, and we aren't good enough.

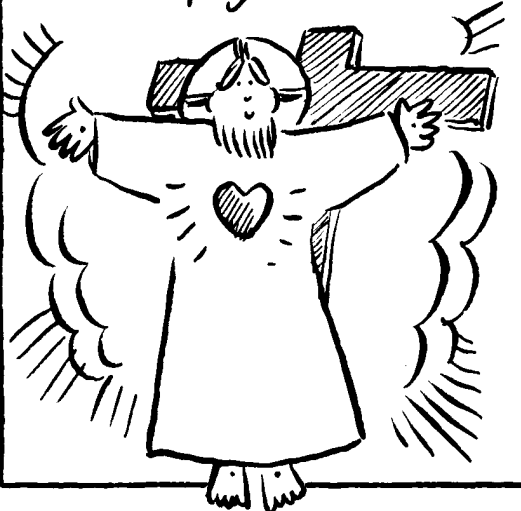


ROMANS 7:15-25

Jesus did what we could not do. He obeyed God for us.



Jesus said, "Come to me when it gets hard, and I will help you."



When we are really trying to obey God, we find out how hard that is. It's easy to get discouraged. But Jesus said, "Come to me, and I will help you."

Think of someone who helps you when you are tired and feel like giving up. Draw a picture of that person helping you. How is that person like Jesus? How does Jesus help you?

