

# Wise parent nourishes each child's gifts

SOME things you remember for years. I remember a statement made by the author Raymond Rogers in his book, "Coming Into Existence." Rogers speaks of what he believes is the greatest gift that a parent can give their child.

"The parent talks of what the child is, what he can be and what he might become. 'I can see that you're going to be able to get along with all kinds of people.' He mentions possible goals and directions. 'Can you imagine how it would be to fly an airplane? How would you like to be able to cure people who are sick?'"

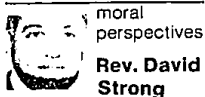
The role of the parent is to help a child or young adult find himself, discover his or her special talents.

THE WORST thing parents can do is to push their child to get a job simply to earn money or become successful.

I meet many people who hate the work that they do. Others, I believe, are truly successful because they find their work meaningful and satisfying.

A person afraid of not being able to earn a living, or of not fitting into a secure niche in society, may never find out what he or she is gifted to do.

In religious terms, we believe that each person is unique. God plants in each a unique set of gifts and interests. A parent gradually realizes that



moral perspectives  
**Rev. David Strong**

each child is different. The most important thing we can do is encourage, support, indeed help to call forth this unique person.

THERE IS A great debate going on about the quality of education in

America. Part of the motivation for this examination of education is our concern about competition from Japan.

Would we want our children to be educated in the same manner as children in Japan? My answer is no. Education needs to be practical. The religious core of education, however, is the belief that each person is a unique creation of God. Our task is to encourage, feed and develop the capacity to be productive in our unique way.

My wife teaches special education. Her students are below normal IQ.

She sees each of these students as unique. She tries to draw out their full, although limited, capacity. Often she tells me of the strengths of her limited students.

Her goal is twofold — to help each develop as much as is possible of their unique self and to prepare them for a job. She works hard at both goals.

GOD GIVES us gifts. Some can be seen clearly. A few are buried. All of our gifts need to be identified and encouraged. Too often, even in the church, we ask someone to do

a job, not because we want to encourage that person's unique contribution, but because we want the job done. This is wrong.

In Elizabeth O'Connor's words, we need to see ourselves as co-creators with God. God plants a unique set of abilities and interests in each of us. We are here to discover these gifts and make them bloom.

I HAVE TWO sons on the verge of deciding their life work. I am tempted to think of such things as security, high wage, getting a job as soon as possible. These are not worthy goals.

They may or may not be the secondary results of each son's discovery of their gifts and talents.

We must hold true to these values. It is easy to be caught up in society's success mode and forget about gifts, talents and the key to personal happiness.

God gives us our unique gifts. We are to discover and nourish them. Then we are to give these to others. This is the true source of happiness.

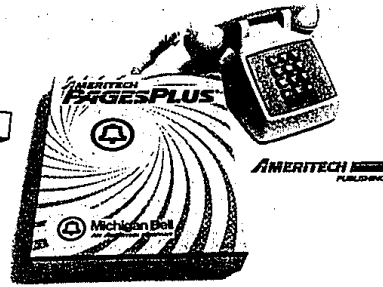
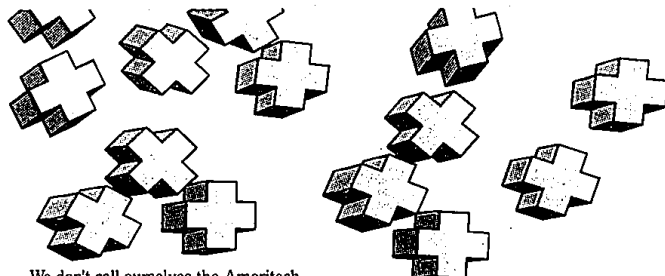
The Rev. David T. Strong is pastor of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, Livonia.

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