

Chapter 14 Let's get practical

Our pine tree children or spouses can show us what is really important – people, sincerity of character, the present moment, time with family and friends, and contentment ... The rest of us can be so driven and task-orientated that we forget that our pine trees are a gift to save us from a senseless, flustered existence.

I once met a very driven, hard-working lady who said that one day she would like to be the best at sitting. She wanted to sit like nobody else could. She wanted people to call out, impressed, "My word, but she *can* sit!" I was amused at first, but the more I thought about it, the more enlightening it became. Many of us can't sit still. Pine trees can! When we are forced to sit down beside them when they need to sit, we may accidentally learn how to do it, too!

Below is a list of things that will test our patience when raising a little pine tree (or living with an adult one!) and which can challenge our view on life. Mark the things that are thorns in your side but also the things that you would be able to learn if you allowed yourself to "inhale the pine fragrance." Write them down.

- They talk or move very slowly.
- They rest a lot.
- They don't mind mistakes.
- They don't expect that much from themselves.
- They don't talk about what's in their hearts, therefore I feel removed from them.
- They think about things for a long time before making a decision.
- They refuse to say they are sorry if they aren't truly sorry.
- They don't drive themselves, except when they really want to do something.
- They can be so predictable and boring.
- They don't pursue titles and qualifications.
- They don't listen to well-known people just because they are "somebody".

This exercise is meant to help you use your energy effectively when raising a pine tree. Make a list of your complaints about your pine tree below. Look at the first two lists you made earlier in your "cultivation plan". Be specific. Avoid generic statements such as "he doesn't listen" or "she has an attitude".

Now write down a scripture verse next to each of these which is a transgression of a spiritual law, for example quote from the Ten Commandments that your child may not lie or from Galatians 5:22 that your child may not be unfriendly. Circle each one that indicates a character flaw that nobody should have. Cross out each one that is not a transgression of a spiritual law or a character flaw. Lastly cross out each one that you are also guilty of. Now you have a list that is worthwhile working on! Don't be surprised if there is almost nothing left on the list. This means that you are finally seeing in black and white that you are trying to change your pine tree's character under the auspices of discipline. This is not wise.

When we spend a lot of time on things that don't affect our child's spiritual or moral growth, we are quite possibly spending too little time on the things that really matter. Write down your new plan below:

I will nag less about ...

I will rather focus my energy on ...

Read the Book of James – it is only a few pages long.

Which admirable characteristics listed here do your pine tree have?

When you or other people criticise your pine tree for being passive, lacking ambition, or any other so-called "flaw", you can remind yourself and your pine tree of these.