



Small Talk: Learning From My Children About What Matters Most

Amy Julia Becker

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Almost every day, one of Amy Julia’s children says something or asks something that prompts her to think more carefully: “Why Mommy crying?” (Marilee, when the family learned a young boy had died of cancer); “Booful, Mommy” (“Beautiful, Mommy,” as Penny proclaimed just as Amy Julia was looking in the mirror and critiquing her post-pregnancy body in her head); “What lasting mean?” (William, when he heard a song in church about God being an everlasting God). These conversations deepen her relationships with her children, but they also deepen and refine her own understanding of what she believes, why she believes it, and what she hopes to pass along to the next generation.

Small Talk is a narrative based upon these conversations. It is not a parenting guide. It does not offer prescriptive lessons about how to talk with children. Rather, it tells stories based upon the questions and statements Amy Julia’s children have made about the things that make life good (such as love, kindness, beauty, laughter, and friendship), the things that make life hard (such as death, failure, and tragedy), and what we believe (such as prayer, God, and miracles).

Amy Julia explores three parts—body, mind, spirit—as she moves in rough chronological order through the basic questions her kids asked when they were very young to the intellectual and then spiritual questions of later childhood. It invites other parents into these same conversations, with their children, with God, and with themselves. Moving from humorous exchanges to profound questions to heart-wrenching moments, Amy Julia encourages parents to ask themselves—and to talk with their children about—what matters most.

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