

# Reel Appeal: The Spiritual Parent's Movie Companion

## Discussion Guide #7

Based on Principle #7:  
Create a Flexible Structure  
from "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting"  
by Mimi Doe

and

"Babe" (1995)  
Screenplay by George Miller & Chris Noonan, Book by Dick King-Smith.

### Creating Structure for Your Babes

Written by Jennifer Marquis & Edited by Mimi Doe

Note: This film is rated G. We at SpiritualParenting.com recommend viewing this movie with your child.

Farmer Hoggett, caretaker and father figure to Babe, the "sheepdog pig," is a marvelous example of a parent who combines healthy order and routine with electrifying openness and spontaneity. He is a classic illustration of Principle 7, which reminds us that structure and flexibility are equal partners in spiritual parenting.

#### **I. Creating a Flexible Structure** (page 233, "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting")

***Rex: "It was my mistake. I was trying to loosen things up a little, but no, today proves that it doesn't work. From now on we'll need to respect the rules. To each creature its own destiny. Every animal in its proper place. And a pig's proper place is under the old cot, not in the barn. And absolutely never in the house. Is that understood?"***

***Babe: "Yes, sir!"***

***Rex: "And I forbid you to consort with or talk with that duck. Ever. Do I make myself clear?"***

***Babe: "Uh, what's consort?"***

Flexible structures allow our children's lives to run more smoothly and help our children to feel safe, handle change, take risks, trust and welcome others, and accept the personal responsibility that comes along with their freedoms. Mimi encourages us to think about ways we can create even more freedom for our kids, and cautions us against excessive criticism and rigidity.

#### **ASK YOUR KIDS...**

- **Why does Farmer Hoggett only allow dogs and cats in the house at first?**
- **What makes him change his mind?**

## **II. Staying Open to God's Plan** (page 235, "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting")

***Mrs. Hoggett: "If it's not a duck that thinks it's a rooster, it's a pig that thinks it's a dog!"***

Make sure there is room in your hectic schedule for God. Add spiritual habits, prayers, quiet times, and playful moments -- whenever and wherever you can. God's plan for your family is bigger than you can imagine.

### **ASK YOUR KIDS...**

- **Why does Babe become Fly's son?**
- **What makes Farmer Hoggett think that Babe would be a good sheepdog?**

## **III. Take a Break from Pressures & Distractions** (page 240, "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting")

***Babe: "That's against the rules. Only dogs and cats are allowed in the house."***

***Duck: "I like that rule. It's a good rule. But this is bigger than the rules! This is life and death!"***

***Babe: "It is?"***

***Duck: "Follow me!"***

Taking a break can mean doing something fun and spontaneous, or it can mean crafting personal time to be alone and rest. In whatever way you or your child choose to recharge, make sure you allow yourselves these periodic and necessary pleasures.

### **ASK YOUR KIDS...**

- **What does Farmer Hoggett do when Babe gets sick at the end of the movie?**
- **What is Mrs. Hoggett doing when she sees the sheepdog trials on TV?**

## **IV. Help Your Child Make Choices** (page 244, "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting")

***Fly: "All right, how did you do it?"***

***Babe: "I asked them and they did it. I just asked them nicely."***

***Fly: "We don't ask sheep, dear; we tell them what to do."***

***Babe: "But I did, Mom. They were really friendly."***

Kids need opportunities to make personal choices, but we shouldn't overwhelm them with too many options, and we must also honor our own needs. Mimi encourages us to help our children make the connection between value systems and creative solutions, such as asking God for help when they face challenging situations.

### **ASK YOUR KIDS...**

- **How did Farmer Hoggett know his sheep were being stolen?**
- **Why did Rex end up chained up outside?**

## **V. Parents' Insight Building Exercises: For Personal or Group Use**

(p. 250, "10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting")

Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Mentally walk through a day in your life, moment by moment, hour by hour, experiencing your children as you go along. Now, walk through a fantasy day, where everything happens exactly the way you wish it to, moment by moment, hour by hour, experiencing your children as you go along. How do you look? What do you say? What do you do differently? When you are finished, continue breathing deeply for twenty minutes or so and see if any new insights appear.

### **Parents' Check-in Questions**

As a child, when did I feel most secure?

Have I been spontaneous today? Have I been ordered today?

What are my three top values? Am I living them?

What was the last risk I took?

Am I overscheduled? What would I love to let go?

Am I open to input from my children?

### **Childrens' Check-in Questions**

What rules or agreements would you like to establish in our house?

What worries would you like to turn over to God today?

Do you ever feel pressured to do what other kids do? When?

### **Children's Guided Journey**

Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and think of a time you felt free. Relaxed. Happy. Completely carefree. Imagine you are back there now, feeling it all over again. When you are ready, open your eyes, and if you want to tell me about it, I'd love to listen.

### **Affirmations for Parents**

I give all worries to God.

I am filled with good humor.

I am open to change.

My family is a living spiritual experiment.

Childhood is a unique and magical time of life.

### **Affirmations for Children**

I am free.

I trust my inner signals.

I am safe within my family.

I can try new things.

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