

The Lowedown

A monthly newsletter from the life and ministry of Dave & Jennifer Lowe

August 2010

Bracing for the Future

Not long ago, we heard the words that no parent wants to hear from their dentist.

“Your kids need braces.”

When we broke the news to our kids, understandably, they were not very happy.

I can sympathize with them. I remember having braces when I was in junior high and high school and it was horrible. It was bad enough that I had all of this exposed metal in my mouth, but the orthodontist told me I had to wear these little rubber bands that went from my top teeth to my bottom teeth. I couldn't figure out what they were supposed to accomplish other than getting me to keep my mouth shut! Maybe it was a directive from my parents!

The orthodontist also gave me this contraption that he called “head gear.” It was basically a big metal bar that connected to the braces in the back of my upper teeth and attached to a strap that wrapped around the back top of my head. It looked kind of like an old school football helmet, with that bar sticking out in front to protect the kicker's face.

The purpose of the “head gear” was to put tension on the upper jaw, pulling it back to correct an overbite. The orthodontist instructed me to wear this thing “at all times”, including when I was at school.

“No Way!” That's where I drew the line. I remember one person from

school who wore a “head gear” and it permanently ostracized her from the rest of society. It was like having leprosy or some nasty skin rash. If you've seen the movie “Diary of a Wimpy Kid”, wearing a “head gear” at school was equivalent to having the “Cheese Touch”. I wore it to bed and that was it.

During my freshman year of high school the inside of my mouth got so cut up from wearing braces during wrestling season that we referred to the inside of my lips as “meatloaf.”

One day, my dad asked the orthodontist if he could finish what he needed to do without the braces. The doctor agreed to take the braces off if I would wear a retainer every night.

It seemed like a good trade, so I enthusiastically agreed.

When the doctor took the braces off, I had nice straight teeth. Man I looked good! At that point, I was glad that I had invested over 2 years in braces. At some point though, I stopped wearing the retainer every night. It just didn't seem completely necessary. I didn't see the point.

One day, years later, I came across that retainer. When I put it in my mouth, I realized that it didn't quite fit anymore. It turns out that my teeth had shifted. Slowly, they were drifting back to the state they were in before I had braces.

The concept of braces is simple: you put a wire around the teeth and slowly tighten the wire to straighten and align them. Once they're aligned, you wear a retainer in order to keep the teeth from drifting back to their crooked state.

It seems to me that spiritual disciplines are a lot like braces. In my

heart, I'm prone to sin and wander from what's right and what's true. I read God's word, pray and practice other disciplines in order to stay on the right path.

God's Word transforms me and helps align me to Him and His purposes. So spiritual disciplines are like braces in some ways.

And it turns out, that once I stop applying these disciplines to my life, I'm prone to wander back to my sinful, selfish state,

just as my teeth, without that retainer, will slowly drift back to being crooked and unaligned.

So when I question the purpose of reading my Bible, praying and meditating, I think about braces. The benefit may not be immediately apparent, but it's the end goal that motivates me—to become more like Jesus.

Now if I could just think of a way to help my 9 year old boys to see the “benefit” of braces now. Because at this point, the motivation that “you'll look good for the ladies” isn't quite working. I'm guessing though that by the time they get their braces removed, they'll have a much greater appreciation for “the ladies”!

Please pray for our kids and us to be constantly “aligned” to God's purposes!



Jacob—4th grade



Dave—wrestling, freshman year



Joshua—4th grade