



part 1 of 2—

Soar

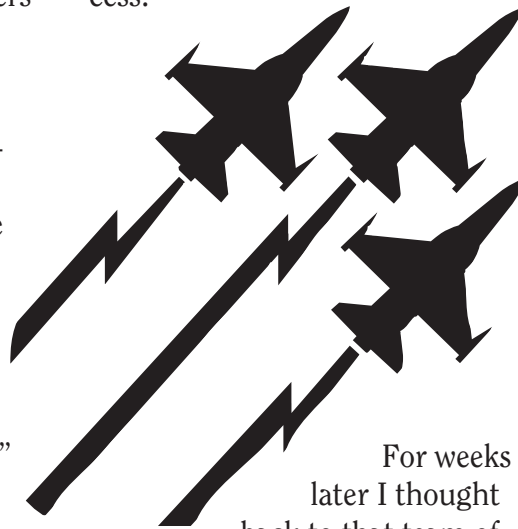
by *Natalie Rogge*
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Have you ever wanted to experience the feeling of being in control in the cockpit of a plane, soaring high above land, free from the limitations of gravity? The ability to soar is a beautiful thing. I have yet to meet someone who prefers nosedives!

Soaring Snowbirds

As I sat on the edge of a cement barricade in the Toronto Harbour this past summer, the concept of beauty in soaring became ever so real to me. The rest of the world did not really matter for that half hour as I focused my eyes on the sky above. The "Snowbirds" were in town for their annual air show feature. That afternoon the sky was like an empty canvas as the Snowbirds worked together in team to make the blue sky come alive above me. They drew pictures, they criss-crossed, they separated, widened, came together, swooped, climbed, and soared. Over and over my thoughts went to the fact that if one of the members was out of sync ever so slightly, devastation could quickly result. That day I gained a whole

new appreciation for the team approach with which the Snowbirds flew. Their ability to soar was not only breathtaking, but it kept me asking myself how they could possibly fly so close to one another with such skill and success.



For weeks later I thought back to that team of competent pilots. Each

one in their own right was a leader. As they moved so gracefully, the members continuously changed positions as some came forward to take the lead and others dropped behind in the grouping. Whatever shape the formation took on, it was evident that, together, they were a team. Each one was just as important as the other. They had varying levels of training and years of flying

experience, but that didn't seem to matter when they took to the skies. What mattered most was that they did not take their eyes off the course, not even for a second. They relied on one another to be in their planned places, exactly on time, with just the right altitude and attitude.

Soaring in Faith

How true this is of you and me in the world we live in as children's workers. Our years of experience are often different, our job descriptions and titles, or lack thereof, really have little to do with our desired output as a team. What is the output? Raising up a generation who will soar in their Christian faith for years to come. Children who will grow up to stand firm on the truths of God's Word and live by godly principles and values. We desire more than young lives who can repeat Bible stories knowing the names of all the players. We believe that Scripture can penetrate the heart and bring about life change, but it must be more than mere words that roll off the tongue in the memory verse competition showdown.

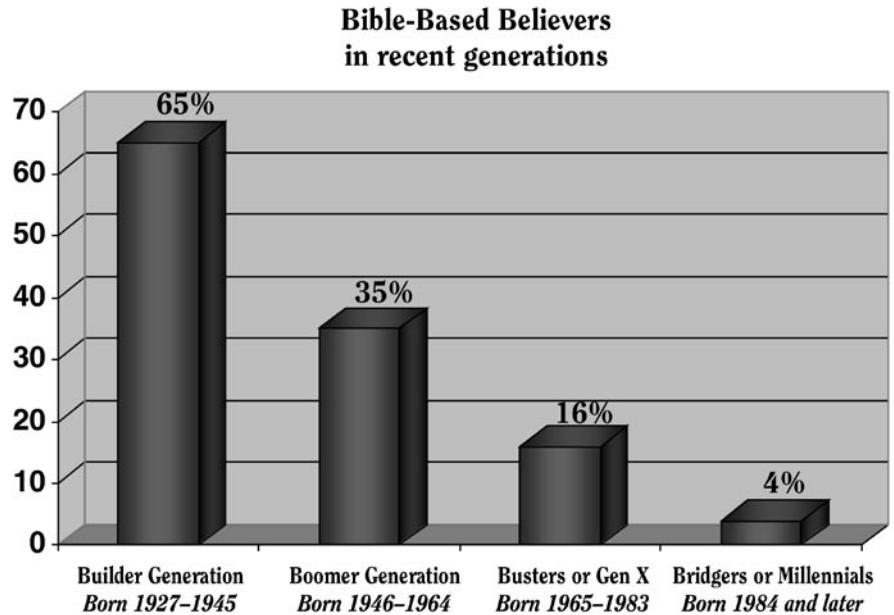
As leaders of children we must individually play our part on the team with care, concern, and consistency. It's about more than filling in the empty spot on the rotational schedule. The reality is that the need to impact this generation is huge, but we hardly realize what really is at stake because we only see what's directly in front of us—the part that we are responsible for. As “pilots,” we only see the inside of our own cockpit. It's not until we step back, take a seat, and actually desire to view the bigger picture, that the reality of our efforts become clearer.

Unfortunately, the clarity of the big picture is not always pleasant to the eye. Picture the reality of the generational statistics expressed by Thom S. Rainer in his book, *The Bridger Generation* (see bar graph below).

The tragedy and disaster of

this big picture is the serious decline in Bible-based believers over the last four generations. As always, there are numbers of factors affecting the outcome. Many would be quick to blame morally corrupt movies, media, and

television. Some would point a finger to the Internet and the sly invasion of pornography. Others may feel that the removal of the Lord's Prayer from our public schools has been a contributing factor.



Questions for Further Study—

1. Name some reasons why it is important for teams to work together “in formation.”
2. What steps can you take to help children learn to soar in their Christian faith?
3. What role do you play in the team of children's workers at your church? What steps should you take to ensure that you play your part well even though you are just one part in that team?

part 2 of 2—

Soar

by Natalie Rogge
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If we are going to affect this rapid decline and see our children once again begin to soar upward in their spiritual lives, we need to jump back into the cockpit and help navigate the course of flight. This means a number of things:

1 A renewed commitment as parents to the spiritual nurturing of the children God has blessed us with.

2 A three-way partnership between church, parent, and child.

3 A unified team of believers who possess different skills yet the same vision of impacting the spiritual fiber of a generation we risk losing.

The Key to Success

In the business world it is necessary for the manager to have his eye always on the bottom line while the leader has his eye on the horizon. In order for the team to soar successfully, each member must be about

their required jobs and responsibilities. Each position is equally as important.

In a recent children's ministries conference workshop I was giving leadership to, an attendee was very intentionally pulling back from the interactive involvement the audience was par-



ticipating in. It was obvious to me that she was involved in leadership; why else would she have given up her entire Saturday to attend? Subtly I approached her and asked why she was not including herself in the learning activity. She responded, "I am only the snack lady. My job is not very important." I'm sure you can

guess my response if you know anything about church kids and their desire for snack time! Although she saw her part on the team as non-important, she was a highly valued individual, especially by those 12 years of age and younger!

No matter what the formation looks like, we are all leaders, and our style of leadership is important to the team's ability to soar in a unified manner. A recently released resource which has really impressed me is the book *Lead The Way God Made You*, by Larry Shallenberger (Group Publishing). This great tool helps us identify our own strengths and weaknesses, while also assisting us in finding our unique place on the team, whether we fly in a formation of 3, 30 or 130.

In a friend's recent conversation with her children on the ride home from school, the eldest was quick to point out the faults of the day regarding her two younger brothers. Hardly able to defend themselves quickly enough, the boys retaliated with statements about their older sibling that may or

may not have been true. Realizing the battle that was about to ensue, my wise friend quickly asked her eldest to share with the rest of the family what she did wrong that day. There was a silent hush that overtook the van—followed by an opportunity for mom to help her children realize that they can either set one another up to soar, or they can attempt to cause each other to nosedive just as quickly. The

choice was theirs.

Whether we are blood relatives or brothers and sisters in Christ, we are part of a larger family. As the body of Christ, we are family with a purpose. If we are about one church in mission, we must soar in the same direction, united and purposed to complete the task God has set out before us. Our passions may lie in different areas. Our skills may have been learned in

a variety of settings. Our personalities and character are unique to whom God made us to be. We are all different in so many ways, yet it is our close-knit and faithful contribution to the team that makes our children's ministry endeavours soar.

Can we unite to reshape the flight of a generation in spiritual decline and cause it to soar once again? I believe we can—the choice is ours.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What steps can you take to help parents renew their commitment to the spiritual nurturing of their children?
2. What steps can you take to help create a three-way partnership between church, parent, and child?
3. What steps can you take to help unify a team of children's workers who each have different skills?