

## TWO WOMEN CHATTING

*This Internet article appeared in the 'Families Honouring Christ' newsletter last year.*

Two women meet at a playground, where their children are swinging and playing ball. The women are sitting on a bench watching. Eventually, they begin to talk.

W1: Hi, my name is Maggie. My kids are the three in red shirts—helps me keep track of them.

W2: (Smiles) I'm Terri. Mine are in pink and yellow shirts. Do you come here a lot?

W1: Several times a week, after we go to the library.

W2: Wow. Where do you find the time?

W1: We home school, so during the day mostly.

W2: Some of my neighbours home school, but I send my kids to public school. We've got curriculum day today—the last one ever, they say, because parents can't always take time like this hanging around. But it is pleasant sitting here in the sun.

W1: Public school? How do you do it?

W2: Well ... it's not easy. I go to all the PTO meetings and work with the kids every day after school and stay real involved.

W1: But what about socialisation? Aren't you worried about them being cooped up all day with kids their own ages, never getting the opportunity for natural relationships?

W2: Well, yes. But I work hard to balance that. They have some friends who're home schooled, and we visit their grandparents almost every month.

W1: Sounds like you're a very dedicated mom. But don't you worry about all the opportunities they're missing out on? I mean they're so isolated from real life—how will they know what the world is like?—what people do to make a living?—how to get along with all different kinds of people?

W2: Oh, we discussed that at PTO, and we started a fund to bring real people into the classrooms. Last month, we had a policeman and a doctor come to every class. And next month, we're having a woman from Japan and a man from Kenya come to speak.

W1: Oh, we met a man from Japan in the grocery store the other week, and he got talking about his childhood in Tokyo. My children were absolutely fascinated. We invited him to dinner and got to meet his wife and their three children.

W2: That's nice. Hmm. Maybe we should plan some Japanese food for the canteen on Multicultural Day.

W1: You have the equipment to cook Asian meals in your lunchroom?

W2: Well, no. We'll have to plan well ahead and put a plea in the bulletin for someone to lend us the necessary things. I don't suppose we could *ad lib*—we're trying to have the children experience authentic culture differences.

W1: Maybe your Japanese guest could eat with the children.

W2: Oh, no. She's on a very tight schedule. She has two other schools to visit that day. It's a system-wide thing we're doing.

W1: Oh, I'm sorry. Well, maybe you'll meet someone interesting in the grocery store sometime and you'll end up having them over for dinner.

W2: I don't think so. I never talk to people in the store—certainly not people who might not even speak my language. What if that Japanese man hadn't spoken English?

W1: To tell you the truth, I never had time to think about it. Before I even saw him, my six-year-old had asked him what he was going to do with all the oranges he was buying.

W2: Your child talks to strangers?

W1: I was right there with him. He knows that as long as he's with me, he can talk to anyone he wishes.

W2: But you're developing dangerous habits in him. The school has taught my children never to talk to strangers.

W1: Not even when they're with you?

W2: They're never with me, except at home after school. So you see why it's important for them to understand that talking to strangers is a big no-no.

W1: Yes, I do. But if they were with you, they could get to meet interesting people and still be safe. They'd get a taste of the real world, in real settings. They'd also get a real feel for how to tell when a situation is dangerous or suspicious.

W2: They'll get that in the third and fifth grades in their health courses.

W1: Well, I can tell you're a very caring mom. Let me give you my number—if you ever want to talk, give me a call. It was good to meet you.