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CHANGE YOUR LIFE | CHANGE YOUR WORLD

Midlife Crisis

God's Checkpoint

Minutes That Count

Building happy memories

Teenagers

10 things every parent should know



SPECIAL FAMILY ISSUE



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

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Clark and Mary were in love. Clark proposed marriage, and Mary accepted. But it wasn't as simple as that. Clark knew that to have a happy and harmonious marriage, he needed to win the approval of Mary's parents, Clarence and Goldie—especially Goldie. He'd heard how mothers-in-law could be, you know, a little difficult. He braced himself and hoped for the best.

"You realize that a marriage is supposed to be 50-50, don't you?" Goldie tested Clark.

"Not ours," Clark answered without a moment's hesitation. "Ours is going to be 60-60!"

And so it was.

That's the true story of how one happy home began—a home I was fortunate to become a part of a few years later. It's a simple story, but it contains an important truth: Successful marriages and happy homes (or any successful relationships, for that matter) are built on little daily deeds of loving self-sacrifice, where each person is willing to give that extra 10% without keeping track of whose turn it is. Don't you love it when people are that way with you?

But where do you get that kind of love that will help you and your loved ones through whatever ups and downs, tests, and disappointments the years may bring your way? It comes from the source of *all* good things, God Himself. And it's yours for the asking. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (James 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:17). "Ask, and it shall be given" (Matthew 7:7).

May God bless you and yours with an extra measure of His love, and may this issue of *Activated* be a blessing to you.

Keith Phillips
Keith Phillips
For the *Activated* family

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OVER 40?

maybe you're
just getting
started!

RESearchers compiled a list of 400 of the most accomplished people of all times and areas of endeavor. There were statesmen, warriors, philosophers, poets, artists, writers, and scientists. Each name on the list was followed by his or her masterpiece or greatest achievement. Since any list of this nature is highly subjective, the list was submitted to a panel of historians and other experts for their opinions. Names and accomplishments were added and dropped until the panel reached a consensus on the final list.

From each person's date of birth and the year of his or her greatest accomplishment, it was determined at what age that individual was at his or her best. The list was then sorted by age at peak performance, and divided into decades.

It was found that people in their seventh decade—between age 60 and 70—were responsible for 35% of the world's greatest achievements; people between the ages of 70 and 80 were responsible for 23%; and people over 80, 8%. In other words, 66% of the greatest things ever done were done by people 60 or older.

Add to that 66% the 24% who were in their 50s and the 9% who were in their 40s, and that accounts for 99%. Only 1% of those 400 people did their greatest work before the age of 40!

The accomplishments of the under-40 group fall into two categories: those requiring youthful prowess and endurance, such as the conquests of Alexander the Great, and lyric poetry, which is typified by the super-sensitive temperaments and short lives of poets such as Shelley and Keats.

So if you're over 40 and feeling over the hill—don't! You may just be coming into your prime! ■

WHAT IS OLD?

NOBODY GROWS OLD BY MERELY LIVING A NUMBER OF YEARS. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear, and despair ... these are the long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.

Whatever your years, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing, childlike appetite for "what next," and the joy and the game of life.

You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

**DOUGLAS MACARTHUR
(1880–1964)**



BY MARIA FONTAINE

MIDLIFE CRISIS

God's Checkpoint

MOST WOMEN EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES AT MIDLIFE, AS THEY GO THROUGH MENOPAUSE. Some men at this age also experience depression or a type of struggle known as “midlife crisis,” as they have to deal with the fact that they aren’t as strong physically as they once were and worrying about their future productivity and usefulness.

Midlife crisis not only affects those going through it, but it often puts a strain on their families and others near them. So understanding the changes and challenges that come at midlife is not only important for those of us who are at this age, so we will know how to handle it, but it’s also important for others, so they can relate to and support those who are going through this stage of life.

Midlife crisis can be explained scientifically in terms of physiological changes that normally occur in the human body at this time, but to best deal with the physical and emotional problems involved, or to help others who are having to deal with those problems, we need to try to see midlife from the Lord’s point of



Whenever we come to an important crossroads like this, our outlook has a major bearing on the outcome.



But the Lord is able to help us understand as much as we need to if we will look to His Word and go to Him in prayer for the answers to our questions and problems.

The Lord allows this period of uncertainty as a crossroads or checkpoint, to force us to take stock of our lives to be sure that we continue in the direction that He wants us to go. Whenever we come to an important crossroads like this, our outlook has a major bearing on the outcome. If we look at the situation negatively, seeing only the problems and apparent limitations, we'll take the road that leads us down. But if we'll look for possibilities and set our sights high, we'll take the high road that leads to greater happiness and fulfillment. As Jesus said, our faith—what we expect God to do for us—is the determining factor: “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29, KJV).

One bedrock promise that makes a wonderful point of reference is found in Romans 8:28: “All things work together for good to those who love God.” If you love God and know how much He loves you, then you can be sure that He has your best interests at heart and wants to use even the problems that come with midlife to help you make positive changes. You will then be able to see midlife through the eyes of faith, looking not at the problems, but at the new possibilities you know He will open to you.

STRENGTH FROM WEAKNESS

This time of slowing down, this time of greater weakness, is for your *benefit*. It is to bring you to full maturity, when you can get more out of life than ever before.

It is often through weakness, sicknesses, and other personal difficulties that we learn to draw closer to Jesus and become more dependent on Him. And as He told the apostle Paul, He can sometimes use us even more in our times of weakness than in our times of strength: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).



view. As is so often the case, He sees things differently than we do, and He can explain many of these things even better than the doctors and experts, although we can surely benefit from their counsel also.

You won't find the term “midlife crisis” in the Bible, but the Bible does contain lots of counsel that applies. Some of it is especially helpful to those who haven't reached that age yet, as it teaches the importance of having loving consideration for others, bearing one another's burdens, and putting yourself in another's shoes. And, as always, the Lord promises to recompense us for the time and effort we give in caring for each other.

ALL PART OF GOD'S PLAN

Our limited human understanding can't grasp all that goes on with our bodies as we grow older. As King David said, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

Also, because of your weakness and more contemplative nature, you appreciate life more and you appreciate the Lord and His goodness more. You value things that you were once too busy for or took for granted. So even though you may feel when you reach this stage of life that you are losing something, you are actually gaining much more than you are losing.

This time in your life can be one of the *best* periods, one of the happiest and most

King David prayed, “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2). When you feel overwhelmed, when you feel depression closing in, climb up on the Rock—Jesus. He will never allow you to be overwhelmed. *He* is the answer to depression!

It is very important that you not attempt to live with those negative feelings and emotions, or adjust to them, or make decisions based on

This time in your life can be one of the best periods, one of the happiest and most fruitful and satisfying.

fruitful and satisfying. It can be a time of genuine fulfillment, even *more* than in your days of youth, for you have now come to the age where you have experienced many of the things of youth—the adventures, the challenges, the romance, the ups and downs, the joys and the tears of growing up and maturing. Now you seek deep, true satisfaction—the kind that comes from finding and fulfilling God’s plan for your life.

JESUS IS WAITING TO HELP

It is not at all uncommon at this time of life to be hit with inexplicable emotions, or even depression. When your emotions are being tossed to and fro, you may feel like Jesus’ disciples who were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm arose and threatened to sink their small boat. “Master, help us,” they cried, “or we will perish!” Jesus commanded the wind and waves, “Peace, be still!” and the wind ceased and there was a great calm (Mark 4:37–41).

Jesus can just as easily and surely calm your emotions and bring peace to your spirit. He is able to drive away the feelings of hopelessness and replace them with feelings of hope, encouragement, happiness, and faith. Hold on to His promises in His Word. Believe Him through the storm. Believe that He will never fail you, and that all things *do* work together for your good.

them. So when you feel depressed or muddled, tell Jesus. Ask Him to take these feelings away. Draw on His strength, grace, understanding, and wisdom. Claim all the promises He has given in His Word, knowing that they are for you and times such as these, and He will bring you through victoriously.

He appreciates you turning to Him. In fact, He looks forward to those times with you more than you know. So when you feel overwhelmed or down or can’t sleep, have a talk with Jesus. He’s never too busy and He never sleeps. Tell Him your deepest thoughts and get to know Him in a deeper way than you ever have before. He has new horizons to show you. He’s just waiting for you to come to Him.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

If these times of turbulence drive you to Jesus, and as a result help you find a peace and happiness such as you have never known before, then aren’t they worth it?

Your life is not over when you turn 40 or 50. This is not the end; this is the beginning of a new stage, of a new era in your lives. Jesus wants to use the lessons and maturity and wisdom you can gain during midlife as steppingstones to take you onward and upward toward the marvelous future He has for you. Choose the high road! ■

The Lower Lights

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

When my husband's health was declining
and I was visiting him at the hospital,
I would see other patients
in waiting rooms or in their beds
and think about what they must be suffering.

Some of them, especially the very aged, would be lying there all alone, day after day. I visited the hospital daily for about a month, and no one ever came to see them. No one cared enough to come. After awhile, this bed or that bed was empty, and still no one had come.

Then I would look out the window of my husband's hospital room, out to the highway where cars were rushing back and forth, and I would think about poor, lost humanity—so many lonely, sorrowful people, so many broken hearts.

I realized then how much everyone—whether dying or rushing through life—needs the Father's love and mercy. I realized, too, how much the Lord needs us as lights to point people to His heart of love. There in the hospital this hymn would come to me, and I would sometimes sing it to my husband, sitting at his bedside:

Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse ever more,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

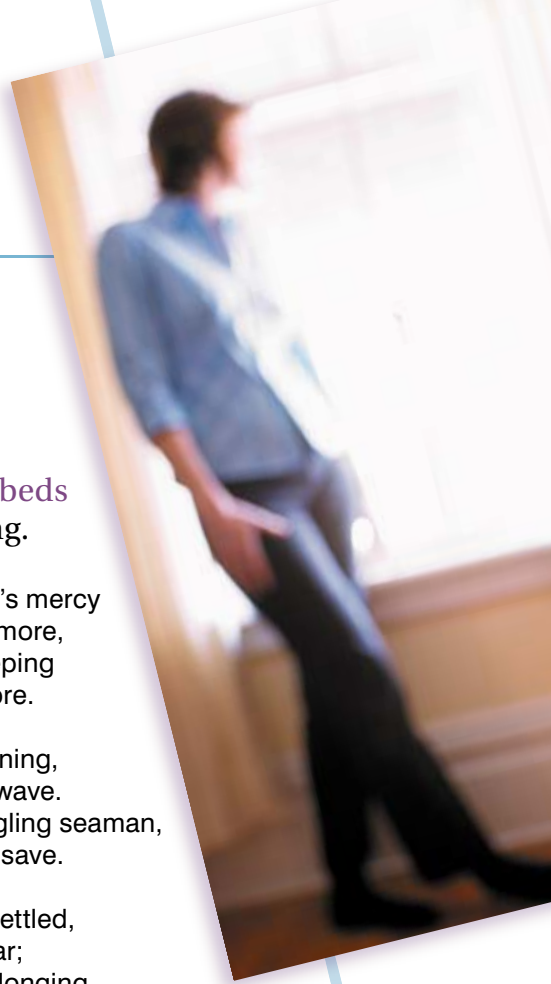
Let the lower lights be burning,
Send a gleam across the wave.
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman,
You may rescue, you may save.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother,
Some poor sailor, tempest tossed
Is trying now to make the harbor,
And in darkness may be lost.

—“The Lower Lights,” music and lyrics by Philip P. Bliss, 1838–1876

God, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are the upper lights, but we are the lower lights along the shore. God has entrusted us with some sacred responsibilities—certain things that should have the first priority in our life. Lots of things demand our attention, and there is so little time for them all. If we're not careful, we will put off or miss what is truly important. What a blessing you could be to your family and neighbors—your “neighbor” being anyone God puts in your path who needs His love and your love, anyone He wants to love and help through you. ■





DINNER

etad

**AUTHOR
UNKNOWN**

After 21 years of marriage,
I discovered
a new way of keeping alive the spark of love.

A little while ago

I started going out with another woman.

It was really my wife's idea.

"I know that you love her," she said one day, taking me by surprise.

"But I love you," I protested.
"I know, but you also love her."

The other woman that my wife wanted me to see was my mother, who has been a widow for 19 years. I loved her, of course, but the demands of my work and my three children had made it possible to visit her only occasionally. That night I called to invite her to go out for dinner and a movie.

"What's wrong? Are you unwell?" she asked. My mother is the type of woman who suspects that a late night call or a surprise invitation is a sign of bad news.

"I thought that it would be pleasant to pass some time with you," I responded. "Just the two of us."

She thought about it for a moment, then said, "I would like that very much."

That Friday after work, as I drove over to pick her up, I was a bit nervous. When I arrived at her house, I noticed that she, too, seemed to be nervous about our date. She waited in the door with her coat on. She had curled her hair and was wearing the dress that she had worn to celebrate her last wedding anniversary. She smiled from a face that was as radiant as an angel's.

"I told my friends that I was going to go out with my son, and they were impressed," she said as she got into the car. "They can't wait to hear about our meeting."



We went to a restaurant that, although not elegant, was very nice and cozy. My mother took my arm as if she were the First Lady. After we sat down, I had to read the menu. Her eyes could only read large print.

Halfway through the entrées, I lifted my eyes and saw Mom sitting there staring at me. A nostalgic smile was on her lips.

“It was I who used to have to read the menu when you were small,” she said.

“Then it’s time that you relax and let me return the favor,” I responded. During the dinner we had an agreeable conversation, catching up on recent events of each other’s life.

We talked so much that we missed the movie. As we arrived at her house later, she said, “I’ll go out with you again, but only if you let me invite you.” I agreed.

“How was your dinner date?” asked my wife when I got home.

“Very nice. Much more so than I could have imagined,” I answered. A few days later my mother died of a massive heart attack. It happened so suddenly that I didn’t have a chance to do anything for her.

Some time later I received an envelope with a copy of a restaurant receipt from the same place Mother and I had dined. An attached note said: “I paid this bill in advance. I was almost sure that I couldn’t be there, but, nevertheless, I paid for two plates—one for you and the other for your wife. You will never know what that night meant for me. I love you.”

At that moment I understood the importance of saying in time, “I love you,” and of giving our loved ones the time that they deserve. ■

IT’S NOT HEAVEN, BUT IT’S CLOSE

Thoughts on Marriage

Knit your hearts with an unslipping knot.
—William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Even if marriages are made in Heaven, man has to be responsible for the maintenance.
—James C. Dobson (1936–)

Marriage is an adventure,
not an achievement.
—David A. Seamands

Success in marriage is much more than finding the right person: It is a matter of being the right person.
—Robert Browning (1812–1889)

Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards.
—Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)

It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love.
—Theodore Parker (1810–1860)

The most important thing in a marriage is for both partners to have faith in God and Jesus Christ. When you have faith, everything is possible!
—David Brandt Berg (1919–1994)

We should apply love as God intended for it to be applied—with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (Matthew 22:37–39). That means to be truly concerned. It’s not saying, “I love you,” and then walking off and forgetting people in need. It’s not saying, “Be warmed and filled,” but not giving them the things they need when it’s in your power to help (James 2:16; Proverbs 3:28). Love without physical application is like faith without works, which is dead (James 2:26). Show real love by putting kind deeds to your kind words (1 John 3:18). **DAVID BRANDT BERG**



A Mother's Calling


AS A TEENAGER, I LOVED AND DID WELL WITH CHILDREN, but as I grew older there wasn't room for them in my dreams and plans. I felt the whole world was just waiting for me and that it was my right as a new adult to see and experience everything in life to the full. I felt driven to pursue all my personal dreams and develop my ideals, but it wasn't long before I began to see that the Lord had a plan for me that was different. Marriage was followed shortly by children, and I questioned, "What happened to my dreams?"

As it turned out, not only did I end up living out the Lord's plan for me as a mother, but He also blessed me with the fulfillment of many other desires as well. His plans were far better than my limited dreams had been. Having experienced the full cycle of motherhood, I can now look back and tell you from experience that the Lord's plan fulfilled all my needs and much more. I ended up a winner all around!

One of the most outstanding things I learned through having babies was to work through prayer. In addition to having more babies—my husband and I had six children in eight years, including a pair of twins—I had other responsibilities to cope with as well. Since I didn't have any additional time to work with, I had to find some other means of accomplishing things, and that means turned out to be prayer.

I found that I could use those moments when I was nursing my baby to pray about everything else I needed to do. Since I had much more to do than I possibly could on my own, I would ask the Lord for direction as to what to do next, as well as for other solutions for the things that I knew I wasn't going to get to, and the Lord answered and worked in wonderful ways! He would send some unexpected help or change the situation in answer to my specific prayer, and the mountain of work before me would melt away.

I was amazed at first, but then I became totally dependent on those times. I learned that I could actually accomplish a lot while sitting in my chair with my baby, if I would also use that time to look



to the Lord for direction and work *with* Him through prayer. I soon found that more was getting done because I was working in closer connection with Him. So my babies actually turned out to be a big factor in helping me find and accomplish God's will in other areas of my life by forcing me to retreat to Him many times a day.

Related to that, I learned to appreciate what I came to call "being confined to God's will." With so little time and so little strength of my own, I knew I couldn't just zip around doing whatever popped into my head at any time. I had to stop and think about what I wanted to accomplish, plan how to do it, and cut out anything else.

Another thing that I learned during that time when my life revolved around the care of my little ones was that my attitude toward circumstances largely determined whether I was happy and victorious, or miserable and complaining. Very often, the physical circumstances didn't matter that much. At first I was in the dreariest doldrums, but then I began to feel interested and challenged with all there was to learn, and that made all the difference.

Those times alone with Jesus and baby, which began in the early morning hours, became some of the dearest moments of my life, and the relationships that were forged then continued to grow and blossom through the years. I fell in love with each of my babies, and fell deeper in love with Jesus in the process. I changed from a rather self-centered and independent young woman to being hooked on being a mom. What I once dreaded, I came to love. What made the difference? I let the Lord give me a mother's heart and character, and that was a miracle!

If God has given you children, rise to the challenge. Motherhood is a priceless gift, shot through and through with purest heavenly love, but destined to last only a few fleeting years. Love and treasure it while you can. ■



home of hearts

BY ESTHER DAVID

Building a home of hearts, my love,
Is what we've got to do,
Making a peaceful haven
To shelter others, too.
Bearing each other's burdens,
Sharing the heavy load,
Yoked to the Master's service,
And walking a single road.

Giving your heart to another
Is making it a home,
Where the heart can rest in safety
With no more need to roam.
It's making the best from nothing,
From two independent souls
Who yield to the Holy Spirit
And make a home of love.

Beholding heart to heart, my love,
Sharing secret dreams,
Loving the Lord in others,
This is what it means.
Laughing with one another
At the funniest things we do,
Learning to be a family,
Jesus, me and you.

It's giving to one another
To make the weaker strong,
Stooping to help the other
No matter who's right or wrong.
It's learning the love of Jesus
That sees beyond the sin,
Loving the heart that loves Him,
Building peace within.

Minutes That Count

PARENTING FROM THE HEART

BY GABRIELA DELORENZO

a prayer for parents

May we so live that all our children will be able to acquire our best virtues and to leave behind our worst failings. May we pass on the light of courage and compassion, and the questing spirit; and may that light burn more brightly in these our children than it has in us.

—ROBERT MARSHALL

T

HERE ARE 1440 MINUTES IN A DAY.

Subtract the nine hours or so that my children sleep, and that leaves 900 minutes each day in which I am bombarded with questions, requests, tearful pleas, laughs, kisses, hugs, and messes.

At times, I feel overwhelmed as a mother. I have three small children, and their care is the most important thing in my life. It's easy to get so caught up with chores that I neglect the most important part of homemaking—love. It was my children who recently reminded me what the best-spent minutes in my day are.

I was rushing around, trying to get the room cleaned before my baby woke up from his nap, when six-year-old Charlotte came with the sweetest smile and asked if I could put together a puzzle with her. I tried to persuade her that she should try and do it on her own, and

explained that I really didn't have time right then. The look of disappointment on her face showed that more than help with the puzzle, she wanted a few minutes with me. I stopped to consider what I was about to do. *When Charlotte looks back on her childhood, what do I want her to remember—the clean room, or our times together?* I played puzzles with Charlotte, we had some laughs, and I hugged her when we were done. Ten minutes well spent.

"Mommy, Mommy, please read me this book!" Three-year-old Cherise had already had three stories that night, and I was tired and wanted to get some work done before collapsing into bed myself. I tried to sweetly tell her no, but she persisted. *What she really wants, I thought, is a little more attention from me, a few more moments to show me she loves me and to be assured of my love.* I read her another story as we cuddled beneath my blankets, and she fell asleep on my shoulder. Fifteen minutes well spent.

It had been an especially busy week, as I was helping to prepare for an event for 100 underprivileged children, and today we were having guests over. My to-do list was overwhelming. Then my daughters asked if they could bake some cookies for our guests. I tried to reason with them. We didn't

need to bake cookies, because we had some from the store to offer our guests, plus I was really strapped for time. But I couldn't resist their sweet, pleading faces. As they served the cookies to our guests, full of satisfaction at having made them almost entirely on their own, I was glad I had given in. Thirty minutes well spent.

My nine-month-old son Jordan can really keep me running around, trying to keep up with his antics, taking things out of his mouth, and keeping him away from our rambunctious pets. When he couldn't sit still and play with something for one minute before crawling off into trouble, I became exasperated. He was whiny and cranky, and I was getting a headache. Somewhere in all the madness, I realized that maybe he needed some extra love, and so did I! So I took him into my arms and let him put his head on my shoulder while I gently danced with him. He loved it! After a little snack, he played happily by himself long enough for me to help the girls finish their schoolwork. Fifteen more minutes well spent.

In the course of our busy days and adult responsibilities, let us not forget Jesus' words to us: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:14). ■

THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE RULES THE WORLD

What an important job a mother has! The mothers of the next generation are the ones who are molding the future. Motherhood is just about the greatest calling in the world. Of course, taking care of a baby may not always *seem* very important, but don't ever minimize it. Who knows what an impact that child may have on the lives of many others one day?

Motherhood takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the courage and administrative ability of David. It also takes the love of God, that's for sure! What a job!

The thing that makes a mother so wonderful is her self-sacrificial spirit that is willing to sacrifice her time and strength and even her own health, if necessary, for the sake of that child. Any woman can have a baby, but it takes a real mother to learn how to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).


—DAVID BRANDT BERG

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS



The best investment
you can make in your new
family is your time

Starting a Family ... Again



WHEN I MET AND FELL IN LOVE WITH THE YOUNG WIDOW WHO IS NOW MY FIANCÉE, I FELT LIKE THE MOST BLESSED MAN IN THE WORLD! NOT ONLY HAD I FOUND THE WIFE OF MY DREAMS, BUT I WAS GETTING THREE GREAT CHILDREN IN THE BARGAIN—A READY-MADE FAMILY. MAYBE I WAS BEING UNREALISTIC, BUT WINNING THE CHILDREN'S LOVE AND RESPECT HASN'T BEEN AS EASY AS I EXPECTED. DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR THIS STRUGGLING DAD?

A: You're not alone. When a single parent remarries, it is often not smooth sailing from the beginning. It takes time and lots of love to become a tightly knit family. It's common for older children, especially, to resent the new husband or wife at first because they feel no one could ever take the place of the father or mother that's not with them. Younger children may also resent having to share their parent's affection with the newcomer. Many new stepparents make the mistake of taking this personally, and becoming frustrated and discouraged and pulling back. Fight to put any such sensitivity aside and pray for the Lord's mind and perspective. Ask Jesus for His insight as to what will work best in your situation. A lot depends on the age and maturity of the children, but here are a few things that have worked well for others:

Communicate. Honest open communication is the first step. If it's clear that only one or two children are unhappy with the new arrangement, it would probably be best to discuss problems and possible solutions with them individually. This is a good time to follow the biblical advice to be "swift to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19). Then, once each child has had a chance to put their feelings into words and you have established a basis of trust, you might want to try an informal family meeting around a snack or special meal, where each explains how they feel about their new family and what changes or improvements they'd like to see.

Ask the Lord in prayer for His solutions. You can do this all together, as a couple, individually, or some of each. Sometimes the Lord will answer directly and immediately by helping you see things from His perspective or speaking to your mind, and sometimes He resolves problems over time.

Pray. Ask the Lord to give each of you understanding and deep, genuine love for the others, as well as for His help in changing in whatever ways you need to for the sake of the other's happiness and well-being.

Take time. The best investment you can make in your new family is your time, and one of the best places to start is by following through on some of the "changes and improvements" they suggest, if reasonable and doable.

Keep praying. Children need time to adjust, and overcoming some negative attitudes can take a while. Specific prayers get results, and as you keep it up, you'll see the mountains of problems melt away.

teenagers

10 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

- 1 [It's not easy being a teenager.]** Teenagers want independence and to be treated like adults, but often lack the necessary maturity, which only comes through experience. They need some independence, coupled with guidance. Give them freedom of choice in matters that will help them mature, yet won't seriously harm them or others when they make wrong choices.
- 2 [Teens are in a process of continual change.]** Just as teens need lots of good food, lots of sleep, and lots of exercise to meet the needs of their growing bodies, they need lots of positive input to grow emotionally and intellectually.
- 3 [Each teen is different and has individual needs.]** Most teenagers go through the same phases, but at different ages and with varying degrees of difficulty. Treat them as individuals.
- 4 [Upbeat is better.]** If you only talk to your teens when you need to reprimand them, they will avoid you. Establish positive communication when they are younger and keep it up as they get older, and they will be more likely to receive direction from you during the tough teen years.
- 5 [Teens are learning the balance between fun and responsibility.]** Help your teens grow into adulthood by teaching them to put responsibility before having fun, and reward them with fun activities when they do.
- 6 [Teens need clearly defined limits.]** Teens often test the limits set for them to see how much they can get away with. Discuss the rules together, agree if you can, and then enforce them lovingly but firmly.
- 7 [Teens need space.]** In their attempt to establish their own identity, it is normal for teenagers to distance themselves from their parents. Don't take it personally. Let them flap their wings, within reasonable limits, but make sure they know you're always there for them.
- 8 [Teens need to feel fulfilled.]** Help your teens set goals for themselves that are worthwhile, challenging, and attainable, and then help them achieve their goals.
- 9 [Peer pressure is strongest in the teen years.]** Your teens' friends are going to have influence for good or bad, so get to know them and try to bring out the best in them.
- 10 [Teens need to feel understood.]** You may not understand them any better than they understand themselves, but Jesus does. Hearing them out and then taking their problems to the Lord together will go a lot further than you trying to supply them with all the answers yourself.

[FEEDING READING]

HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY HOME

Love is the cornerstone.

John 13:34

1 Corinthians 13:13

Colossians 2:2

God gives us love to love others.

Romans 5:5

Galatians 5:22

1 Thessalonians 3:12

1 Thessalonians 4:9

2 Thessalonians 3:5

Differences must be overcome with love.

Proverbs 17:9

Philippians 2:3

Colossians 3:13

1 Peter 4:8

Parents, treat your children gently and in love.

Luke 1:17

Colossians 3:21

Ephesians 6:4

1 Thessalonians 2:7

Titus 2:4

Parents should govern their children with authority, tempered with patience, mercy, and truth.

Proverbs 16:6

Proverbs 29:15

1 Timothy 3:4

1 Timothy 3:12

Children, respect and obey your parents.

Proverbs 1:8–9

Ephesians 6:1

Colossians 3:20



INCLUDE *Me*

If you want a happier family and happier family life, here's how:

Include Me in everything you do.

I'm not talking about dry, formal, somber religiosity—anything but! You just might be surprised at how much fun I can be! The benefits of including Me are too numerous to list here, but I'll give you three.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

ONE: I'm full of ideas. My Father and I created this world together—the first-ever family project, if you will—and you've got to admit, we came up with some pretty good stuff! If we made it all for you and want you to enjoy it to the full—which we did—don't you think I can show you better things to do together than to sit semi-comatose in front of a TV?

TWO: I can relate. I can relate to every generation and know better than anyone how to bring generations together and *keep* them together. Don't forget, I've been at this a long time. There's no situation you face that I haven't helped others deal with before, so consult with Me the moment you begin to have problems on the home front.

THREE: More love. Isn't that what you want most for your family—love? *I am* love—the very spirit of love—so where I am, love is. The Bible says that in My presence is fullness of joy, and at My right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). I have so much love to give you and yours—more than you could possibly imagine and much more than you can contain. It's here for you any time, all the time, just for the asking.

I'm at your beck and call. Just say, "Jesus, thank You for being a part of our family—the head of our family. Be with us now in what we're about to do."