

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 10 • Issue 6

INFLUENCE

Life-changers wanted

CONFIDENT CHILDREN

5 ways to help kids blossom

REAL FATHERS

Every child needs one



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Growing up, the last thing I expected to become was an editor. For starters, I was a miserable student—“miserable” in both senses of the word. From almost the first day of first grade, I struggled to keep up with the class, and language was never one of my better subjects—at least not until tenth grade. The difference-maker then was my dad.

He had been an Army war correspondent during WWII and then a newspaper reporter for several years. He had changed careers in order to better support his growing family, but journalism was in his bones. When he offered to type one of my handwritten tenth grade papers and saw how utterly clueless I was about writing, he clicked into gear. And when he explained what needed fixing and why, things started clicking for me.

Over the next couple of years my English grades improved, which gave my sagging self-confidence a boost, which helped me pull up my grades in other subjects. It would be another 25 years before I tried to do anything more with what Dad had taught me, but when I did, much to my surprise, I discovered that his passion for pushing words around a page had been contagious. So here I am, thanks in large part to my dad, doing what I now love to do, as part of a close and talented team, for a God I love and a publication I believe in. Who could ask for more?

That’s my story and that’s my dad. The two seem inseparable now, and I think that’s the way God means for it to be. Good fathers help make us who we are. They are one of His special gifts, and fatherhood is one of His special callings. The more I think about that, the more I wonder why we waited so long to do this, our first issue in tribute to fathers.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

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GOD IN SKIN

BY LILY NEVE

I READ ONCE THAT a good father prepares us for our relationship with our heavenly Father, God.

My father may not realize it, but one thing that shaped my life was a conversation he and I had sitting on a hill overlooking our home the summer I was 18. He probably doesn't even remember it—so simple and yet so typical of him and his wise and loving way of advising without overtly giving advice.

We talked about everything that day, and I found myself telling him about a boyfriend, the problems we'd encountered, and what our friendship might lead to. I don't remember how I explained it all, but I do remember how awkward I felt. After I'd gotten it all out, I looked at him and asked plaintively, "What do I do now, Daddy? Tell me what to do."

"That *is* a tough decision," he began, "but you're 18. You're an adult now. I'm not going to tell you what to do, because you already know what you should do."

I looked at him blankly. No, I *wasn't* an adult yet—or at least

No matter what choices I make,
I will always be his daughter and
will always have his love.

I didn't feel like one. I was only 18, and I didn't have a clue. Wait a minute—yes, I did. In that situation I knew exactly what I should do. Not that I wanted to do it, but I knew. And I ended up doing the right thing largely because Dad believed that I would, that I had the capacity to.

Not every decision that I've made from that point on has been the right one, but that conversation helped me onto the path to independence and got me believing that I could succeed at life. Knowing that someone believed in me helped me later when even harder decisions came my way.

Dad has always made it clear that he not only believes in me, but he loves me unconditionally. No matter what choices I make, I will always be his daughter and will always have his love. Of

all the gifts I have ever received from him, I am most grateful for that assurance.

It took me awhile, but eventually I realized that my father's love and trust mirrors God's.

God teaches us to walk and then lets us run on our own, believing we can succeed but always being there for us when we fall or need help. "You are a special person," He tells us, "who can do something wonderful for Me and others." And when we mess up, as we often do, He whispers, "Whatever you do, I will always love you," and He helps us do better.

Thanks, Dad, for the gift of God's love in flesh and bones!

LILY NEVE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH ASIA. ✨

REAL FATHERS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A FATHER or father figure. Especially as he grows older, he needs a father even more than a mother. A father comes into the picture in a big way during adolescence, when the child needs discipline and strength more than ever. Fathers are usually the disciplinarian of the family, whereas mothers are inclined to be a lot more easygoing and lenient, especially if they have to handle the job alone.

A man can start being a good father by taking good care of the

mother, even before the child is born. Then he needs to learn to help her with the baby. He needs to realize how taxing it is for her, and he should share the load as much as possible.

Childrearing is not always easy or fun, but if you have real love for each other and the child, you will do whatever is needed. It also becomes easier when you remind yourself what an amazing thing has happened: God has created a new immortal soul and placed him or her in your hands. With His help it is now your responsibility to see that child through this world.

I loved being a parent, and I spent hours at it every day. I fixed bottles during the night when my children were babies, and I fixed them breakfast when they got older. I taught them how to eat and how to dress

God has created a new immortal soul and placed it in your hands.

themselves—all kinds of things. I got a lot of satisfaction out of it and a lot of reward.

I tried to spend at least an hour or two with my kids every day. I started reading them Bible stories as soon as they could understand speech. Of course when they were very small they couldn't follow all of it, so the youngest usually dropped off to sleep first. I'd read from the King James Version and translate it into the Daddy Version, explaining almost every phrase. Then I'd act it out, and they were just fascinated.

Someday you're going to be thankful that you had a part in those children's care and training. You will have helped form another human being. That's thrilling!

Are you equal to the task? No, but God is, and He will help you if you try! ✠

A PARENT'S PRAYER

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*



FATHERHOOD



My father didn't tell me how to live; he lived, and let me watch him do it.—Clarence Budington Kelland

My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, "You're tearing up the grass." "We're not raising grass," Dad would reply. "We're raising boys."—Harmon Killebrew

A father carries pictures where his money used to be.—*Author unknown*

When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.—*Mark Twain, "Old Times on the Mississippi," Atlantic Monthly, 1874*

**The greatest gift I ever had
Came from God; I call him Dad!**
—*Author unknown*

Any man can be a father. It takes someone special to be a dad.—*Author unknown*

Character is largely caught, and the father and the home should be the great sources of character infection.—*Frank H. Cheley*

**You have a lifetime to work, but
children are only young once.**
—*Polish proverb*

A man's children and his garden both reflect the amount of weeding done during the growing season.—*Author unknown*

Father of fathers, make me one,
A fit example for a son.
—*Douglas Malloch*

Directly after God in heaven comes a Papa.—*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as a boy*

Noble fathers have noble children.—*Euripides*

I watched a small man with thick calluses on both hands work fifteen and sixteen hours a day. I saw him once literally bleed from the bottoms of his feet, a man who came here [to the U.S., from Italy] uneducated, alone, unable to speak the language, who taught me all I needed to know about faith and hard work by the simple eloquence of his example.—*Mario Cuomo*

**A good father is worth a hundred
teachers.—Jean Jacques Rousseau**

Until you have a son of your own, you will never know the joy, the love beyond feeling that resonates in the heart of a father as he looks upon his son. You will never know the sense of honor that makes a man want to be more than he is and to pass something good and hopeful into the hands of his son.—*Kent Nerburn, Letters to My Son*

**To her the name Father was another
name for love.—Fanny Fern** 🐾



CONFIDENT CHILDREN

BY ALEX PETERSON

PARENTS WHO ARE CONCERNED about their children's progress at each stage of their development, as nearly all parents are, need to realize what an important role a child's self-image plays toward that end. Children with positive feelings about themselves, who believe they can succeed, are far more likely to.

Children make their first judgments about themselves and their abilities in the context of their home. Parents can find opportunities every day to develop their children's self-confidence, which in the long run will help them grow into well-adjusted, well-rounded adults.

Problem solving

Parents are often amazed to discover how capable and resourceful their children are in solving their own problems, with a little guidance. All children encounter problems; that is a necessary part of growing up. It is through dealing with such challenges that they learn problem-solving skills that are essential for success in life. It takes time and patience to help children learn to solve their own problems, but it is a wise investment that will pay big dividends when the children get older, their problems become more complex, and the stakes are higher.

One tendency of parents is to be too quick to fix the problem or provide the answer. That may meet the immediate need, but it hinders the learning process. It's like the saying: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life. Teaching problem-solving is more important and more beneficial in the long run than providing solutions. Helping children work through their problems also shows that you have faith in them, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

This is how God works with us. He could solve all of our problems with a snap of His fingers, but instead He usually expects us to reason things through, consider our options, and do what we can before He will step in and do what we can't. He involves us in working out the solution and brings us along step by step, not to make life more difficult but to help us grow from the experience.

Insecurity issues

No matter how much parents love their children and try to meet their needs, situations will come up that cause the children to feel insecure, and insecurity is often reflected in behavioral problems.

Bad behavior needs to be corrected, but unless the parent understands what prompted it, the correction may hinder more than help. Was the misbehavior the result of natural childish experimentation—a bad idea that seemed good or fun at the time? Or was it the result of insecurity—trying to fit in, impress, or win new friends after moving to a new neighborhood or changing schools, for example? Bad behavior is only a symptom, so correction alone is like lopping off the top of a weed; it will soon be back. Parents need to identify and go to work on the root of the problem, the underlying cause.

Depending on the age and maturity level of the child, try to help the child come to his or her own conclusions by approaching it from the problem-solving angle. That may not be easy in the heat of the moment, but remember, the goal is to correct the problem, not to punish the child. By making a clear distinction between the problem and the child and then involving the child in turning the problem situation into a learning situation, it

is possible to build rather than undermine self-esteem, even in what might otherwise seem like an impossibly negative situation.

Not all children misbehave when they feel insecure; some become withdrawn or underachieve. But however the insecurity is manifested, the first step in rectifying the problem is to recognize it, and the second step is to go to work on the cause from a positive angle.

Cultivate mutual respect

Mutual respect strengthens the bond of love in a parent-child relationship. It also engenders unity, obedience, and appreciation.

Respect within a family is manifested through consideration, understanding, thoughtfulness, a willingness to listen, and loving communication. And it works both ways; if you want your children to show you respect, show them respect.

Children learn by observation and imitate what they see. If lack of respect is the problem, it probably started with the child's parents, peers, or other influences such as TV, movies, or computer games. Minimizing such negative influences is half the battle; setting clear guidelines as to what's expected and then consistently upholding that standard is the other.



Ways that you can show your children respect include:

- ◆ Treating each child as an individual
- ◆ Being sensitive to their feelings; putting yourself in their position
- ◆ Not belittling them or using sarcasm when they falter
- ◆ Not intentionally embarrassing them
- ◆ Asking and suggesting, rather than giving commands
- ◆ Paying attention when they speak and hearing them out; not being too quick to provide your perspective
- ◆ Treating them as though they were slightly more mature than they actually are
- ◆ Giving their ideas serious consideration; thinking in terms of how you can help their ideas to work

Avoid misunderstandings

Sometimes it seems that children choose the worst possible times to misbehave, and sometimes it is not so much actual misbehavior as it is annoying behavior. When parents are under pressure, are preoccupied with other work or other thoughts, aren't feeling well, or are simply not in a good mood, that's bound to affect the way they interact with their children. Some things that are normally allowed or overlooked—a certain level of noise or rambunctiousness, for example—push the parent over the edge, resulting in harsh words, more severe punishment than the offense actually warrants, or “the look” that sends the message “You're in trouble” but leaves the child confused.

Children usually don't see the big picture, so when a parent's frustrations boil over like that, they often assume more of the blame than they actually deserve, which can lead to even more damaging conclusions—“Mommy wishes I wasn't here,” “Daddy doesn't love me,” “I'm no good.”

Avoid such confidence-shattering misunderstandings by catching yourself short of the boiling point and putting the questionable behavior in context. “I would love to hear you sing that song again, but right now I need to concentrate on driving.” “I have a headache, so I'm going to have to ask you to not

do that right now.” And if you don't catch yourself in time, an after-the-fact explanation and apology will set the record straight. By giving the child an opportunity to be part of the solution to your problem, you will have turned a potentially damaging situation into a positive one.

Positive reinforcement

Praise is a superior motivator. Children thrive on praise. It's more important and more beneficial to praise a child for good behavior than it is to scold for bad behavior.

There are times when admonitions and correction are needed, but by learning to preempt problem situations with praise and other positive reinforcement, you will build self-esteem in your children and find yourself less discouraged, exhausted, and frustrated at the end of the day. It's a win-win parenting strategy.

The more you focus on the positive, the more things you will find to praise your child for and the less you will have to deal with bad behavior. Praise encourages actions that warrant more praise.

Be consistent, be sincere, and be creative—but be believable. For example, if the child tries to do something new with disastrous results, commend the effort, not the outcome. Or if the ill-fated attempt was meant to be a surprise for you, commend the thoughtfulness. Always accentuate the positive, and make the good memorable. ✎



Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Proverbs 22:6



INFLUENCE

WHENEVER YOU HEAR of someone doing a great thing, you may be sure that behind it somewhere is a great background. It may be a mother's training, a father's example, a teacher's influence, or an intense experience of his own, but it has to be there or else the great achievement does not come, no matter how favorable the opportunity.—*Catherine Miles*

FATHERING HELPS SELF-ESTEEM

A study by the British parenting research project Tomorrow's Men found that fathers who spend a few minutes each day one on one with their sons greatly increase their sons' chances of growing into confident adults.

Of the boys who said that their fathers spent time with them and took an active interest in their progress, more than 90 percent fell in the "can do" category,

whereas 72 percent of the boys who said that their fathers rarely or never spent time with them fell into the group with the lowest levels of self-esteem and were also more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems.

More surprisingly, the study found little difference between the positive effects of good father/son relationships in two-parent homes and homes where the father was absent (as in divorce situations) but nevertheless took time with his son. Similar studies have found that in a father's absence, another father figure such as a stepfather, uncle, grandfather, teacher, or mentor, by assuming an active role, can have an equally positive effect.

.....
Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.—John Crosby

Put high expectations in front of [young people]. Give them love. Give them support. They will succeed.—Said Sewell

.....

THE GREATEST SERMON

A farmer had an unusually fine crop of grain, but just a few days before it was ready to harvest, there was a terrible hail and wind storm. The entire crop was demolished. After the storm was over, the farmer and his young son stepped outside. The little boy looked at what was formerly a beautiful field of wheat and, with tears in his eyes, looked up at his dad, expecting to hear words of despair. Instead he heard his father softly sing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." Years later the son, now a grown man, said, "That was the greatest sermon I ever heard." ❀



Thank you, Dad

AN OPEN LETTER BY ANGIE FROUMAN

DEAR DAD,

These are some of the thoughts that come to mind as I sit down to write you for Father's Day. I hope you know how much I love, admire, and appreciate you.

For showing me through your example of giving your life in service to others for the past 37 years, that every sacrifice we make for Jesus and others is worth it—**thank you.**

For all those times when the outlook was bleak, but you held on and kept trusting Jesus to pull us through—**thank you.**

For making time, despite your work deadline that day, to help me finish my project for Bible class when I was in the 2nd grade (I still have that booklet!)—**thank you.**

For not getting impatient over my childish questions and nonsensical conversation starters—**thank you.**

For all the memorable trips you took us on and for lugging all our extra baggage—**thank you.**

For the tasty little healthful treats you brought home for us kids, which we always looked forward to and enjoyed so much—**thank you.**

For being the one to take me shoe shopping and for not stopping till we found the perfect pair—**thank you.**

For doctoring all those scraped knees, splinters, and maladies of every sort, and for dispensing all that extra attention and moral support in the process—**thank you.**

For all the amusing and animated tales of your childhood—**thank you.**

For the bedtime stories, which were always a high point of my day—**thank you.**

For making me feel safe and secure no matter where in the world we were, just because you were there—**thank you.**

For all the great basketball and softball games we played together when those were my passion—**thank you.**

For the times when you had to put your foot down and make me toe the line and abide by our family rules (now that I have kids of my own, I know how tough that is, and how important)—**thank you.**

For believing in me when it was time for me to spread my wings and fly, but I was sure I'd bungle it—**thank you.**

For teaching me how to negotiate the rental contract on my first place away from home—**thank you.**

For being a fun and adventurous grandpa to my kids—**thank you.**

For those one-on-one times you spent with me, in spite of your busy schedule and long to-do lists, which always meant the world to me—**thank you.**

Your daughter

ANGIE FROUMAN IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO. ☚

The connection

BY JULIE VASQUEZ

God's idea of prayer is not a ritual, but loving and lively communication between a father and his beloved children.

But sad to say, most people don't think they can talk to God like that. Some think they're not religious enough, not righteous enough, or not spiritual enough. Some think He's too big, too far above them. Some think He's too busy to be concerned about them and their problems, which they think must seem awfully petty to Him. Some feel unworthy, not good enough. Some feel guilty or ashamed about things they've done. Some are even afraid of Him. If only they understood how differently God sees it!

God wants to have a personal relationship with each of us, and He wants it to be the deepest, most meaningful, most fulfilling and rewarding, most natural part of our lives. Now that's not to say He wants to take away from the other relationships and activities that we enjoy and consider important. To the contrary, He wants to be a part of all that. He wants to make our day-to-day living easier, He wants to give the things we experience greater meaning, and He wants to enjoy them with us. In a word, He wants to make our lives better. He wants to add a wonderful new dimension to all that we do—the dimension of His loving presence.

If God is your Father, please call home!

How do we establish such a relationship, especially when we feel small and unspiritual and unworthy? How do we make that connection?—Through His Son, Jesus.

None of us can really grasp how great and wonderful God our Father is, because He and His Spirit are greater than the whole universe. He's so beyond our comprehension that He had to send us Someone who could show us His love, Someone who could experience, Someone who could bring God down to the level of our limited human understanding. So He sent His Son, Jesus.

Jesus lived for thirty-three years on Earth in human form and experienced the joy and sorrows that we as humans experience.¹ Jesus has been here, so He can understand us and be the link between us and God.²

We can get personal with Jesus. He even told us to ask Him into our hearts: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."³ He's the One we can have direct, personal



contact with. He is the One we can approach God through.

If you have prayed to receive Jesus as your Savior, you already have that connection. If not, you can make it right now by sincerely praying a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me. I need Your love to cleanse me from my mistakes and wrongdoing. I now open the door of my heart and ask You to please come into my life and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

"THE CONNECTION" IS ADAPTED FROM THE BOOKLET *PRAYER POWER* FROM AURORA PRODUCTION, AND IS AVAILABLE FROM ONE OF THE ADDRESSES ON PAGE 2. ✉

¹John 1:1–3,14

²1 Timothy 2:5

³Revelation 3:20



WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Some people picture God as an all-seeing eye carrying around a big stick, ready to clobber them; or as a cruel tyrant, some kind of monster who is trying to frighten them into hell. But actually, He is love! He is our loving heavenly Father who is trying to love everyone into heaven. He's so close, so intimate, so personal, so loving, so kind, so tender, so gentle, so concerned—and He's waiting with open arms. The only reason He follows us around is that He's hoping we'll turn around and meet Him with open arms.

—David Brandt Berg

Understanding God

YOU DON'T HAVE TO understand God in order to love Him. In fact, no one can ever fully understand God. It's impossible because, as He says, His ways are far above our own. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."¹ Forget trying to figure out God! Just accept His love by faith.

Jesus tried to make it simple. He said, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."² What baby or little child understands all about his mother or father, or how he was born, or all about life? Yet he is instinctively attuned to the most profound thing in the world—love. He feels his parents' love and receives it and responds with love.

The Bible tells us that "God is Spirit"³ and "God is love."⁴ He's the very Spirit of love in your heart. It's impossible to fully understand God and His love, but it is possible to receive His love and to love Him in return. Making a personal connection with the God of love is so simple that many people can't believe it. It's just a matter of asking in faith and receiving.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG ✠

What baby
or little child
understands all
about his mother
or father?

¹Isaiah 55:9

²Matthew 18:3

³John 4:24

⁴1 John 4:8



All my friends were distancing themselves from their parents, and I felt compelled to follow suit.

And so, as a child, I had immense love and respect for him. He was my dad, and I would do whatever I could to please him if it would get me just one more minute with him.

But as happens, I grew older. Passing through my preteen and early teen years was rough. I felt as though I had to pull away from him, as that was what kids did at that age. All my friends were distancing themselves from their parents, and I felt compelled to follow suit. I'm sure it's not easy for parents to watch their kids drift away, but I refused to see that back then.

I grew older still, and we grew even further apart. When I got mixed up with the wrong crowd and got into delinquency and drugs, I pushed my dad out completely, not wanting to face retribution for my poor decisions. He might have understood part of what was going on, but I didn't. I was blind to how my actions hurt him, and I couldn't see that he wanted to see me make something of myself simply because he loved me. That was a concept beyond my years. All I could see was the world immediately around me, selfish people doing selfish things, and I thought he was one of them.

Things got even worse, and eventually I got into trouble with the law for an act of sheer stupidity. But rather than admit where I had gone wrong, I let these things turn into resentment toward my dad. Every step he took to try and help me see how I was messing up my life was perceived by me as another step to control me.

When I was 17 and the last of his children still living with him, we had a falling out and I moved out. He tried to help me see the road I was headed

NOW I SEE

BY PETER STORY

I HAVE TO SAY THAT I genuinely admire my dad. But in saying that, I also have to admit that wasn't always an easy thing for me to say. Over the years I've come to see more and more how much I couldn't see.

I was the youngest of three children raised by a single dad. I'm sure it was tough for him, but he didn't act like it around us. I can see now how wise that decision of his was. He had many difficulties of his own, but he made sure he remained an example of our heavenly Father so we would feel safe and secure.

I had pushed away a person who loved me dearly and only wanted to help me out of love.

down, but I was determined to hang on to my pride and be master of my own destiny. No one but me would make decisions about how I was going to live.

I moved in with some friends and continued further down the road I was following. If I had thought things were bad before then, it was clear that my life was now like a car careening downhill. In the months that followed, I got into some very troubling relationships, often didn't have food to eat, found out the true value of my "friends" when they attempted to take advantage of me in drug deals, and narrowly escaped jail. I finally saw that if I didn't slam on the brakes soon, I was headed for a big crash.

In that time of desperation, about to hit bottom, I turned to Jesus. When I did, He helped me begin to see how blind I had been for years. I had pushed away a person who loved me dearly and only wanted to help me out of love.

I made amends with my father, and I am now able to look back on those dark experiences and actually be thankful for them, in part because they gave me a much deeper respect and love for my dad. Through his example, I learned to appreciate those who lay down their lives for others, simply because of love. It was that appreciation that led me, at age 19, to dedicate my life to serving God and others. Five years later, I'm still finding new reasons to be thankful for a dad who cared so much for someone who cared so little for him. I couldn't see it then, but now I see.

PETER STORY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO. ✂

Unconditional love

In the parable that Jesus told about the prodigal son,¹ do you remember how the father acted when the boy returned home? Did he run up and sniff his breath to see if he had been drinking? Did he comment on how poorly he had cared for his clothes? Did he criticize his straggly hair and dirty fingernails? Did he inquire about the balance left in his checking account? Of course not. He hugged the boy—the hug of loving acceptance.

—Dr. Bob Pedrick

¹Luke 15:11–24



FEEDING READING

A godly father...

...bases his life and actions on God's Word.
Deuteronomy 12:28

...sets a good example.
1 Corinthians 11:1

...has strong moral character.
Proverbs 20:7

...seeks God's guidance in raising his children.
Judges 13:8b

...loves his children unconditionally.
Luke 15:11–24

...provides materially for his family.
1 Timothy 5:8

...is actively involved in his children's education and moral training.
Proverbs 22:6
Ephesians 6:4

...teaches his children the Word of God.
Deuteronomy 6:6–7

...understands his children's limits and sympathizes.
Psalm 103:13–14

...treats his children gently and lovingly.
Colossians 3:21

...corrects his children when needed.
Proverbs 13:24
Proverbs 3:12

...is rewarded in his children.
Proverbs 23:24–25
3 John 4



Look on the bright side

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

LIFE IS SELDOM problem free, and it seems that many of our problems involve the people closest to us—family members, co-workers, neighbors, and others with whom we interact on a regular basis. Even if those people aren't the cause of our problems, they are affected by our reactions to them. If we are in the habit of reacting negatively, that can sour life and relationships faster than almost anything else.

One of the secrets to both happiness and success with people is to not allow the relatively small problems and irritations of daily life to cast large shadows. Helen Keller hit on that truth when she said, “Keep your eyes to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows.” The apostle Paul was more specific when he said, “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”¹

For the next couple of weeks, why not take a few minutes each night to reflect on your day? What were the high points and low points? Did you thank God for the highs? How could you have reacted better to the lows by looking on the bright side? There's something to be gained from even the worst situations if you look for it. By recasting the events of your day in a more positive light, you condition yourself to react more positively in the future. ✨

¹Philippians 4:8



Leading the way

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Your children need Me, like you do. They need to learn to include Me in their daily lives. They need to learn to trust Me when the going is hard. They need to learn to depend on Me. They need to learn to bring their problems to Me. They need to learn to pray for others. They need to learn to listen to My voice, so I can help them make the right choices. Most of all, they need to learn to love Me and accept My love.

Do you want your children to learn all these things? They will as they see them in you. The best way to get your children to go the right way is to lead the way. I want the best for your children and it is Mine to give, but you are the channel through which most of My blessings will flow. How much I am able to work in your children's lives depends largely on how much I am able to work in yours. Love Me with all your heart. Seek to please Me. Ask Me to lead the way. Follow closely, and I will do the rest.