



ACTIVATED PARENTS

The ACTIVATED Magazine Articles on Parenting

From the First 124 Issues

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PRIORITIES

BY MARIA FONTAINE



If today was your last day and you knew it, how much time would you spend on things that mean nothing in the scope of eternity?

Your minutes would be extremely valuable, and you would choose to spend them on the things that were most important to you. The things of the world would seem pointless—almost offensive to your spirit. You would want to love those dearest to you, and to make sure they know how much they mean to you. You would be righting any wrongs and working out anything that had come between you. If you have ever come face to face with death or been with a loved one through a life-threatening illness and seen their priorities realign, you understand this. Everything becomes abundantly clear in those moments. The only thing that matters is love.

Our souls receive personality from God. They are designed to be filled by Him. The danger for us all comes when we crowd them full of our own petty ambitions and our shortsighted ideas of fulfillment and leave no room for the work that must be done in us.—William Kirk Kilpatrick

In good times and rough times, the happiness and joy that Jesus can give you is light years beyond anything that the world can offer. Fulfillment, peace, love, satisfaction, knowledge, truth—there is no way that the world can compete with Him in those areas. It takes discipline of mind and body to learn to treasure those things above the fleeting pleasures that the world has to offer. It's a matter of satisfying your heart and mind more than your five senses. When it comes down to it, that's really all the world can give you—temporary satisfaction of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. But beyond those things, nothing the world has can satisfy the other cravings in your soul. Only Jesus can really satisfy. He is the answer. But as long as you're still looking for the things of this world to satisfy and make you happy, you won't find the truth.¹ ❧

¹1 John 2:15–17

The source of true love

GOD CREATED US with the need to love and be loved, and He alone can satisfy the deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding. The things of this earth can satisfy the body, but only God and His eternal love can ever fill that aching spiritual void in our hearts that He created for Himself alone. The human spirit can never be completely satisfied with anything less than utter union with the great and loving Spirit that created it.

“God is love.”¹ He is the very Spirit of love itself, true love, everlasting love, real love, genuine love that never ends from a lover who never leaves, the lover of all lovers. He’s pictured in His Son, Jesus, who came for love and lived in love and died for love that we might live and love forever. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”²

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

When we find Jesus and receive Him as our Savior, we make direct, personal contact with the creator and source of love, God Himself. New worlds of love open to us. Our perception of love in its many human forms deepens and gets better. But there’s even more than that in store for us: We can experience the supernatural love

of God that far surpasses any earthly loves.

To receive God’s love in Jesus, all you have to do is open your heart and ask Him to come in. Jesus promised, “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 Jesus waits lovingly and meekly at your heart’s door, not forcing Himself upon you, not pushing the door open, but waiting for you to simply ask Him in. If you haven’t yet done so, you can right now by praying a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for me. I need Your love to cleanse me from past wrongs. I now open my heart and I ask You to come into my life. Please fill me to overflowing with Your love. Amen.

When you have done this, your life will be changed. Like a newborn baby, you’ll be born into a whole new world of love you have only dreamed of. He can give you a whole lifetime of love—all the love you’ll ever need to live your days to the full and come through any situation victoriously—but He can’t give it to you all at

¹John 4:8

²John 3:16

³Revelation 3:20

The things of this
earth can satisfy the
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void in our hearts
that He created for
Himself alone



once. Jesus and His love are always there for you, but you need to keep coming back for more. You need to let Him fill you up daily, and sometimes even hour by hour or moment by moment.

As you spend time praying to Jesus, reading His Word, and listening to His voice in your heart, He will impart His love to you and it will become part of you. Little by little you will become more like Him. You'll become more loving; His love will spill out of you on others. As you grow and mature in His love, His Spirit within you will enable you to do the humanly impossible: love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself.⁴

—SHANNON SHAYLER

His love for you is unconditional. No matter how weak or disheartened you may feel right now, or how disappointed you may be in yourself or others, He still loves you. His great, perfect, marvelous, unconditional love is not lessened, no matter what the circumstances or conditions. He keeps pouring it on, and pouring it on without measure and without limit.

His love is always there for us, pouring forth in full measure, gushing forth in such abundance! And we can freely experience that love; we can have it manifested in our lives as much as we desire, according to our obedience

and yieldedness to Him. He's always looking for ways to show His love if we'll just let Him. He's just waiting for us to make a way, an avenue for His love to pour forth, and we do that by staying close to Him, by loving Him, and by doing the things that He wants us to do.

—MARIA FONTAINE

If people could just understand the magnitude of the Lord's love—how truly unconditional it is, how vast and deep and wide and unending it is—it would solve so many of their problems. They would find freedom from so many of their fears and worries and regrets. If they could just understand that, then they'd know that everything is going to work out, that He is going to cause everything to work together for good,⁵ because He is in control of every detail and His hand on their lives is so perfectly loving.

—D.B.B. ✝

FOR MORE INSPIRING AND THOUGHT-
PROVOKING MATERIAL ON THE WORLD'S ALL-
TIME FAVORITE TOPIC, LOVE, ORDER THE
BOOKLET *LOVE'S MANY FACES* FROM ONE OF THE
ADDRESSES ON PAGE TWO OF THIS MAGAZINE.

⁴Matthew 22:37–39

⁵Romans 8:28



Love

as seen through the
eyes of children

A GROUP OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS asked this question to a group of four- to eight-year-olds: “What does love mean?” The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think.

“Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way.”

“When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That’s love.”

“When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth.”

“Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.”

“Love is when someone hurts you, and you get so mad but you don’t yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings.”

“Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.”

“Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My mommy and daddy are like that.”

“Love is what’s in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.”

“If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.”

“When you tell someone something bad about yourself and you’re scared they won’t love you anymore. But then you get surprised because not only do they still love you, they love you even more.”

“There are two kinds of love, our love and God’s love. But God makes both kinds of them.”

“Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.”

“My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don’t see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night.”

“Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.”

“Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford.”

“Love is when your puppy is so glad to see you even though you left him alone all day.”

“Love cards say stuff on them that we’d like to say ourselves, but we wouldn’t be caught dead saying.”

“You really shouldn’t say I love you unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.”

“When they crucified Jesus, God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn’t. That’s love.”

—Compiler unknown

By Katie Roselle, USA

It Happened to Me

Friendship, marriage, children, travels, lessons—love and happiness!

DAN AND I HAVE BEEN MARRIED for over 25 years. We met when I was 18 and Dan 19, and we'd both just begun what would become lifetime careers as Christian volunteers with The Family. I was a full-time teacher for 17 preschoolers at the time. Completely immersed in my work with the children, I hadn't given much thought to marriage.

Then Dan volunteered to drive the children on Sunday outings. We lived quite far from the city, so I would read the Bible to him on the long drive. When it got too dark to read on the way home, we would sing. As our friendship grew, so did our respect for each other. A mutual love for the Lord and His Word brought us together and has kept us together all these years.

As soon as I got to know Dan, I knew he was the man I wanted to marry! I was attracted to him because of his enthusiasm and friendly manner, and because of all of the attention he showed to the children. He was very generous and seemed to always be giving to others.

Several months later, I relocated in another state where a new school was opening, while Dan stayed back. I had told God (but not Dan) that Dan was the one I wanted to marry; suddenly I didn't know if I would ever see him again.

Three months later, on Christmas Day, Dan came to where I was. We began working together again, helped set up the school, and finally talked about getting married. When we told our friends, they seemed to have a collective sigh of relief and said, "Finally!"

The night before our wedding, we stayed up all night working on classrooms for the new school. While we took a nap the next morning, the children made cards to surprise us. One of the most outstanding things about our wedding turned out to be a message from the Lord that one of our friends received for us, in which He said He had called us to serve Him together in these Last Days. That prophecy has since helped us



through many troubles and difficulties.

Heartbreaks and Healings

Then we hit some hard times. When I became pregnant for the first time, I didn't know how to take care of myself, so I overworked myself and practically stopped eating when I had morning sickness. Our first baby was born in the sixth month of pregnancy and didn't survive—a *very* difficult experience for such a young couple!

Shortly thereafter, we prayed about where the Lord wanted us next. As we learned more about hearing from God together and finding His will, opportunity knocked. God led us to move to Latin America, where we helped set up several small schools for the children of other Christian workers like ourselves.

I became pregnant again, and again our hearts were broken when the twins I was carrying were also born too early and passed on to be with the Lord. During these very difficult times, only the Lord and our faith in Him kept our marriage together. We learned to not give up, and also to not take the children that surrounded us for granted; each little life was a miracle.

In time the Lord blessed us with a baby who stayed

here with us. I needed extra strength and faith during that pregnancy, and God's Word became my greatest resource. I learned to live closer to Him, and He saw me through. Now Dan and I have seven wonderful children on Earth, and three in Heaven. The Lord has helped us through a lot!

Investing in a Marriage

We found that success in marriage depends largely on how much each partner is willing to give to make his or her spouse happy. We also found that problems entered in when pressures and responsibilities grew and we didn't make opportunities to keep up our communication. The work was inevitable, but we finally realized that we needed to organize our days to include special times together, to communicate and show that we cared about and appreciated one another.

Some things that helped us greatly were reserving an evening to go out together, to talk and pray and relax together; saying words of appreciation during "ordinary" days and activities; finding little things the other liked and doing them; banning discussions of the business of the day from bed, in favor of deeper and more intimate conversations; agreeing to talk out differences as they came up; helping each other see and correct mistakes we had made, while remaining respectful and loving.

Dan and I continue to work and travel together in our ministry for the Lord, but besides being married and working together, we're very good friends. It's taken a lot of love and good hard work on both sides, but the Lord has helped us to nurture and enjoy a very special and loving relationship—and that, of course, makes us love Him all the more!♥

Photo captions (top to bottom): 1. Fall of 1999, Southern California, USA: Dan and Katie Roselle. 2. Fall, 1973, Burlington, Washington, USA: Dan chopping wood for the winter. The building on the left is the school building where we taught. 3. Spring 1976, Caracas, Venezuela: Dan, Katie and first son, Daniel. First time to South America. 4. 2000, Colorado, USA: Dan, Katie, their seven children, and granddaughter. 5. November 1999, Tijuana, Mexico: Dan and Katie with a group of teenagers getting ready to paint an orphanage.



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mother once took her young son, who was just beginning to learn to play the piano, to hear the world-famous pianist Jan Paderewski in concert. After an usher had shown them their seats, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. The little boy saw that as his opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, and eventually explored his way through a door marked “NO ADMITTANCE.” When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that her son was missing.

Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive grand piano on stage. In horror, the mother saw her



little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” At that moment, Paderewski made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy’s ear, “Don’t quit. Keep playing.”

Then Paderewski leaned over, reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and added a third part. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

That’s the way it is with our heavenly Father. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren’t exactly graceful, flowing music. But with the hand of the Master, our life’s work truly can be beautiful.

Next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. You can hear the voice of the Master, whispering in your ear, “Don’t quit. Keep playing.” Feel His loving arms around you. Know that His strong hands are there, helping you turn your feeble attempts into true masterpieces. Remember, God doesn’t call the equipped; He equips the called. As long as you’re trying your best to do what He knows is best, He’ll always be there to love and guide you on to great things.

*“Don’t quit.
Keep playing.”*

—Author unknown

a little
child
shall
lead
them



What difference can one word make? One phrase? One sentence? Each of us has it within our power to affect someone else's life forever, and to bring him or her just a little bit closer to the kingdom of God.

THE SURGEON SAT BESIDE THE BOY'S BED; the boy's parents sat across from him.

"Tomorrow morning," the surgeon began, "I'll open up your heart..."

"You'll find Jesus there," the boy interrupted.

The surgeon looked up, annoyed. "I'll open up your heart as we begin the operation," he continued, "to see how much damage has been done..."

"But when you open up my heart, you'll find Jesus in there."

The surgeon looked to the boy's parents, who sat quietly. "When I see how much damage has been done, I'll close your heart and chest back up, and I'll plan what to do next."

"But you'll find Jesus in my heart. The Bible says He lives there. The hymns all say He lives there. You'll find Him in my heart."

The surgeon had had enough. "I'll tell you what I'll find in your heart. I'll find damaged muscle, low blood supply, and weakened vessels. And I'll find out if I can make you well."

"You'll find Jesus there too. He lives there."

The surgeon left.

After the surgery, the surgeon sat in his office, recording his notes. "Damaged aorta, damaged pulmonary vein, widespread muscle degeneration. No hope for transplant. No hope for cure. Therapy: painkillers and bed rest. Prognosis"—here he paused—"death within one year."

He stopped the recorder, but there was more to be said.

"Why?" he asked aloud. "Why, God, did You do this? You've put this boy here. You've put him in this pain, and You've cursed him to an early death. Why?"

The Lord answered and said, "The boy, My lamb, was not meant for your flock for long, for he is a part of My flock, and will forever be. Here, in My heavenly flock, he will feel no pain, and he will be comforted as you cannot imagine. His parents will one day join him here in Heaven, and they will know peace, and My flock will continue to grow."

The surgeon's tears were hot, but his anger was hotter. "You created that boy, and You created that heart. He'll be dead in months. Why?"

The Lord answered, "The boy, My lamb, shall return to My flock, for he has done his duty. I did not put My lamb with your flock to lose him, but to retrieve another lost lamb."

The surgeon wept.

Later, the surgeon sat beside the boy's bed; the boy's parents sat across from him.

The boy awoke and whispered, "Did you cut open my heart?"

"Yes," said the surgeon.

"What did you find?" asked the boy.

"I found Jesus there," said the surgeon.

—Author unknown

LUNCH WITH GOD

THERE ONCE WAS A LITTLE BOY WHO WANTED TO MEET GOD. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with cookies and a few bottles of juice and started his journey.

When he had gone only a few blocks from home, he met an old man in a park. The old man was sitting by a pond, feeding the birds.

The boy sat down next to him, opened his suitcase, and was about to enjoy a drink when he noticed that the old man looked hungry. So the boy offered him a cookie.

The old man gratefully accepted, and smiled at him. His smile was so incredible that the boy wanted to see it again. So he offered him a drink.

The old man smiled at him again. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they hardly said a word.

As it grew dark, the boy realized he was tired and he got up to leave. But when he had gone only a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old man, and gave him a hug. The old man gave him his biggest smile ever.

When the boy got home, his mother was surprised by the happy look on the boy's face. "What did you do today that made you so happy?" she asked.

"I had lunch with God," the boy replied. But before his mother could respond, he added, "And do you know what? He's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old man, also radiant from his day in the park, returned to the home he shared with his grown son's family. The son was stunned by the look of peace on his father's face and asked, "Dad, what did you do today that made you so happy?"

"I ate cookies in the park with God," the old man answered. But before his son had a chance to respond, he added, "You know, He's much younger than I expected."

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring—all of which have the potential to make someone's day a very special one, or even turn someone's life around.

—Author unknown



... the
power of
a touch,
a smile, a
kind word,
a listening
ear ... the
smallest
act of
caring ...

CHILDREN ARE FOREVER

Compiled from the writings of
David Brandt Berg

BEARING BABIES AND RAISING CHILDREN IS THE GREATEST EXPERIENCE in this natural life. Children are eternal gifts—not just for a time, but for eternity.

Babies are so close to God—straight from Heaven. Although it's very mysterious how the Lord plans and orders His creation, we know that He does not make any mistakes. God is the Creator of souls. He's the one who creates that spark of life, the union of spirit and body to form a human soul.

Of course children are not only a gift of God, but also the work of God. If God has given you children, then your first duty to God is to raise those children right. Your children are God's work for you. They're His children too, of course, but He wants you to take care of and train them.

That's a full-time job, but with that big job come big rewards and lots of benefits. You should be very proud to be a parent, because yours is the greatest work in the world—molding the future. The world of tomorrow is what the parents of today make it, according to the way they raise their children.

What an important job a parent has! It probably doesn't seem very important, just taking care of a baby and changing diapers, but who knows what that baby will grow up to do someday?

Never minimize the training of your children. Did you ever realize that the most important things



children are going to learn in their lifetimes, they learn before they're five years old? So just think how important it is that you teach and train them right during those first formative years. That's why the Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

You can't wait till your child is five years old before you begin teaching him or her. Every single day counts, and what that child learns each day is important. You as a parent are responsible to see to it that your child is not only fed, clothed, protected, and kept healthy, but also that your child is taught God's Word, trained in His truth, and inspired with His love.

Some parents have the wrong attitude that if their kids learn, they learn, and if they don't, they don't. While children shouldn't be forced to learn something they don't want to learn, the truth of the matter is that all children want to learn. They're happier and feel more fulfilled when they are learning,

and they can learn a lot more with a parent's guidance and encouragement than if they are just left to learn on their own. In fact, it is entirely unscriptural to leave children to make up their own minds without first trying to inform them and guide them in their decisions. "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15).

My mother and father placed great importance on teaching me about the Bible, the Lord, spiritual values, and biblical truths. Bible stories and the Bible itself were a tremendous influence in my life. I loved them and believed them because I knew they were the voice of God and the Book of God. As a result, my knowledge of God's Word and its truths were what guided my decisions and kept me through many difficult situations as I grew older.

I traveled a lot when my own children were small, helping to put a Gospel program on over 1,100 radio and 300 television stations over a 13-year period. But when I was home, I followed my parents' example

and spent as much time as possible with my children. I also took them with me on my trips when I could, and constantly taught them myself when we were together. I'd tell them a Bible story at bedtime nearly every night, usually in simple language they could understand. I would even act out parts to help them get the point, and they really enjoyed that. Children's minds are just like sponges, or tape recorders, or computers; they absorb, record, and process everything that goes on around them.

It's simple to teach your young children about Jesus. Just do it from your heart! Point them to the Lord by your example and your love, and by talking to them about Jesus.

As soon as they're old enough to understand what a mother or a father is—someone who loves them and takes care of them, who helped create them and gave birth to them—they're old enough to receive Jesus as their Savior. Just explain that there is a great unseen Father who is everywhere and loves us all very much, but because we've all been bad and deserve to be punished, He sent Jesus to take our punishment for us. Then have them repeat a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, please forgive me for being bad. Please come into my heart and help me to be good.

That's all they have to do! Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). He's just waiting to become their Best Friend and Savior!

May God help us to be good stewards of the most precious gifts He's given us—our children! •



GROWING UP, HELPING OUT



PARENTING FROM THE HEART

By Michelle Lynch

I WATCHED FROM MY WINDOW as a group of neighborhood children tried to retrieve a ball that had fallen into a drain. One boy reached in to get it, and pulled out a handful of leaves and dirt instead. That handful was followed by a second and a third of the same. Soon he and his friends had forgotten all about their ball game and were enthusiastically cleaning out the drain. They worked tirelessly for nearly four hours, as a couple of their parents stood by to guide them.

As I watched that group of five- to twelve-year-olds work happily together, I thought about my oldest son, now in his teens, and how much responsibility I had given him when he was a child. By contrast, my six- and eight-year-old sons weren't nearly as responsible. That's when it dawned on me that I wasn't expecting enough of my

younger boys. The difference was in me. Like most kids their age, my younger two were sometimes rascals, but they also had a desire to help out and take responsibility. I needed to learn to channel their energy in the right direction and in a way that would inspire them rather than push them.

I decided to start working with them each weekend. We tackled such needed projects as gardening, sweeping the driveway, raking leaves, cleaning the pantry, and making jam. Most of these jobs required physical exertion that burned up their excess energy—and they loved it!

I needed and appreciated the help and it kept my boys occupied and out of trouble, but best of all we found that working together can be a fun and unifying experience. Before long they would actually

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ask, “Can we do one of those fun projects, so it’s not a boring weekend?”

Some of the things I learned to keep in mind are:

➡ Be realistic when choosing jobs and setting goals. Don’t get into such a big project that it will leave a mess or create other problems if you run out of steam or time.

➡ Spending quality time together is more important than getting the job done. If I go into the job with my primary goals being to give my boys attention and to strengthen the bonds between us rather than getting a lot done, we actually get more done and it doesn’t become a chore.

➡ Pour on the praise and appreciation. I make a point to be both lavish and specific when I thank my boys for their help and the difference their hard work will make for our whole family.

➡ Reward jobs well done. Knowing that there will be a little treat at the end helps the job go faster, even if the reward is no more than a special snack that the kids fix themselves.

My long-term goal, of course, was to teach the boys to take initiative and be responsible when I wasn’t there to remind them or work with them. As they gradually became more responsible, things that I had first done for them and then with them—like washing dishes, for example—they were able to do on their own.

I could expect more of them, but they still needed commendation from me. There’s a subtle but important difference between doing things out of a sense of responsibility and doing them out

of duty alone. I soon learned that if I failed to keep my boys motivated by praising them for being responsible and working hard, tasks that had once been fun and rewarding challenges became drudgery. I needed to be careful not to take their help for granted.

Another tricky situation was what to do when the boys couldn’t fulfill one of their new responsibilities. I didn’t want to be hardline, but also didn’t want to be so lenient that they stopped taking their responsibilities seriously. It was actually my youngest son who helped me solve this dilemma. He had a good reason for not being able to help with dinner dishes one night, so he offered to do one of my small jobs the next day if I’d do his dishes. His sweet presentation put all of our household chores into the realm of a team effort. It wasn’t a matter of bartering jobs in a self-serving sort of way, but rather a matter of shifting responsibilities. Of course I was happy to say yes, and I heaped on the thanks the next day when he fulfilled his offer without being reminded.

From what I learned by watching those neighborhood children clean out that drain and from working with my own children since, I think I can safely say that most children desire responsibility. They are just waiting to be helpful; they’re waiting on us parents to provide the spark that makes it fun and rewarding for them. If they learn to enjoy and take pride in work when they’re little, they will carry that attitude into the responsibilities that come with adulthood. That’s something that contributes to our overall happiness, I think, and something we all want for our children. •

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By Maria David

Wanted:

I RECEIVED A LETTER in which a man told me of his childhood experiences before he found Jesus. He had been a juvenile delinquent as a preteen and teen, but a dramatic change took place when his father began spending more time with him. Here are excerpts from this man's letter:

"From the age of eight to fourteen I was a very bad boy. My father would leave for work at 3:00 in the afternoon, and come home at 3:00 in the morning. He was asleep when I got up, and by the time I got home from school he had gone to work. I rarely saw him, except for a few minutes on weekends.

"I got into lots of trouble. I stole everything I needed or wanted, including cigarettes, candy, food, and money. I was incorrigible, and did poorly in school.

"At fourteen I was arrested for stealing again and sent to a reform school. My father's first reaction was to be angry with me, but later as he prayed about it, he came to the realization that he had been partly to blame for not being more of a father to me. He reevaluated his life and decided to help me.

"He quit his nighttime job and took a daytime one that paid less, so he could spend time with me every day. When I came home from

school, he was there. He took an interest in how I was doing in school, and helped me with my homework. We joined a men and boys club. Instead of me hanging out at a dingy pool hall, we went together to a recreation center where we played pool, handball, and basketball together—all the things I liked to do. He bought me a season pass at the local golf course, and took me golfing three or four times a week. We were together all the time.

"As my father showed me love and understanding, it changed my life. My grades at school improved until I made the honor roll. I made new friends who were stud-

ous and didn't get in trouble. I had been tough on the outside, but on the inside I had been crying out for love, attention, and companionship. My father's love, as demonstrated by the time he spent with me, was the key."

All children need a father or a father figure—someone they know admires them,

prostitutes, gang members—those who fall through the cracks of society. In the interview she said, "The children that I serve are the most unwanted children, the rejects of the nation."

When the interviewer asked some of the kids what they were doing before they came to the home they

said, "She's my mom. Not by blood, but in a sense, she's still my mom. She takes care of me."

When the kids were asked what changes had come about in their lives as a result of this woman, the meanest-looking kid, the one who used to shoot people for fun, said, "Look inside of us. We've

Real Parents!

has faith in them, enjoys their company, and looks forward to being with them. All children need someone who they know will be there to feel for them and pray for them when they're deeply disappointed, to hold on to them when they're about to lose hope, and to celebrate with them when their dreams come true.

Are your children getting that kind of love? Are there other children around you who don't have a father, who need that kind of love too? You can make a difference!

We often see stories on TV of otherwise ordinary people—teachers, pastors, police, etc.—who have helped bring about remarkable changes in young people's lives, even the worst of delinquents, because they gave them their time.

One such news spot featured a woman who had opened a home for troubled kids—runaways, castoffs,

answered, "Taking drugs." "Fighting a lot." "Pimping girls." "Shooting people for fun."

When talking about the kids, the woman said, "They've lost all hope. They've lost trust in adults. We adults are too busy. We don't listen anymore. No one has time for the children anymore."

When asked what the children need, she responded, "These guys? It's a very simple formula. You know what these kids really need?—Motherly love. They want role models. They want people who will be honest with them. They want someone to discipline them. They want someone who can teach them responsibility, consequences. Someone to hold them, hug them. I don't give up on them. If you teach them to give up easily, they'll give up."

One of the older boys hugged this woman and

got hope. We've got dreams. We care too. Now I want to go to college."

This woman's closing message to parents was: "Love your children. Don't give up on them. Love them till it hurts. That's what love is all about—loving unconditionally, till it hurts!"

This woman is making a difference. Just one caring person is changing the lives of those kids. We can easily lose sight of the power of one individual. We can depend too much on society as a whole—its institutions, government, schools—so we as individuals don't feel the need to take responsibility for children, whether our own or some whose paths simply cross ours, who may need us.

You could be Jesus' love for a child. You could be part of God's plan of love and care for that young life. Your love, concern, and friendship could make a world of difference! •



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

What to Do when You Don't Know What to Do

Q: MY ELDEST SON HAS BECOME REBELLIOUS to just about every rule in our home. This has been going on for months now, and it's getting harder and harder to communicate with him or to get to the bottom of his bad behavior. I'm exasperated! What can I do to straighten out my son?

A: When children seriously misbehave, there is usually an underlying cause. Maybe they feel insecure, so they act up to get more of your time and attention, reassurance, and love. Maybe they're upset about something that happened at school. Maybe they're testing the boundaries you've set, to see if you mean what you said. Maybe they think they're old enough to make their own decisions and don't understand the reason behind some of your rules. Maybe it's time to change some rules in order to give

them more room to grow.

Whatever the case, it's important to find out why they're misbehaving, and how you can help them get back on track. Most problems don't just go away by themselves, nor are children usually equipped to handle them on their own. Many times the children themselves don't even know what is wrong. They need a parent's love and guidance.

The best way to know what your children need and how to help them—the only way, really—is to ask the Lord to show you. Next to having the Lord's love, the most important key to successful parenting is learning to ask the Lord for the answers. Jesus always has just the answer you need. Having Him as a parenting partner lifts a great deal of the load off of you. You know you can always go to Him in prayer, and He will speak to

your heart and mind with the guidance and solutions you need.

If your child has been going through a difficult phase that is trying your patience, ask Jesus for help. Share your burden with Him; He has lots of patience. He has had a great deal of patience with your faults and failings, so you can be sure that He will help you be patient with your children's. When you feel at the end of your rope, ask Him for His love and patience. His Spirit will calm your own spirit, bring solutions to your mind, help you to ride out the storm of difficulties that may arise, and help you be the kind of love and support to your children that He is to you.

*This month's answer was provided by Derek and Michelle Brooks, from their book *Keys to Kids*, available from Aurora Production. •



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

A Promise for You and Your Children

All parents feel inadequate in some way or another, at some time or another. It is part of parental love to want the best for your children even if it means giving of yourself beyond your natural limits.

But don't make the mistake many parents do in thinking they have to carry the whole load themselves. If you do that, you'll soon wear out. You need to learn to share the load with Me. If you can't give your children everything you would like to every day, give them what you can and then trust Me for the rest.

The most important thing you can give your children is love—your love and My love. Do that, and you will have happy, well-adjusted children; you will have succeeded as a parent. But to have that love, you must take time with Me and My Word, in prayer and reflection. I have all the strength and peace and faith and love and answers you need. I love your children and know exactly what they need day by day. I want to fill your every need so together we can fill theirs, but to get those things you must spend time with Me.

When it seems impossible to make time for Me, that's when you need it most. Come into My arms and find rest. Cast your burdens upon Me. My shoulders are broad enough and My arms strong enough to carry any load. Make time to be with Me each day and I will answer your prayers for your children. I will make you the parent you want to be. I will do what you can't. And last but not least, your children will see a new light upon your face, for they will see Me there.

parenting from the heart

Coping with the Unexpected

By Jasmine St. Clair

My husband and I pray daily for our girls' safety, and I'm sure those prayers are what have kept them from having more accidents. It's possible, though, that I have also considered my kids exceptions—not to the rules, goodness no!—but exceptions in that they never seemed to do the typical silly little-kid things that lead to accidents or trouble. Like putting things in their mouths.

I suppose I should have seen the warning signal—Lauren, two-and-a-half, snatching up a penny from the floor and gleefully popping it into her mouth. Fortunately she was within arm's reach. I got it out, and Lauren got the appropriate scolding, complete with an explanation of “dire consequences.”

Still, nothing could have prepared me for what happened that night.

My husband and I were getting ready to go out for the evening. The girl's room was darkened, and the kids were squirming in their beds, like they always did. Would they be asleep by the time the babysitter arrived? Probably not.

Sudden Kimberly called out, “Mommy! Mommy! Lauren is choking!”

I grabbed Lauren and asked Kimberly what had happened.

“Lauren swallowed a coin!” she replied.

My mind shut down. I had read and reread—probably five or six times—an article on how to help a choking child, but when I needed it, I couldn't remember a word. I carried Lauren to the lighted hallway and screamed for help.

The worst was not to happen, thank God! Lauren started coughing and I remembered that if choking children can cough, they usually cough up whatever they're choking on.

Two or three seconds later a quarter popped out and rolled onto the floor. I couldn't stop crying—or thanking the Lord for His mercy!

Long after the kids were back in bed, still sobbing and hugging each other in a tender display of preschool sisterly love, “what ifs” raced through my mind.

A choking child can't cry out. The darkened room, me in a hurry to get myself ready for our evening out, my husband already waiting downstairs—what if Kimberly hadn't noticed that Lauren was choking? I might not have heard what was happening until it was too late. What if, instead of the quarter, Lauren had swallowed the penny I found in her bed when I tucked her in the second time? The smaller coin could easily have gotten lodged in her windpipe. Could I have gotten it out before it was too late? What if we'd already gone and the babysitter hadn't heard Kimberly calling for help?

I am now a wiser and warier parent. I learned to not assume that my children would never do foolish, childish things that could put them in danger. I also have a renewed appreciation of the love and mercy of God, for His tender loving care, and especially for the way He answers our daily prayers for our children's safety. When faced with the unexpected and the matter is all but out of our control, having Jesus and prayer makes all the difference! •

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I was watching some little kids play soccer— what most of the world calls football. These kids were only five or six years old, but they were playing a real game, a serious game. Two teams, complete with coaches, uniforms, and a small crowd of parents watching from sideline bleachers. I didn't know any of them, so I was able to enjoy the game without the distraction of being anxious about winning or losing. I only wished the parents and coaches could have done the same. The teams were pretty evenly matched. I will just call them Team One and Team Two.

Nobody scored in the first period. The kids were hilarious. They were clumsy and earnest as only children can be. They fell over their own feet, stumbled over the ball, and kicked at the ball and missed it, but they didn't seem to

care.—They were having fun!

In the second period, the Team One coach pulled out what must have been his first team players and put in the scrubs, with the exception of his best player, who he left at goalie. The game took a dramatic turn. I guess winning is important even when you are five years old, because the Team Two coach left his best players in, and the Team One scrubs were just no match for them.

Team Two swarmed around the little guy at goalie. He was an outstanding athlete for five, but he was no match for three or four who were equally as good. Team Two began to score.

The little goalie gave it his all, recklessly throwing his body in front of incoming balls, trying valiantly to stop them. Team Two scored two quick goals. This infuri-

ated the young goalie. He became a raging maniac, shouting, running, and diving. With all the stamina he could muster, he finally was able to cover one of the boys as he approached the goal, but that boy kicked the ball to another boy twenty feet away and by the time the goalie repositioned himself, it was too late. They scored a third goal.

I soon learned who the goalie's parents were. They were nice, decent-looking people. I could tell that his dad had just come from the office, tie and all. As they yelled encouragement to their son, I became totally absorbed, watching the boy on the field and his parents in the bleachers. After the third goal, the little kid changed. He could see it was no use; he couldn't stop them. He didn't quit, but he became quietly desperate. Futility was written all over his face.

win[■]ner

Thoughts on a soccer game

His father changed too. He had been urging his son to try harder, yelling advice and encouragement. But then he became anxious. He tried to say that it was okay, and to hang in there. He felt the pain his son was feeling.

After the fourth goal, I knew what was going to happen. I've seen it before. The little boy needed help so badly and there was no help to be had. He retrieved the ball from the net, handed it to the referee, and burst into tears. He just stood there while huge tears rolled down both cheeks. Then he went to his knees.

As the father rose to his feet, his wife clutched his wrist and said, "Don't, Jim. You'll embarrass him."

But the boy's father tore loose, climbed down from the stands, and ran onto the field. He wasn't supposed to, of course,

because the game had resumed. Suit, tie, dress shoes, and all, he charged onto the field and picked up his son so everybody would know that this was his boy. And he hugged him and kissed him and cried with him. I have never been so proud of any man in my life.

He carried him off the field, and when they got close to the sidelines I heard him say, "Son, I'm so proud of you. You were great out there. I want everybody to know that you are my son."

"Daddy," the boy sobbed, "I couldn't stop them. I tried, Daddy, I tried and tried and they scored on me."

"Scotty, it doesn't matter how many times they score on you. You're my son, and I'm proud of you. I want you to go back out there and finish the game. I know you want to quit, but you can't. And son, you're going to get scored on

again, but it doesn't matter. Go on, now."

It made a difference.— I could tell it did. When you're all alone, you're getting scored on, and you can't stop them, it means a lot to know that it doesn't matter to those who love you.

The little guy ran back on to the field. Team Two scored two more times, but it was okay.

I get scored on every day. I try so hard. I recklessly throw my body in every direction. I fume and rage. I struggle with every ounce of my being. The tears come, and I go to my knees, helpless. And my heavenly Father rushes right out on the field, right in front of the crowd—the whole jeering, laughing world—and He picks me up. He hugs me and says, "I am so proud of you! You were great out there. I want everybody to know that you are My child—and I declare you the winner!"

—Author unknown

JAM TO REMEMBER

PARENTING FROM THE HEART

I USED TO STRUGGLE MORE OFTEN than I wanted to admit to really *enjoy* my children. Sure, many little unexpected happenings turned to happy thoughts later—the sorts of things that fond memories are made of—but just as often I seemed to spoil the fun for my children before it had a chance to *become* a fond memory. But then something happened to help change that.

It started one Monday morning. No sooner had my husband gone to work, leaving me home with our two young children, than I found myself counting the hours till he would come home. By then it would almost be the kids' bedtime and things would be easier two-on-two.

Morning inched past, and finally it was afternoon. I had hoped to get some work done while the kids took their afternoon naps, but that hope vanished when my youngest, Ella, stayed awake, eager for attention and lively play.

When she finally fell asleep, I plopped myself in a nearby chair, but not a moment had passed before my two-and-a-half-year-old son bounced out of bed and up into my lap.

"I woke up, Mommy!" he announced as

though that were a great accomplishment.

"You sure did!" I tried my best to sound positive, while thinking, *There goes my afternoon. I guess I really won't be getting anything done today.* I looked at my watch. "Two more hours till Daddy's home," I said out loud. "Let's go and get you a snack."

Evan stood on a kitchen chair and leaned against the counter as he helped pour milk into his cup. I would have rather done it without his help, but remembered something my mother had recently said. "At this age he wants to do everything *himself*."

"But that's so frustrating for me," I had complained to her. "Even simple things get complicated and take so much longer."

"It's for the best," Mom had told me. "Just think of it as education—all the things you go through with the kids that are part of daily life, like brushing teeth, washing hands, dressing, making snacks—it's all brand new to them, something new to learn and experience. Those little things teach them self-sufficiency, character, and style. Remember, you're the teacher and your kids are eager young pupils in the school of life."

So I had let Evan help me pour the milk. "There you are," I said as we finished.

*Claire Nichols with
her son, Evan*



“And I’d like some bread, please—with jam on it.” He knew I couldn’t refuse when he asked so politely and cheerfully.

I started toward the fridge, but Evan had beaten me there and was already pulling the jam from the fridge shelf.

I hope that jar doesn’t slip through his little fingers and break, I thought, just as it did!

The jam managed to stay in a fairly neat red splatter on the floor, but the broken glass was a different story. It was *everywhere*, in a hundred pieces. I covered my mouth with my hands to keep the tiredness and frustration from spilling out.

“Never do *that* again!” Evan offered in a sorry and slightly worried tone.

I forced my thoughts into a short prayer. *Jesus, help! I don’t want to lose my patience. I know it wasn’t his fault.*

Suddenly Mom’s words rushed back into my mind—“*something new to learn and experience.*”

I swooped up Evan to the safety of my arms. “First we had better get some shoes on your bare feet, then I’m going to show you how to clean up a broken jar of jam.”

Moments later, as I swept up the mess

and Evan held the dustpan ready, I explained to my little pupil the dynamics of glass: how easily it shatters, and the best way to clean it up when it does.


Mom’s advice was wise. By treating the mishap as a new learning experience for my little one, I felt calm and controlled. Instead of scolding my son and promising myself I’d never make the mistake of letting him get something from the fridge by himself again, I had taught him how to deal with accidents in a positive way.

We got another jar of jam from the cupboard, and went on to butter bread and spread jam together, make coffee for mom, and set it all out neatly on the table to enjoy together. That’s when I caught myself actually *enjoying* the moment!

“You’re such a good cook, Evan!” His little eyes shone. “Mommy is so proud of you!”

“Evan is so proud of *you*, Mommy!” he replied without hesitation. I smiled. Come to think of it, I was proud of myself too.

“I think I’ll buy another jar of jam and make it a permanent fixture on the kitchen counter,” I told Evan, “because enjoying you at this moment is something I want to *always* remember!” □



My Little Girl

I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS THE SAME FOR ALL FIRST-TIME MOTHERS, but nothing holds my interest like watching my little girl. Her facial expressions, the excitement in her eyes, her curiosity—just about anything she does brings out the motherly love in me. And one wonderful day I realized that's how Jesus, in His unconditional love, is with me.

As I watched my Ashley Elle sitting up on the bed and looking at me with her bright blue eyes, all smiles, I thought, *How could I not love her? Sure, at six months she is as active as a puppy, she makes a mess sometimes, she fusses, she wakes up in the night and wants to be fed when I just want to sleep, but no matter what she does, there is no way that I could ever stop loving or caring for her.*

Then I remembered the previous day, when I had felt so low and far from the Lord. I had made so many mistakes! Surely He had stopped loving me—or so it seemed. Then, as I looked into my baby's eyes, He spoke to me. "How could I ever stop loving you? Why would I ever want to stop caring for you? You are the joy of My heart, and I love you. You are My girl. Sure, you aren't perfect and you sometimes make a mess of things, but that's all just part of growing up. I love you more and more every day. And don't worry, you will *always* be My little girl!" □

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, please help me to remember that You love me, no matter what. Even if I mess up, even if I feel lower than low, even if I feel I've failed You or others, Your love is still the most real and most concrete and most absolute truth in my life. You will never stop loving me, and that encourages me to keep going for You. It makes me want to love You back, knowing I could never love You as much as You love me. It makes me want to forgive myself, because I know that You have already forgiven me. It makes me want to lay down the burden of guilt or self-accusation and pick up Your joy and freedom and clarity of mind. I love You, Jesus, because You love me so much. Amen. □

BY MICHELLE CHARISSE



life blessed

DOUBLY blessed

A young mother gets up from her table and dances with her baby girl in her arms. The baby laughs. She is secure. She is loved.

IT'S MOTHER'S DAY. I take my place on stage, test the microphone, and scan the hotel restaurant where some friends and I are about to perform. Most of the 200 people who came for the Sunday brunch are mothers and daughters—young mothers with little girls, elderly mothers with adult daughters, short round mothers with tall slender daughters, and some who look like they could be sisters. There are a few sons and husbands, but they are greatly outnumbered by the women, who are all radiant. The reception desk is heaped with individually wrapped pink roses, the hotel's gift to the mothers on their special day.

As the opening chords of our first number fill the room, I feel my mother's presence. The lyrics remind me of her. "Surround me with the little people..." Mom brought eight little people into this world, each of us her favorite in some inexplicable way. "I want to be held in the everlasting arms of eternity..." Those arms hold her now. It's been seven years since she died of cancer. My dad held her in his arms till she took her last breath. We kids still hug her goodnight as we say our prayers. Now she's in Jesus' arms for eternity. I blink away the tears.

"Laughing and singing, what a way to live..." Now I think about my stepmom, who I love just as dearly and can only think of as "Mom," whose voice I heard on the phone just days ago. As usual, she was full of laughter. If there is one person who knows what it means to live, it's her. "Life ain't worth living, if it's not to give..." I can see her now, giving tirelessly as she cares for my dad and their eleven children who are still at home. (Three of us are grown and living abroad.) Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, giving.

A young mother gets up from her table and dances through the restaurant with her baby girl in her arms. The baby laughs. She is secure. She is loved.

Then I realize why I can smile and laugh and come halfway around the world to show other people God's love. It is because I have been blessed with the love of not one, but two mothers—one who had to leave me but is ever near in spirit, and one who came when I needed a mother the most. What am I doing, fighting back the tears? I am secure. I am loved. God has blessed me in double measure. ◇

(MICHELLE CHARISSE IS A FULL-TIME FAMILY VOLUNTEER IN INDIA.)

To do the job of a mother takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of King Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the administrative ability and courage of King David.

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

REAL *mothers*

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO BEING A MOTHER THAN JUST HAVING A BABY! Almost any woman can have children, but it takes a real mother to raise and care for them and do all the work that's involved—and it's a full-time job! Motherhood is probably one of the hardest jobs in the whole world, yet one that is seldom appreciated enough. People who have never done it can't possibly appreciate what a big job it is! It takes great faith and a whole lot of plain hard work.

Up until a couple of generations ago, most women believed that their calling in life was to be a wife, mother, and homemaker. They gave themselves to it, and began learning it at an early age by helping their mothers do all the things they would one day need to know.

In many modern countries today, however, girls grow up without learning that kind of responsibility. Young women may receive little or no preparation for motherhood and

homemaking before they are plunked down with a full-grown man and a baby and find they don't know what to do with either one of them, much less the housekeeping and cooking. To them, boys were romantic playthings and a husband some kind of a dream, apparently with no work attached. But real life is a drastically different picture. Even with all the conveniences of modern living to take much of the pain out of housekeeping, children are still a full-time job!

To do the job of a mother takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of King Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the administrative ability and courage of King David. David was a fighter, and it takes a lot of fight to be a mother. It also takes the love of God, that's for sure!


I think motherhood is just about the greatest calling in the world! Mothers of the next generation are the ones that are molding the future. The

Never out of style

—A Message from Jesus for Mothers

Old-fashioned motherhood never goes out of style because it's all about love. I made people to need love, and I intended for them to first experience that love through their mothers. Mothers are the embodiment of love and care and tenderness—love that even the tiniest baby can feel and respond to.

So if you think you're missing out or living in the past because you're stuck at home "just" caring for a baby or raising children when you could be pursuing a career, think again. Love is the best thing in life! It's the most important lesson anyone can ever learn and the greatest gift anyone can ever receive—and mothers teach it and give it like no one else. Life would go on fine without many things, but not without mothers. Old-fashioned motherhood is here to stay! ◇



world of tomorrow is what the mothers of today make it, according to the way they raise their children.

My mother undoubtedly had the greatest influence of anybody over my life. Even though she couldn't be with me all the time due to her ministry for the Lord as an evangelist and pastor, I was constantly conscious of her spiritual presence, her love, and how she felt about things. Others had a great influence over me too, of course, like my grandfather and my father, my teachers and caregivers. Children are influenced by a combination of a lot of people and a lot of things—parents, caretakers, teachers, scoutmasters, Sunday school teachers, uncles and aunts, and friends they admire, books, and so on. Nowadays kids can also be greatly influenced by what they are exposed to on television and in movies.

Throughout my childhood, there were wonderful, dedicated people who helped mold my character and



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make me what I would become. I remember well the caretakers and Sunday school teachers my brother and sister and I had when we were young, who read us the Bible and told us Bible stories.

Bible stories and the Bible itself were a tremendous influence on my life, because I knew God was speaking to me through His Book. Thus God was a tremendous influence on my life through my teachers and mother and father, who all taught me of Him. Even as a small child, I knew the Lord, and He was a powerful influence on my life. I also learned a great deal from reading books, especially historical classics with their idealism and heroism.

As a young teen, my father became a tremendous influence in my life too. That is a crucial age when young people learn a lot about the world around them, much of it from their friends and peers. Young teenagers are very idealistic and begin to form strong ideas of what they think is right. The ideals, morals, goals, standards, and hopes that will largely steer their later lives are crystallizing.

At the age of 19 I was filled with the Holy Spirit. After that I just lived in the Bible and devoured the Scriptures all the time. I would say that from then on Jesus really became the greatest influence in my life.

After completing school I helped my mother in her full-time evangelistic work, and she continued to influence me. At 25 I married, and soon came another tremendous influence in my life—my own children!

Children make us parents serious about life and inspire us to be good and do good, to be an example and train them in the way they should go. We realize the sober responsibil-

ity of having a little child's life in our hands, and that he's going to be what we make him. Probably the final greatest influence in your life will be your own children.

Psychologists say that a child learns more in the first five years of his life than he'll learn in all the rest of his life put together. Those first years are extremely important. Parents can't wait till their children are five years old; every passing day is important. Parents are responsible to see to it that their children are not only fed and clothed and protected, get proper sleep and are physically healthy, but that they are also trained, taught, stimulated mentally, and inspired spiritually.

Childrearing is a serious, sobering responsibility. God will hold parents responsible who don't do what's right for their children or don't take care of them properly. If both parents must work at other jobs or are otherwise unable to be the primary caregivers to their children, then it is their responsibility to their children and to God to find somebody who is qualified to give that care and dedicated enough to do it right—and the same goes for single parents.

It cannot be stressed sufficiently how important children are to the future, or how important a mother's job is. God will bless you mothers for all you give of yourselves for these precious, eternal gifts from Him, your children. In fact, He is no doubt blessing you daily in ways that others can't even imagine!

Train your children in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6). When they are grown, your children will be so thankful that they had a *real* mother! ◇

Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.

—WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY (1811–1863), BRITISH NOVELIST

The role of a mother is probably the most important career a woman can have.

—JANET MARY RILEY (1915–), U.S. LAWYER AND WRITER

Rejecting things because they are old-fashioned would rule out the sun and the moon and a mother's love.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Women and children, mother and child—these belong together as naturally as heaven and earth.

—TANG MIN (1956–), CHINESE WRITER

The heart of a mother is a deep abyss at the bottom of which you will always find forgiveness.

—HONORÉ DE BALZAC (1799–1850), FRENCH NOVELIST

Most of all the other beautiful things in life come by twos and threes, by dozens and hundreds.

Plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins, but only one mother in the whole world.

—KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN (1856–1923), U.S. AUTHOR AND EDUCATOR

A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials, heavy and sudden, fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends who rejoice with us in our sunshine, desert us; when troubles thicken around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her



thoughts on mothers and motherhood

kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts.

—WASHINGTON IRVING (1783–1859), U.S. WRITER

Life began with waking up and loving my mother's face.

—GEORGE ELIOT (1819–1880), BRITISH NOVELIST

An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.

—SPANISH PROVERB

My mother was the making of me.

—THOMAS A. EDISON (1847–1931), U.S. INVENTOR

The thing that makes a mother wonderful is that self-sacrificial spirit that is willing to sacrifice her own time and strength and even her health, if need be, for the sake of her child.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)

All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. No man is poor who has a godly mother.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809–1865), U.S. PRESIDENT

Motherhood is the most important of all the professions, requiring more knowledge than any other department in human affairs.

—ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (1815–1902), U.S. CAMPAIGNER FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

From my experience and observation, if a family is held together in difficult circumstances, nine times out of ten it's the woman who's doing it.

—RODDY DOYLE (1958–), IRISH NOVELIST AND PLAYWRIGHT

The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.

—WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE (1819–1881), U.S. POET AND SONGWRITER



IS THE
ANSWER

THE PRIMARY FACTOR IN RAISING CHILDREN IS LOVE. If parents can just learn to treat their children with love and consideration, the children will feel loved and secure.

Most parents can't be with their children all the time, but it's difficult for small children to understand that. Children think they should be the most important things in the world to their parents, so when the parents can't show them constant attention because of other obligations, it hurts the children—and of course, the more children you have, the less individual time and attention you can give each one. That's why it's so important for parents to tune in to their children and give them love and attention when they do have the opportunity.

The first step is to pray for understanding of your children. Ask the Lord to show you what each child needs in each situation, and then do the little things that can mean so much.

Everybody needs to feel special to somebody, to have a personal sense of belonging. No matter how many children you have, you can still give each one something special—either special attention or a special something that means a lot to them—and you should try to do this consistently

so none of them think they're just one more child in the line-up.

Give each one lots of love and encouragement, because words have the power to build them up and help them feel loved. "Look what a big boy you are! We're so proud of you. You've learned so much!" Say things that will let them know they really are special to you.

Small children, especially, don't yet have a concept of time, so if you give one child something and tell the others that theirs will come next time, "next time" will probably seem a long way away and very nebulous. So in most cases when you give one something, you should try to do a little something special for the others too.

You can't and shouldn't treat all of your children the same all the time. Each needs to know they are special in their own way. And when one needs something that the others don't, they have to be taught that it's according to need, not because one is more loved. If you take one out to get a needed pair of shoes, for example, and you bring the others back a little toy or something that may cost only a few cents, this shows that you love them and remembered them too.

A lot of adults don't realize how

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important it is to explain things to children. You can't just assume that they understand. How can they understand hardly anything unless you explain it to them? Most adults don't take things without some kind of explanation, and children have as much right to an explanation as anybody. If you think there could be any question in their minds or hurt feelings, explain. Even if they can't understand everything you say, just the fact that you try to explain it conveys to them that you're concerned about their feelings, and that will help.

It's nearly always a problem when somebody else comes along, like a new baby, who they think is going to take their place. Children's feelings are just the same as adults', only difficult situations can be even more traumatic for children when they haven't experienced those things before and therefore don't have the assurance that things usually work out in the end. That's why children are so much more vulnerable than adults, because of their very limited experience. So you have to treat children even more carefully and tenderly and considerately than adults.

It breaks my heart when I see parents in public places cuff their child on the head or lash out over something that the poor child probably didn't understand in the first place. It's tragic! Children are more sensitive and more easily hurt than adults. They instinctively love and trust their parents, and to destroy that is really sad!

Children aren't that hard to understand if you just put yourself in their position. The experiences they go through are very similar to the things we adults go through, only harder for them to understand and harder for



them to take. When we go through difficulties, even though we know that if we pray the Lord will work things out and see us through, it's still often difficult. But when children go through these things, they're sort of lost unless we do everything possible to reassure them with love.

I once heard a true story about a boy who went to a banquet and found he was the only male guest. He was so nervous that he knocked over his glass of water. The hostess saw his embarrassment and immediately knocked over *her* glass to draw everyone's attention away from the boy and spare his feelings. Without saying a word, she reassured him that it was okay; everyone makes mistakes.

A little love goes a long way! Children are bound to have problems, but no matter what the problem stems from, love can correct it. Even if you don't understand what the problem is, the *Lord* understands—and the answer is love! “Love covers over all wrongs” (Proverbs 10:12 NIV). Just a little love and concern can make up for a lot of mistakes and failures, no matter who or what is to blame. Anybody—child or adult—can be helped by love! Love is the answer! ◇

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The rich parent

What can I give my children, Lord,
When there's not much I can afford?
They rate the best, these girls and boys,
Yet get along with so few toys.
I see nice things I'd like to get,
But can't, for we are poor, and yet
We have great riches in our keep
That kings but dream of when they sleep!

We've wealth to share with all our house,
The Words of Heaven, from God's mouth.
We've love that stands when all else flees,
And mountains tumble to the seas.
We've trust that will not break or tear,
And hope we know is always there.
We've Heaven in our hearts today,
The Son of God who's come to stay.

We've got a Rock on which to stand,
When fears and tremors fill our land.
We've faith to stand the toughest test,
And give us peace when none can rest.
It whispers softly in our ears
To calm our hearts and melt our fears.
It stills the storm and sends the sun,
And helps us stand when all is done.

Jesus, Jesus, what a store
Of treasures, diamonds, at our door!
Your precious Words, so great yet free—
What *riches* You have given me!
I've gifts, new gifts, to give each day,
And when they're gone, I hear You say,
"Come here, My child, peer in My chest,
Behold it all and take the best.

"Heaven's treasures, old and new
I've stored it all for them and you.
Choose everything they'll need someday,
Bright jewels to shine and light their way.
Give each of them a crown of gold,
Whose worth's so great, it can't be told.
Choose all the gems your children lack,
If you need more, why just come back."

For things so priceless, precious, rare,
Most mortal men seem not to care.
But when the earth begins to quake,
Their stores and mighty buildings shake,
When towers tall come tumbling down,
And all man's dreams lie on the ground,
God's own "poor" children then shall find,
A place of rest for heart and mind.

Yes, we are the more truly blessed
For having sought and found the best.
Now all the Words God's given me,
I'll share with children on my knee.
Yes, untold wealth is what we own.
It fills our hearts and fills our home!
What greater gifts could we impart
Than Heaven's Words to children's hearts?

—KAY SPAIN

(KAY SPAIN IS A FULL-TIME FAMILY VOLUNTEER
IN MEXICO, MOTHER OF 11 AND GRANDMOTHER
OF 16.)



Thank you, dear parents...

for being part of the miracle of bringing new lives into the world;
for loving the children I have entrusted to your care;
for opening your hearts and lives to these gifts of joy;
for teaching them that I am love by your own loving examples;
for giving them a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on;
for comforting them when they hurt and need extra tender loving care;
for giving of yourselves for them, asking nothing in return, which teaches them unselfishness and self-sacrifice;
for showing mercy, even when they least deserve it, that they might understand My mercy and forgiveness;
for praying for them in all things big and small, that they might learn the power of prayer;
for leaning on Me when your own strength runs out, which teaches them that My grace and strength are always enough;
for never losing faith, which teaches them the rewards of faith;
for holding on to the promises of My Word, that they too might learn to put their trust in Me;
for giving them back to Me, knowing that I always care for My own;
for loving them unconditionally, no matter where their choices may take them;
for helping them grow into men and women we can all be proud of.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

WHY FEAR THE FUTURE?

I'VE TALKED TO LOTS OF PEOPLE who were afraid of the future, particularly events of the Endtime as described in the Bible's final book, Revelation. Several have said they were afraid to even read those parts of the Bible and would rather not think about it, much like a child who closes his eyes when he's afraid, hoping trouble won't see him.



I must admit that I, too, used to be fearful of coming events. Even though I had been taught all my life about God's power and plan to protect His own in the dark days to come, the mind has a way of forgetting such reassurances when it gets busy worrying. Then something happened that changed that.

Two and a half years ago I discovered that I was pregnant, and that same month God called my husband and me to be missionaries to Africa. The latter was an even bigger surprise because I had lived in Japan most of my life and was actively involved in a counseling program for university students and other charity work. I spoke Japanese, was happy and fulfilled, and felt I had settled into the place God had for me—but then He told me He had some other things to teach me, and that a change of scenery would be just the thing!

After overcoming the initial shock and having a little time to adjust to the idea, I became excited about going somewhere completely different. Within a few months we were on our way. We stopped in Europe to visit my husband's family, and while we were there we contacted some members of The Family who were already in Africa and whom we planned to team up with.

They urged us to bring everything we would need for the baby, as such things were either hard to find, poor

I started to realize that as much as I loved my child and wanted only the best for her, God cared about us even more.

quality, or prohibitively expensive in that part of Africa. Baby things were not inexpensive in Europe, either. To make matters worse, it was winter and the baby would be born in tropical East Africa. No one was selling summer baby clothes.

I started to feel the weight of what I was getting myself into. Was I crazy or being irresponsible to be going to Africa with a baby on the way? How on earth was I going to get everything I needed in such a short time and with so little money? Why me?! I broke down in tears.

I was at rock bottom, but that's not a bad place to be sometimes because then all you can do is look up. I read verses from the Bible on the subjects of encouragement and God's care, and started to realize that as much as I loved my child and wanted only the best for her, God cared about us even more. He was more than able to provide everything we needed. I had only to rest in His arms and listen when He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ... and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30). "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).

Comforted by these thoughts but still not knowing how He was going to supply all we needed in such a short time, we decided to look at flea markets, where it is sometimes possible to find good quality used children's items. One advertisement looked perfect: "Furniture and children's clothes." Off we went with some friends, only to find that the

flea market had almost nothing but antiques and old paintings. One stall had two baby shirts—not exactly "everything we would need"!

There I stood, completely dismayed and discouraged, when our friends ran up to us, breathless and excited about something they had found. *Great*, I thought. *Two or three more baby shirts. That should cover it.* But then I reminded myself that God was my Father and He would not let me down.

What they had found was one stall I had somehow overlooked, where a man was selling his child's complete set of clothes from newborn to one year old. All of it was in near-perfect condition and most of it was for summer! There were also some toys and other baby items we would need. When the man heard we were going to Africa as missionaries, he practically gave it all to us!

Later, my sister-in-law, who works for a pharmaceutical company, gave us everything else we would need—vitamins, creams, powders, you name it. By the time we left for Africa, we didn't lack a thing!

What does that have to do with fears about the Endtime?—Now whenever I am faced with such fears, especially in regards to our little girl, I recall that experience.

If you have those fears too, think about how much you love your children and to what lengths you would go to protect and provide for them, then multiply that by a million. God is the best Father you could possibly have. We are only human, so it's inevitable that we sometimes let our children down or are less than perfect parents, but God will never fail. We are safe in His arms forever! ◇

(TINA YAMAGUCHI IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN UGANDA.)

OR

BITTER BETTER?

BY DAVID PHILLIPS

EVEN AS A TEENAGER I loved babies and couldn't wait to be a father. By the time I was 20, I was married and my wife Anisa and I were expecting our first child. We were overjoyed and waited with great anticipation for the arrival of our son. (An ultrasound had revealed that our baby was a boy.)

Finally it came—the big day that we had so looked forward to for nine months. Finally we would see the face of our dear son. But the Lord had other plans. Complications developed during the delivery, and He took our dear little baby back to be with Him before he drew his first breath.

Unless you've lost a child yourself, you can't imagine the shock, the pain, and the anguish we felt. There were so many thoughts, so many regrets, so many unanswered questions. What had we done to deserve this? Where did we go wrong? Why did God allow this to happen? Was He punishing us for something? Where were we to go from here? Would we ever smile again?

All the while God said, "Trust. Trust in Me that I do all things in love." But how *could* we trust when it seemed our whole world had shattered and fallen out from under us?

As the weeks and months passed, I had to decide to either hold on to the



hurt or to let my son go, get a grip on life, and start over. Would I let this heartbreaking experience turn me bitter or make me better?

Thanks largely to my friends and family, whose prayers and words of encouragement strengthened me through each trial, I decided to trust God and give my beloved son back to Him. Even though it was still hard for me to understand why God had let such a tragic thing happen, I chose to accept by faith that He had allowed it for a good and loving reason, and that one day *I would* understand.

As time went on, Anisa and I did find peace in our hearts and we were able to smile once again. We were beginning to see the rainbow after the storm.

During my times of great trial and heartache, the same verse from the Bible had kept coming to mind: “God comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). I see now what I couldn’t see at the time: God broke and then mended my heart in order to give me a greater understanding of what others are faced with.

In the two and a half years since our son went home to Heaven, I have learned many priceless lessons. God used it to soften my heart, and through it He has given me a gift of being able to encourage and comfort others.

He soon brought others across my path who had also recently lost loved ones and, just as the Scripture says, I was able to comfort them with the same comfort with which God had comforted me, by leading them to Him.

I can truly say that although it was a painful experience, it has served to strengthen me and make me a better tool in God’s hands—one that is able to be a blessing to many others who don’t yet know Him and don’t have faith to lean on in their times of great trial.

I am now happily serving the Lord and others in Khon Kaen, a province of northeastern Thailand, with Anisa and our one-year-old daughter. (Yes, the Lord soon blessed us with another child.) I can honestly say with all my heart that it was well worth all the tears and heartache, because through it all I learned to trust in God’s love.

To anyone reading this who has lost a loved one or is going through other severe difficulties I would say, please hold on, no matter how difficult the trial or dark the night. There will soon be light at the end of the tunnel. Look to God and His Word for comfort and strength. He loves you and wants to see you happy again. He’s simply making a better you. ◇

(DAVID PHILLIPS IS A FULL-TIME FAMILY VOLUNTEER IN THAILAND.)

I was able to comfort them with the same comfort with which God had comforted me.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Help me to trust You, Lord, and never to question or criticize You for anything You send or allow to come my way. I know that You know best, even when it doesn’t seem best to me at the time. Give me the faith to let go of my own wants and wishes so You can have Your way. You have promised to always work things out for my good in the long run, because You have my best interests at heart.

Help me to not become resentful or bitter. Harboring bitterness is like holding onto a deadly infection, and who would want to do that? Rid me of any doubts or fears or hurts or resentment that could lead to bitterness. Give me faith to just let it all go, to forgive and forget and go on to better things—all the wonderful things You promise those who trust and keep their hearts right with You.

My Parenting Safari

My five-year-old son Chris and I went on a trip to the village of Sintet, Gambia, where a group of us volunteers from The Family are helping to build a school.

Until this trip, I had enjoyed the thrilling tales told by coworkers who had returned from there. But now that my twin babies were old enough to eat solids and drink bottles, I could leave them in the care of others for a couple of days. When I heard that a team needed to make a one-and-a-half-day trip to the

village, I jumped at the chance to go.

The next day we were on the road, ready for adventure. Chris sat in a cozy spot in the jeep that his grandpa, who is also a member of our team, had prepared for the occasion. For most of the trip, all I could hear was his excited voice saying things like, "What's this? Oh, Mommy—look! Can you take a photo of me on the termite hill?"

The rainy season was just beginning to transform the dry West African bush into gorgeous green. The country around us was full of enchanting beauty—a mix of low rolling hills, rice paddies, coconut trees, and ponds. Farmers peacefully tilled the land.

Along the way, we enjoyed delicious local food, explored a thick swamp full of towering termite hills and giant baobab trees with trunks often thicker than our car.

As we drove up the dirt road lined with cashew trees that led to Sintet, we could see a large crowd gathered at the school site straight ahead. Two of our volunteers, Joe and Richard, had arrived ahead of us and were already at work directing the construction. Village children crowded around our jeep and flashed gorgeous, white-toothed smiles. As soon as Chris got down from his seat, the village kids surrounded him and helped him get acquainted with everything.

The other kids had been pushing around toy cars made of cut-up plastic bottles, the rubber soles of broken flip-flops, and sticks. With the children's help, Chris soon had his very own car and was pushing it over anthills and through puddles. A crowd of boys ran after him.

With no electricity in the village, most people go to bed when darkness falls, and so did we, in our small tent under the star-filled sky.

Day two at Sintet was just as much fun. I prepared my materials for the morning class I would be teaching the village children, and Dad helped me find a nice quiet spot in front of a baobab tree to give the class. We sang some action songs, and then I told the story of Creation, using movable flannel figures on a flannel-covered board. This was high-tech to these children. Finally I reviewed some basic scholastic themes: colors, common animals, following directions, flashcards of a few simple words, counting to ten, etc. Chris did a great job as my assistant teacher.

Then the children led us to fields where they showed us several large monkeys at play and a huge snake that hung from a tree branch high above us.

They also treated us to a yellow and



red moon-shaped fruit we had never seen before, which they called *tao*. To “pick” the fruit, the children climbed the large tao tree and swung from its highest branches. As they were about to begin, I felt a tug on my sleeve and turned to see who it was. One of the boys who had stayed earthbound said, “We must go! The fruit will hit us!” And he was so right! Fruit began raining down all around us.

Soon there were piles of fruit everywhere. How would we carry it all back to the village? The children knew how to do that too, of course. They pulled up their shirts to make pouches, which they filled with fruit, and headed back to the school site to store what we hadn’t already eaten.

A few of the kids stuck with Chris and me until the very end of our visit. Many of these dear children had at first seemed quite tough because of the hardships they face every day. (They sometimes bear incredible pain without shedding a tear, or if they do cry, it’s only for an instant.) As we got to know them, we saw that inside their tough exteriors were tender hearts, like sponges just waiting to soak up love. Chris and I gave them as much attention as we could. Some even began to call me “Mom,” which said in their own special way how much they appreciated the love and attention we were giving them. To me, this was just as fulfilling as seeing the progress that was being made on the school construction.

All too soon, it seemed, we were home again. My visit to Sintet with Chris had been an extraordinary cultural experience, like no other I’ve had (and I’ve traveled all but four of the countries of South America and extensively in North America). What made this



trip so special is that I shared the experience with my son. We learned a lot together and lived what many people only read about in schoolbooks or see on TV.

But actually, you don’t have to visit a village in the African bush to have a bona fide cultural experience or to reach out to those in need. Today they’re everywhere! Most modern cities are melting pots of various races, each with something special to offer. All it takes to make new friends is a little initiative. Add a little love and concern, and you truly bring your worlds together.

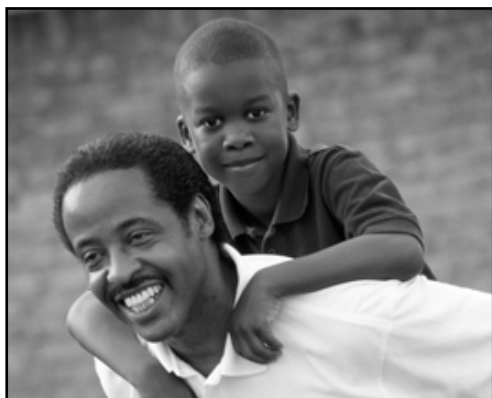
LAILA ENARSON IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN GAMBIA, WEST AFRICA.

Some even began to call me “Mom,” which said in their own special way how much they appreciated the love and attention we were giving them.

What a parent's love can do

A partially deaf boy came home from school one day carrying a note from officials at the school. The note suggested that the parents take the boy out of school, claiming that he was “too stupid to learn.”

The boy's mother read the note and said, “My son Tom isn't ‘too stupid to learn.’ I'll teach him myself.” And so she did.



When Tom died many years later, the people of the United States of America paid tribute to him by turning off the nation's lights for one full minute. You see, this Tom had

invented the light bulb—and not only that, but also motion pictures and the record player. In all, Thomas Edison had more than one thousand patents to his credit.

—GOD'S LITTLE DEVOTIONAL BOOK FOR MOMS

* * *

“My mother was the making of me. She was so true and so sure of me, I felt that I had someone to live for—someone I must not disappoint. The memory of my mother will always be a blessing to me.”

—THOMAS A. EDISON (1847–1931)

When he was a teenager, Jim worked for a grocer in Hamilton, Missouri. He liked the work and had plans to make a career of it. One night he came home and proudly told his family about his sly employer. The grocer had a practice of mixing low quality coffee with the expensive brand and thus increasing his profit. Jim laughed as he told the story at the supper table.

His father didn't see anything funny about the practice. “Tell me,” he said, “if the grocer found someone palming off an inferior article on him for the price of the best, do you think he would think they were just being sly, and laugh about it?”

Jim could see his father was disappointed in him. “I guess not,” he replied. “I guess I just didn't think about it that way.”

Jim's father instructed him to go to the grocer the next day and collect whatever money was due him and tell the grocer he wouldn't be working for him any longer. Jobs were not plentiful in Hamilton, but Jim's father would rather his son be unemployed than associated with a crooked businessman.

J.C. Penny came that close to becoming a grocer. Instead he founded the retail chain that still bears his name. He shares the secret of his success in the title of his autobiography: *Fifty Years with the Golden Rule*.

“Go home and love your family.”

—MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA (1910–1997), WHEN RECEIVING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IN 1979, IN REPLY TO THE QUESTION “WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROMOTE WORLD PEACE?”



There's no question about it. Raising teenagers is one of life's special challenges. The teen years are difficult, and often teens will "share" those difficulties with those living around them.

Their sometimes crusty, disrespectful, or rebellious exteriors can be intimidating and leave parents in a state of shocked confusion, wondering where they went wrong. This is when many parents, not knowing how to try to help their teens, pull back. That's a tragic mistake, because all the while, inside, their teens are desperate for direction, encouragement, love, support, understanding, and guidance. Teens have an intense need to feel secure and loved unconditionally. They need to know someone notices their problems and is concerned enough to help them at any cost. It's not an easy ride by any means, but parents who hang on and keep loving and reaching out to their teens are far more likely to see them through to victory than those who take a less active role.

Here are 21 tried and true ways to improve your relationship with your teen.

1 Accept your changing role.

The transition from childhood to young adulthood is so gradual that many parents don't see the need to stop treating their teens like children until it's long overdue. Teens are in the process of discovering their own personalities, abilities, and goals, and separating themselves to a greater extent from their parents is part of that process. Teens want to be treated as emerging adults and respected for the individuals they are. In their quest for independence, teens put up their guard against their parents' "parenting." If you can learn to treat your teens as friends when appropriate, they'll be much more likely to drop their guard.

2 Put yourself in your teen's place.

Feelings of insecurity are normal during the teen years. Teens are no longer children, but neither are they fully adults. Their bodies are going through huge changes, and their emotions and hormones are running wild. They are

COMPILED FROM
THE WRITINGS OF
MARIA FONTAINE AND
DEREK AND MICHELLE
BROOKES

ways to win your teen's love and admiration



learning to handle more independence and the responsibility that comes with it, and they face decisions and pressures they've never faced before. Remembering these things should help you to not take their emotional and verbal outbursts personally. If you sincerely try to empathize, you'll gain a better understanding of them and their problems and they will feel they have an ally in you.

3 Keep your cool. Don't allow yourself to be offended by some of the outlandish things they say or do. Sometimes teens say and do odd things just to see what kind of reaction they'll get. Sometimes they're trying to express what's going on inside, but don't know how or don't understand themselves. Other times they're simply being self-centered, as teens tend to be. Your getting upset or expressing shock or horror will only make matters worse. Learn to roll with the punches. If your teens know you will try to understand and sympathize when they vent themselves, they will feel safe around you.

4 Respect your teen. Respect is a sign of faith. When teens are having a hard time having faith in themselves, a little respect can boost their confidence, spur them on, and help them succeed. Conversely, if they think you *don't* have faith in them, they'll be much more likely to give up before reaching their potential.

5 Don't tease or belittle. When your teen is feeling vulnerable—which is most of the time—he or she is likely to take things said in jest personally and consider it ridicule rather than innocent fun.

6 Be positive and supportive. Most teens feel inferior in some way or another, and their negative view of themselves often spills over into their actions. Try to remain consistently positive and supportive in your reactions. You can't gloss over serious problems or wrongdoing, of course, but you can put a positive spin on almost any situation by talking mostly in terms of solutions and lessons behind

Inside, teens are desperate for direction, encouragement, love, support, understanding, and guidance.

them, rather than expressing anger or disappointment. Dwelling on the positive is a sign of unconditional love, which counteracts low self-esteem. Praise your teen every chance you get.

7 Avoid unnecessary rules. Too many rules and restrictions can cause almost any teen to rebel. At the same time, some rules are needed because it's unwise to give your teen complete free rein. When you feel a new rule is necessary, try to discuss and decide together, rather than dictate. Explain your reasoning, hear your teen out, and get his or her agreement on the terms and consequences for breaking the rule, as much as possible.

8 Give your teen responsibility. Teens need guidelines, but they also want to be independent and feel trusted. Trust your teen with adult responsibilities, and he or she will try harder to act like an adult. A wise person once said, "Treat people as though they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of being." Your teens will make mistakes, as everyone does, but when they see that doesn't diminish your love and faith in them, they will keep trying and eventually succeed.

9 Earn their confidence by being confidential. Teenagers are sensitive about the things they are going through. No one likes to be the subject of gossip or careless

conversation—especially teens. When teens confide in you, they like to know that what they say will be kept as confidential as possible. It may seem like a small matter to you, but it may be a very big matter to them. Betray their confidence, and it will probably be a long time before they confide in you again.

10 Pray. Whenever you aren't sure what to say or how to react when your teen is having a problem, pray. Send up a silent prayer for wisdom, asking the Lord to give you His understanding and solutions.



11 Spend time together. Many parents spend a lot less time with their teens than they did when their children were younger. That seems natural since teens need less supervision than children and teens want to assert their independence, but it's often a mistake. Teens need lots of support, guidance, and fresh challenges. They need someone to coach, mentor, and teach them, and no one is in a better position to meet that need

than their parents. No other investment will form stronger bonds between parent and teen or pay higher dividends.

12 Admit your own shortcomings. Teens hate double standards. It takes humility to admit your shortcomings and to apologize when you've made a mistake or you've hurt your teens, but being honest about your own faults and failures will help your teens be honest and open with you about theirs. It will help you and them put their problems in perspective.

13 Have a sense of humor. There's a time to be serious and focus on long-term goals, but there's also a time to lighten up. Teens admire adults who know how to have fun and enjoy life. Just make sure your humor is in good taste and not at someone

else's expense, because teens emulate adults whom they admire.

14 Express your love. Teens may not like to be kissed and cuddled the way they did when they were younger, but we never outgrow our need to feel loved. Try not to let a day go by without you putting your love for your teen into words and backing up those words with actions.

15 Listen. Every teen needs a confidant—a true friend they know they can trust with their innermost secrets. Teens have so many things going on inside that it can be quite confusing, yet often they're afraid to talk about it for fear of being misunderstood, ridiculed, or considered naive. Take time to hear them out. They need to feel that someone understands (but avoid “when I was your age” responses, which most teens hate to hear). A common mistake parents make is not listening long enough and therefore jumping to the wrong conclusions. Rather than “showing them the light,” gently guide them to come to the right conclusions themselves as they articulate how they feel.

16 Befriend your teen's friends. Show a sincere interest in your teen's friends. Look for the best in them, and they will probably consider you the coolest parent they know. Then don't be surprised if your house becomes the main hangout for your teen and his or her circle of friends. The noise level and food bill may go up, but the trade-off in knowing where they are and what they're doing will be worth it.

17 Forgive and forget. Face it—your teens will make mistakes for which they will need to ask and receive forgiveness. Like the rest of us, teens often feel they can't confess their mistakes or wrongdoing because they will forever be labeled by their mistakes. They need to be

convinced of your love and readiness to forgive and forget and start anew.

18 Have conviction. If you're not careful, parental pride, emotional attachments, and the instinctive desire to protect your child can cause you to give in, go easy, pull back, or run to the rescue at the wrong time. You may even feel their anger, frustration, and rebellion as your own. That's when it's important to remember that your teen is learning to exercise good judgment, and that whether or not they act like it, they will take their cues from you. If you don't have the conviction to do what is right, despite some unpleasant consequences, chances are they won't either. Sometimes “tough love” is the best love. Teens are very idealistic and will respect you more if you stand up for your convictions, even when it's hard on them or they don't agree, than if you're too lenient.

19 Be genuine. Teenagers can smell a fake a mile away! Even if you're sincerely trying to relate to them, if you're trying too hard and laying it on too thick, they won't take you seriously. The secret is to be natural. Teens don't want to be patronized or cajoled, but they do want friends—people they know they can count on and feel comfortable with. If you accept them the way they are, they will feel comfortable around you and accept you the way you are.

20 Be willing to change. You may need to work on changing a few habits or the way you react to things. Why not let this be the motivation you need to get out of the rut you've been in, or to make changes in areas you've known for a while that you need to? It's often easier to change for someone else's sake than solely our own. What better reason could you have to strive to be a better person in every way? Seize it!



21 Point them to Jesus. The teen years are turbulent times. It's like being lost at sea in a small boat during a storm. Be a lighthouse, pointing your teens to the safe harbor—Jesus. No matter how much you love your teens, Jesus alone can answer their deepest questions and meet the deepest needs of their spirit. You're not their Savior; Jesus is. You can't be with them every second or rescue them from everything, but you can point them to the One who can. ◇

PARENTING *From the heart*

Things Are Not Forever, Children Are

BY RUTH CORTEJOS

We parents want our children to be liked and get along well with other children. I certainly did when my first child, Danae, was beginning to play with other kids. I tried to teach her how to interact lovingly, and she

did well in most aspects—making friends, not fighting, being considerate and helpful, and even letting me play with the other children. Teaching her to share her toys was the biggest challenge.

To give her more opportunities to learn this,

we started inviting other children her age over to play. That small step was the key to helping Danae discover that it's fun to share with others—a lesson I needed to brush up on myself, as it turned out.

One evening Danae had invited a friend, Natalie, to play with her. Natalie was one of her more frequent playmates, and their favorite thing to play with was the brightly illustrated deck of cards from a children's card game called Go Fish. Although the girls were too young to follow all the rules and play the game as intended, they liked looking at the pictures and finding the ones that matched.

That evening, after Natalie left, Danae came to me and said, "Mommy, I'd like to give these to

Natalie. They're her favorites." She held up three or four cards from the Go Fish game.

I tried to explain that I didn't want her to give them away because then our set wouldn't be complete, but Danae persisted. "But I really *want* her to have them!"

Again I tried to explain. "Danae, these cards belong to our Go Fish game. If you give them to Natalie, we won't have them anymore and the set will be missing pieces."

"That's okay, Mommy, because I have the other cards."

I thought perhaps she didn't understand that when she gave something away, it was gone for good, so I tried again to dissuade her. "If you give those to Natalie, you can't go and ask for them back tomorrow. Once you give them to her, they'll be hers."

A look of concern came over Danae's face. For a moment I was happy that she seemed to understand. Then she smiled and said, "Well, that's okay, I want her to have them anyway."

What could I say to that? I sat quietly for a moment and prayed. Then it came to me: I had been trying for so long to teach her to share, and now that she had learned that important lesson, I was trying to stop her. What was I doing? I was just about to make a very stupid mistake! What did it matter that our Go Fish game would be incomplete? It could be replaced, if need be. What mattered was that my daughter was learning the joy of giving, that she was thinking about others instead of herself, that she was



Danae (left) and friend, Natalie

My daughter taught me a lesson that day, and it's one that I still get tested on.

trying to make her friend happy. Isn't that what life is all about?

My daughter taught me a lesson that day, and it's one that I still get tested on. I now have three children, and fairly often one of them will come to me with a toy or stuffed animal in their hands and say they want to give it to one of their friends. My first

thought is often how I can talk them out of it, but when I stop to think about it, I always come to the same realization: Things are not forever, but children are. The values I instill in my children today will be part of who they are tomorrow. ◇

RUTH CORTEJOS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THAILAND.

A Parent's Prayer

Oh, heavenly Father, make me a better parent. Teach me to understand my children, to listen patiently to what they have to say, and to answer all their questions kindly. Keep me from interrupting them or contradicting them. Make me as courteous to them as I would have them be to me. Forbid that I should ever laugh at their mistakes, or resort to shame or ridicule when they displease me. May I never punish them for my own selfish satisfaction or to show my power.

Let me not tempt my child to lie or steal. And guide me hour by hour that I may demonstrate by all I say and do that honesty produces happiness.

Reduce, I pray, the meanness in me. And when I am out of sorts, help me, O Lord, to hold my tongue.

May I ever be mindful that my children are children and I should not expect of them the judgment of adults.

Let me not rob them of the opportunity to wait on themselves and to make decisions.

Bless me with the bigness to grant them all their reasonable requests, and the courage to deny them privileges I know will do them harm.

Make me fair and just and kind. And fit me, O Lord, to be loved and respected and imitated by my children. Amen.

—ABIGAIL VAN BUREN (1918–), "DEAR ABBY"

Q: Things have changed so much since I was growing up that I don't even know where to start in relating to and helping my teenage daughter. How can I bridge the generation gap?



To better relate to your daughter, try to remember how you felt at her age.

A: The world *has* changed a lot in the last generation. On the surface, the generation gap appears to be widening, but appearances can be deceiving. Inter-generational differences are manifested differently from generation to generation, but the core issue remains the same: teenagers' God-given need to find their place in life.

To better relate to your daughter, try to remember how you felt at her age. If you were a typical teen, you felt awkward and unattractive in your constantly changing body. Every pimple or bad hair day was a life-altering crisis. You worried about how you fit in with your friends. You compared yourself negatively with others in your class who were more beautiful, smarter, more popular, or seemingly more self-confident. You faced bigger decisions than you had ever faced before, and knew that even bigger decisions loomed ahead:

How far would you go in school? What would you do when you grew up? Who would you marry? How could *anyone* ever want to marry you?

You probably didn't understand what was happening at the time, and your daughter probably doesn't understand it now, but it's the process of discovering yourself and establishing your own identity.

At this stage in their lives, teens look to their peers and parents for clues. They constantly compare themselves with their peers to determine where they fit in, and they scrutinize their parents' attitudes, lifestyle, and values to determine whether they want to be like their parents when they become adults.

The teen years are when most children become at least a little rebellious. After all, how can they establish their own identities without cutting loose from their parents? Many parents make a difficult

Many parents make a difficult situation harder by overreacting to their teens' rebelliousness, which nearly always leads to greater rebellion and a deeper rift between the generations.

situation harder by overreacting to their teens' rebelliousness, which nearly always leads to greater rebellion and a deeper rift between the generations.

The wise parent will accept that a certain amount of rebelliousness is natural, and will understand that many of the outward changes they don't like in their teen—the outlandish clothes or hairstyle, the dreadful music, etc.—are all part of the separation process.

The wise parent also understands that experimentation is a necessary part of growing up, and that not every experiment is going to be a success. On his way to inventing the light bulb, Thomas Edison tried hundreds of combinations of materials that *didn't* work before he struck on one that *did*. Like Edison, most teens will recognize what isn't working and move on to something else. Allow your teen latitude to experiment, within bounds. "Nothing harmful to yourself or others, and nothing illegal" makes a good starting point.

Closely related to experimentation is the issue of self-control. Many teens lack self-control, mainly because they don't see any reason for it. They like to have fun, they enjoy their greater independence, and they're learning by trial and error. It's often not until they experience the consequences of poor decisions that they learn self-control—but wasn't it that way for you?

While teens want to be their own person, they're generally insecure in that new role. It's a bit like standing at the top of a high diving board for the first time: They're about to take the plunge into adulthood and wonder if they'll survive the impact.

Nothing counters that insecurity like unconditional love. Teens often act like they don't want or need their parents' love and support, and they can some-

times be downright ornery and unlovable to underscore the point. But more often than not, whether the teens realize it or not, what they're really doing is *testing* their parents' love. They seek affirmations of their parents' love, because love is an indication of value, and teens need to feel they have value. Parents who demonstrate unswerving love for their teens through thick and thin give their teens the validation they so desperately want and need.

It takes great love, patience, and self-control on the part of the parents to loosen their grip and let their teens go through the growing up process. It also takes faith—faith in their teens; faith that the values they tried to instill in their children when they were younger will now guide them to make the right choices; and faith in God, who created the process. This last point is where parents who believe in the power of prayer and have a personal connection with God through Jesus are at a great advantage; they know where to turn when they and their teens need help.

Another thing that works to believing parents' advantage is the fact that more people accept Jesus during their teen years than at any other time. Teens, in general, are seekers—pilgrims in search of truth and the meaning of life. If you or someone else can lead your daughter to Jesus—"the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)—He can put things in perspective for her like no one else. He can give her unconditional love and acceptance. He can give her peace in her heart. He can give her answers as she learns to take her problems to Him in prayer.

And once you and your daughter share a strong, living faith, you'll have more in common than ever before. Jesus is the ultimate bridge for the generation gap! ◇

PRIME TIME—FAMILY TIME!



BY SARA KELLEY

One of the most important things we can spend on children is time. It seems we parents often need to be reminded of that important principle. When our days are busy and our children are in school throughout the day, the short amount of time families have together in the evening and on holidays and weekends should be cherished and guarded as special “family time.” That’s our chance to show our children just how important and special they are to us.

How we spend our time together and how much time we spend together should be important to parents and children alike. However, it’s really up to us parents to make this time both fun and worthwhile for the kids. One thing that shows kids that they’re special to their parents is when the parents make sure those times together are not interrupted.

In many homes, the first time of the day the whole family gets together is at dinnertime. Dinner conversation is good, but it’s not enough. Some parents with strong bonds with their children have found that the best way

to ensure they stay close is by setting aside one hour after dinner as official family time and making sure it’s *quality* time. During this hour, the parents agree to not disturb one another with any other business. That way, the children know they can count on having their parents’ full attention.

Whether it’s an hour or more, it’s up to each of us parents to make a conscious effort to put aside our work and other concerns and give our children our 100 percent. It may be inconvenient or seem a sacrifice, but if we will be consistent and put the necessary effort into it, it will make a noticeable, positive difference in their lives and our kids will love us for it!

To make family time all it can be, get involved with your children. Don’t just do the same thing separately in the same room—like watching TV—but get on their level and talk with them, make conversation, find out what they’re thinking. Step out of your adult world into their world. Have fun. Relax. Learn to really enjoy your children.

If you have both younger and older

Family time will make a noticeable, positive difference in our kids lives and they will love us for it!

FEEDING READING

children, you will probably want to do different activities with each age group. Perhaps one evening Mom can play with or read to the younger children, while Dad does a special art or carpentry project with the older ones, or helps them with their homework. Then the next night the parents can switch roles. Or if you're a single parent, you may need to spend time with the younger ones first and the older ones after the younger ones are in bed. The point is to spend some quality time with each one.

If one of your children has a special aptitude or talent, such as typing, art, or playing a musical instrument, family time can be a great opportunity to help develop this talent and provide parental support at the same time. (Be sure your other children don't feel slighted.)

The main key to success is to have ideas planned out and organized in advance. You don't need lots of special skills or fancy equipment to keep your kids happy and challenged at family time. Just as your children are very special to you, *you* are very special to them. Spending time with you is what will mean the most and have the greatest lasting effect. Give it your best shot, and you and your children can all look forward to family time as a chance to do your favorite things with your favorite people! ◇



Honesty pays

One father confessed that he hadn't realized how dishonest he'd been with his son until he learned a hard lesson. His son received a very low grade in English. In spite of scoldings and extra study, it seemed the boy simply could not bring up his grade. One day he said to his father, "I guess when you went to school you got all A's in English."

"What makes you say that?" the father asked.

"Well, if you didn't do well," said the son, "you wouldn't scold me the way you do."

The way he had corrected his son was a misrepresentation of the truth. "No, the fact is that I had a really hard time with English," the father replied. "Especially spelling."

From that moment on the boy did better, freed from the impression that he was inferior and a failure. Seeing that his dad had the same problems, but succeeded, gave him hope.

—ANONYMOUS

Maturity

Maturation is an on-going process.

Philippians 3:12–13

2 Peter 1:5–10

Our speech and actions reveal the level of our maturity.

Proverbs 9:6

Proverbs 15:2

Proverbs 29:11

Ecclesiastes 10:12–13

James 3:2

We become mature when we learn to take responsibility for ourselves and others.

Lamentations 3:27

Romans 14:12

Galatians 6:2

Philippians 2:12

Steppingstones to maturity:

Proverbs 20:11

Proverbs 23:24–25

1 Corinthians 13:11

Ephesians 4:14

Titus 2:4b,6

2 Timothy 2:22

1 John 2:13b–14

Spiritual maturity depends on our connection with the Lord and His Word.

Psalm 16:8

Daniel 11:32b

Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23

John 15:4–5

1 Timothy 4:15–16

2 Timothy 3:15–17



Parenting through prayer

It's not easy raising children in today's world. Many of the godly values that you want to encourage in your children are constantly being attacked by others who are going the opposite direction. You worry that even your best efforts will fail and that your children will turn their backs on the values you hold dear. I know you're tempted sometimes to give up, but don't. Your concern and care are not in vain. There's only so much that you can do, even though you try your best. But I'm capable of doing much more than you ever could, and I am here to help. I also understand your children even better than you do, and I know how to best handle their problems. I want to work with you to shape your children into the godly people you and I both want them to become.

Commit your children to Me in prayer. Through prayer you can be the better parent you want to be. Through prayer you can help protect your children from harm and unwholesome influences. Through prayer you can find My solutions to their problems. Through your prayers I can do what you can't do.

Set aside time each day to pray for your children. Each time you're faced with a troublesome issue, ask Me for the answer. Start today to be a better parent through prayer. Changes that you haven't thought possible will come to pass through the power of prayer.



bright, multicolored icing
caterpillar cake

Through the

BY MARIE CLAIRE



bitten off a bit more than I could chew. But Tristan was sure he wanted a castle cake, knights

and all, and I wanted to make him happy, so I shot up a quick prayer asking the Lord to help me and give me talents I don't normally have.

Before I knew it, his birthday was upon me, and I set to work on the cake. Book in hand, I tried to follow the directions as best I could, but soon realized why there was only a *drawing* of this castle cake, not a photograph, as with most of the other designs. There was a gulf between concept and finished product, and I was adrift and sinking! My cake was lopsided, the icing didn't stick well, and the turrets weren't equal in height or diameter. I couldn't find any toy knights, so I settled for a Lego figure of a man on a horse.

I felt so under pressure and discouraged! *Poor Tristan, I thought. He's going to be so disappointed! He's been looking forward to and talking about his*

knights and castle cake all week, and now look what he's going to get! Things never turn out the way I want them to! Tristan is sure to be one unhappy little boy when he sees his mother's version of his dream cake!

I finally finished the cake, adding the final touches as best I could—paper flags, cookies along the top of the walls that were supposed to look like stones but kept falling over at awkward angles, and “grass” made from shredded coconut dyed with food color that somehow turned out a muddy mossy color. I was done, but felt like crying.

I cleaned up my mess and decided I'd better let Tristan see the cake, to prepare him for the embarrassing moment when he and his friends would see it at the party. As Tristan entered the room, I studied his expression and prayed for just the right thing to say to cheer him up and help him not to take it so hard.

Tristan's eyes widened and, to my surprise, a huge smile spread across his face. “Wow,

ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE MY SON TRISTAN'S FOURTH BIRTHDAY, I talked with him about how much he had grown up in the past year, how much he had learned, and how proud I was of him for the progress he had made. Then we talked about his birthday and what he wanted to do for his party. As usual, I let him choose what kind of birthday cake he wanted.

Last year he chose a “caterpillar” cake, as at the time bugs fascinated him. That cake wasn't too difficult—just a string of crescent-shaped cake pieces with bright, multicolored icing. I expected him to choose something equally simple this year, so you can imagine my chagrin when, after looking through a book with imaginative cake ideas for children, he chose the “knights and castle” cake.

I looked at the detailed drawing, read over the explanation, and felt immediately that I had

Eyes of a Child

PARENTING FROM THE HEART

knights and castle



Mom! It's so cool!" he exclaimed. "It's *just* what I wanted!"

I nearly burst into tears as he went over to the cake, inspected each part, and said it was exactly the way he wanted it to be. Then he ran over and hugged me, thanked me for making it for him, and lifted his hand to his mouth as if to tell me a secret. I bent over to let him whisper in my ear.

"I love you!" he said, and then ran off to tell his friends about what he'd just seen.

After he left the room I sat there a while, thinking about what I'd just experienced. In those few minutes I was taught a lesson that can take a lifetime to learn. How many times had the Lord chosen to let things in my life turn out differently than I had hoped or imagined? How many times had my dreams seemed to turn out a little lopsided, distorted, with pieces missing? How many times had I questioned God and not fully accepted or appreciated what He had done for me?

Oh, that I can learn to see life through the eyes of a child—full of faith, hope,

love, and positivity, instead of seeing the imperfections. Oh, that I can learn to see the *good* and the wonder of it all. I stayed in that magic moment as long as I could. Drinking in the scene of that misshapen cake before me and the fresh memory of Tristan's sweet reaction, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my recent negative outlook on life and to help me see things the way my son had seen that cake.

Then a funny thing happened. As I stared at the cake, it took on a cartoon quality and I actually began to *like* it!! Best and most important, Tristan liked it. It was *his* birthday, after all. •



OH, THAT I CAN LEARN

see

TO SEE THE GOOD AND

THE WONDER OF IT ALL

wonder

PARENTING *From the heart*

WHEN WORK IS PLAY

BY CATHERINE NEVE

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOUNG CHILDREN LIKE TO HELP OUT. It's true! Children actually enjoy and take pride in being helpful until they are "taught" otherwise. It's only when they hear their parents or older siblings grumbling about "having to do" this or that around the house that helping out becomes a chore.



What goes around comes around.

Catherine Neve gets some love from granddaughters Kimberly and Lauren.

Children actually enjoy and take pride in being helpful.

If approached positively, helping out can seem more like play. It can also go a long way in building self-esteem and instilling other qualities that will greatly benefit the children in school and throughout life, such as self-discipline, initiative, diligence, perseverance, self-reliance, and being responsible.

There is at least one educational system that uses this "work as play" principle in a big way. Departing from traditional teaching methods in favor of capitalizing on the child's natural interests, Maria Montessori (1870–1952) gentled some of the most undisciplined preschool children from the ghettos of Naples, Italy, into highly motivated, creative, and accomplished students. One facet of Montessori schooling called "practical life" involves teaching children the basic skills they will need in everyday life, such as dressing, hygiene, and food preparation. Two-year-olds, with their "I can do it myself" attitude, are at the perfect age for practical life training, but there are plenty of practical life challenges for every age and stage of development, right up to learning to drive and maintaining a home.

I made a point of creating situations where my children could succeed and receive appreciation and praise. As a busy first-time mother, I usually found it quicker and easier to do the little jobs myself than to teach my little one to help. But I soon realized that I was being shortsighted. I needed help, and my children needed opportunities to learn and feel "grown up." Later, when helping to care for others' children as well as my own, I found that even rascally children were usually happy to channel their boundless energy into doing little jobs for me if I approached them right.

The kitchen is a great place for helping out. Preschoolers can help with simple meal prep, beginning with washing vegetables, spreading peanut butter onto sandwiches, or mixing cookie dough or pancake batter. The table needs to be set and cleared, and spills wiped up. Young children enjoy using hand brooms and dustpans, and they love getting under tables and into other places we adults have a hard time reaching. You can also let your little one sort and put away the silverware (or nonbreakable plates, bowls and cups) after the dishes are washed and dried. If you keep it fun and reward them with praise and recognition, they will be thrilled when they "graduate" to washing or drying alongside you, and eventually on their own.

And it doesn't need to stop in the kitchen. Even toddlers can learn to help tidy their rooms, put away their things, and fold their pajamas or clean laundry.

Nor does it need to end when your children reach school age. It was a milestone for my children when they were considered old and responsible enough to use the vacuum cleaner.

Some children like to clean bathroom sinks and change the hand towels. Others like to rake leaves or mow grass, or help wash the car. Some older

ones like to sew on buttons or do other simple mending. The list is endless—just look around!

Assigning game names to household jobs is good “marketing strategy.” The first such game I taught my children when they were little was

“Ant Hill.” They pretended they were ants and scurried around, taking every toy, block, or stuffed animal that was left out back to the “ant hill” (where it belonged). Even babies can learn to play this game, sitting in your lap or next to you as the two of you take turns putting blocks or other small toys into a box—then you praise, praise, praise!

Some possible pitfalls and how to avoid them:

- It can be frustrating for both of you if the job is beyond their ability or attention span, so don't expect too much.
- Make it easy for your children to succeed by making sure they understand the job and how to best go about it.
- Make helping out voluntary or give your children a choice between jobs, when possible. If you've succeeded in keeping it fun, your children will be quick to volunteer.
- Be consistent. If you let your children know you depend on their help regularly, they will be less likely to balk when you ask for it.
- It helps, especially when the job may seem daunting or tedious to the child, to talk about something fun as you tackle the job together.

Be coach, teammate, and cheering section.

- Don't wait till the job has gotten too big or your child is too tired to tackle it cheerfully. Teach your children to put away one thing before getting out another and to clean up as they go, whenever possible.
- If your child is old enough to be left alone to do a certain job, don't be surprised if you come back and find he or she has gotten busy with something else; children get distracted easily without supervision. Don't wait till time is up to find out how it's going.
- Be careful how you express disappointment, and always try to counter it with love and reassurance. Stay positive!

There are so many benefits to making work fun for children. Not only will they learn practical skills and develop character, but as you work alongside them they will also learn to work as a team and better appreciate how much you and others do for them.

Finally, if you want your children to get into that habit of helping cheerfully, then get in the habit of thanking and praising them. Thank them on the spot. Reward them with hugs and the occasional special treat. Sing their praises to your spouse, family members, and friends—preferably within your children's earshot. Nothing builds self-esteem like praise and appreciation from those we love most!

(CATHERINE NEVE [1951–2003] SERVED AS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY FOR 31 YEARS AND IN 12 COUNTRIES, RAISING TWO CHILDREN OF HER OWN AND TEACHING SCORES MORE ALONG THE WAY. SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER IN FEBRUARY 2003, AND PASSED INTO JESUS' ARMS FOUR MONTHS LATER, SURROUNDED BY HER LOVED ONES.)



I found that even rascally children were usually happy to channel their boundless energy into doing little jobs for me if I approached them right.

An Angel Named Beverly



BY NYX MARTINEZ

ONE OF THE KIDS AT THE CANCER HOSPITAL I VISIT HAS JUST DIED. I know I should be happy that one more child has passed on to Heaven, finally ending her suffering, but still, seven-year-old Beverly was one of my favorites. She never seemed very sick, really. She had a full head of hair and wasn't as thin as the others. How I took it for granted that every Thursday at 10:00 A.M., Beverly would be there in the playroom, waiting for our art class to begin.

She wasn't there today, and she never will be again.

They kept on telling me that. "Don't get attached to the kids." "You can't get attached to the kids." But I shrugged it off, thinking I could take it. I understood that their lives hung by a thread, and I could deal with it when the thread unraveled. Other volunteers before me had dropped out because kids they'd grown to love had died. It was all too much for them. But I was strong. I wouldn't be so affected.

The question is not a matter of whether they will live or die, but rather if I will live to love them.

And yet, here I am, crying my eyes out.

Perhaps Beverly was an angel, too good for this world, so she was given her wings before the rest of us. She seemed untouched by the evils of this world and was too innocent to know of the pain that loved ones leave in their wake when they pass on.

It doesn't seem to make sense. Not for Beverly, and not for the others whose lives will be cut short—thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions. Am I wasting my time by investing in these little souls who will experience so little more of life? If their existence is so short-term, then is it right for me to love them as though they will live forever?

Asking myself these questions led to a surprising answer: Because their futures are so unpredictable, every day counts. Every second counts. The question is not a matter of whether they will live or die, but rather if I will live to love them.

There is no glory in this job. I know it will bring more pain each time I witness another young life slipping away. It is inevitable that I will again become attached, only to lose someone very dear to my heart.

There is no glory, but there is comfort. It is the comfort of knowing that if I can be a touch of love in the hearts of others who will take a remembrance of that love with them—be they here on earth or in the next world—then I have done what matters most.

Beverly had lived for seven years. I may live seventy more. I don't know. Nobody knows. Death can take anyone by surprise. But whatever happens and whatever I see when I get to Heaven, there is one face that will not surprise me. Standing there at the reception, waiting to welcome me to a place where there will be no more suffering or crying or death, will be the beautiful face of an angel—an angel named Beverly. ◇

BY TOMOKO MATSUOKA

WHERE JESUS LIVES

“WHO LIVES IN A STABLE?”

“JESUS! JESUS LIVES IN THE STABLE.”

At first I laughed at the answer
my four-year-old sister gave during my impromptu
lesson on animals and their habitats.

But her answer kept coming back to me. *Jesus lives in the stable.* Was that the only place Jesus was alive for her? Was that the only place she saw Jesus come alive for me, when telling her about the first Christmas?

I rebelled at the thought. *Surely I have taught her better than that! Surely she's seen me pray to Jesus many times. And not long ago, when our brother was sick, hadn't we had prayed together for his healing? Hadn't I, just the other day, read from the Children's Bible with her?*

As I sifted through scenes of me hurrying around, helping my parents care for my younger brothers and sisters, and juggling my own studies, work, and other activities, I tried to think of times when I had actually *explained* Jesus to her. Of course I had told her about His birth, the miracles He performed, and His life and ministry, but had I told her of the role He played as my best Friend?

Did I only bring Him out with the tinsel and the baubles for the Christmas tree? Did I tuck Him away in the pages of her picture Bible when storytime was done? Was I daily celebrating His life in such a way that my little sister *knew* Jesus is alive today, not living in a stable but in my heart and hers? Did she see me turning to Him when things got rough and I was

nearing the end of my strength? Had I shown her how Jesus could be her best Friend too—that if she gave her heart to Him, Jesus would cherish her as though she were the only one and love her like no other could?

I realized then that I had shown her a plastic version of Jesus. I hadn't introduced her to the living Friend whom I relied on every day and trusted with my life. That was where I had gone wrong. How else would she get to know Jesus if not through my example? I felt so ashamed.

Since this revelation, my relationship with Jesus has changed. It took time and effort for me to get back in the habit of talking with Jesus as though He was standing or sitting right next to me, but now I'm enjoying the rewards in my life and seeing that reflected in my little sister's life and others', as well. And that's priceless!

As another Christmas nears and the festivities begin, one thought is firmly fixed in my mind: This year—and not only at Christmas—I will celebrate the meaning of His life by being aware of His life in my own. I will take Jesus out of the stable and invite Him into my life, in everything I do. Then I can say and others will see, “Jesus was born in a stable, but He lives in my heart and home.” ❶

I hadn't introduced her to the living Friend whom I relied on every day and trusted with my life.





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.

EACH DAY OF OUR LIVES WE MAKE DEPOSITS IN THE MEMORY

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."

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: My children are at the age that watching TV or movies on video or DVD is one of their favorite activities. The problem is that nearly everything they want to watch has some attitudes, language, or behavior that I don't approve of. It also seems that these negative aspects are what my children remember most and tend to copy. How can I protect my children from that?



A: **MANY PARENTS TODAY** share the same concern. They realize the importance of monitoring and sometimes restricting what their children view and listen to, and certainly it is their right and responsibility to do so. At the same time, it is virtually impossible for parents to shield their children from every negative influence that comes their way. If the children don't get exposed to these things via TV, movies, and computer games, they will through their peers or other avenues. You can't always protect your children from the negative, but you can counter it. Here's how:

As is true of nearly all parenting challenges, two keys are prayer and time—two-way prayer, asking Jesus for both insights into their needs and help with their problems, and time spent with your children, instilling the positive values you want to see them carry into life.

In this case, time means making it a practice to watch *with* your children and to discuss the show with them afterwards, with the

goal of helping them get the most positive and the least negative from the experience. This also gives you an opportunity to discuss problem attitudes or behavior from a third-party perspective—"What do you think that character should have done in that situation?" Over time, this will help your children form strong personal values, as well as teach them to be more selective in what they watch.

It's important to preview the material whenever possible, or at least read the reviews on it so you are aware of the content. This gives you a chance to make sure it is age-appropriate and otherwise suitable for your children. It also gives you time to think and pray about what lessons or information can be gained. Think in terms of, "How can this benefit my children?" If you draw a blank, it's probably not worthwhile for your children to watch.

Gear both viewing and discussion to the age of the children. Videos have an advantage over "live" TV in that you can pause to answer their questions.

So if you can, record shows and then show them to your kids later. (That way you can also skip the commercials, which promote materialism, pitch some products you may feel would not be good for your children, or are otherwise detrimental.) If young children are going to be scared or not understand certain parts, then stop and explain or fast-forward. Older children usually prefer to watch the movie straight through and have the discussion afterwards.

In your discussion, the objective is to get the children to think about what they have just watched, and to help them arrive at more mature conclusions than they would on their own. Children learn better by asking questions and thinking things through than they do when all the answers are supplied too quickly. Also, they tend to more readily accept guidance when it comes in the form of answers to their questions or thought-provoking questions that you put to them, than they do when they feel they are being "preached to."

RATING GUIDELINES

YOU JUST MIGHT BE SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH YOUR CHILDREN CAN BENEFIT FROM MOVIES AND DOCUMENTARIES WITH A LITTLE GUIDANCE.

As you watch, you may also want to make note of points that you could use as springboards for more fun, positive, educational interaction with your children, such as reading more about historical figures, places, events, or activities depicted in the show, or taking them for an outing that somehow relates to the show.

You just might be surprised at how much your children can benefit from movies and documentaries with a little guidance. They can learn about life and human nature; they can learn how to deal with crises and hardships; they can learn to empathize; they can see that bad choices have consequences, and thus learn from others' mistakes; they can see how many people struggle through life without the Lord, when He could help solve their problems if only they would turn to Him. So while potentially harmful if not properly channeled, movies and TV can actually be a good teaching tool and bring your family closer together if used prayerfully and selectively. □

ELEMENTS THAT MAKE A MOVIE, TV PROGRAM, OR BOOK WORTHWHILE:

- 👍 A predominantly positive message that inspires noble qualities in the viewer or reader, such as love, self-sacrifice, courage, conviction, or perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds
- 👍 A portrayal of the triumph of good over evil
- 👍 An exposé of injustice, corruption, hypocrisy, vice, or other wrongs, provided the depiction of the problem is not so traumatic that it overshadows the positive
- 👍 An insight into human nature or a particular cultural or social group that helps the viewer or reader be more understanding, tolerant, etc.
- 👍 A storyline that is humorous or otherwise entertaining and relaxing, provided it is done in good taste
- 👍 A storyline that keeps the viewer or reader guessing, such as a good mystery
- 👍 Historical information, information on current events or trends, or other educational material, provided it is reasonably accurate and balanced
- 👍 A good ending—not necessarily a happy ending, but a “right” ending that leaves the viewer or reader with a good feeling

ELEMENTS THAT MAKE A MOVIE, TV PROGRAM, OR BOOK OBJECTIONABLE:

- 👎 A message that undermines good morals, where the main characters are criminals or liars, for example, or the “end justifies the means” rationale is used to condone or glorify wrongdoing
- 👎 A storyline that promotes wrong attitudes, such as selfishness or racial or cultural discrimination
- 👎 A message that is anti-God or undermines faith in God, His Word, or other spiritual truths
- 👎 A storyline that glorifies evil and evokes fear, such as horror stories involving Satanism, vampires, werewolves, zombies, demon possession, or sexual or other perversions
- 👎 Violence and gore, especially if they are graphic or senseless and not essential to getting across a predominantly positive message
- 👎 Abundant foul language
- 👎 Humor that is vulgar, derisive, or otherwise distasteful
- 👎 Promotion of unhealthy or ungodly habits, such as smoking, taking drugs, or overdrinking
- 👎 Promotion of worldly hang-ups, such as unrealistic get-rich-quick schemes or an overemphasis on beauty, fashion, dieting, or bodybuilding

A Hidden Blessing

IT'S THE END OF A LONG DAY OF CARING FOR SICK CHILDREN. No, not my own. They belong to a couple whose Christian volunteer work often calls them away to tend to others' needs at the sacrifice of some of their time together as a family. I am the children's teacher and usually enjoy being a substitute parent, but not this week.

"I'm feeling overtired, run down, and stressed," I grumble. "I'm way behind on the dishes and laundry, and I'm missing a beach trip with my friends to instead take care of a bunch of coughing, sniffing, whiny kids."

A creak on the stairs tells me somebody's awake. It's two-year-old Susana. "What do you need, Susy?"

She pauses for half a second, then runs to me, throws her little arms around my neck, and whispers, "I love you!" Then she turns and runs back to bed.

I hear four-year-old Martin stirring, so I go to check on him. He opens one eye and mumbles sleepily, "You're the bestest

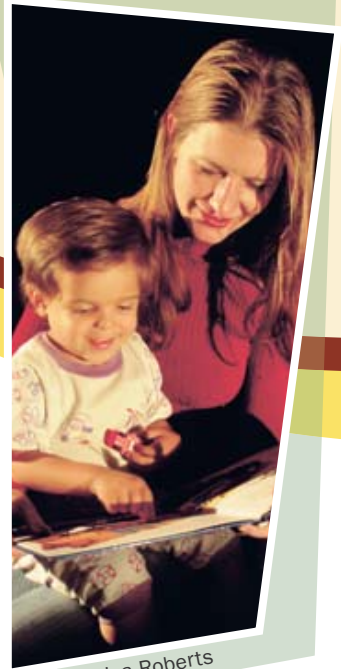
teacher ever!" Something about the way he smiles when he says that...

I think about their pure-hearted love and how they've adopted me. I remember all the laughs, the hugs, the discoveries we've shared.

Suddenly the mountain of dishes is no longer impossible. I'm not so tired anymore. I remember what Jesus said about loving the little people, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Tomorrow we're going to have our "bestest" day yet! I'll make pancakes for breakfast. I'm sure there is a way to build a three-ring circus in the sick room. And when they reach that tired, grumpy hour before dinner, I'll just shoot up a prayer for more of the Lord's unflinching love. And I'll thank God for the blessing of having these kids to care for.

Jessica Roberts is a volunteer with the Family International in Mexico.



Jessica Roberts

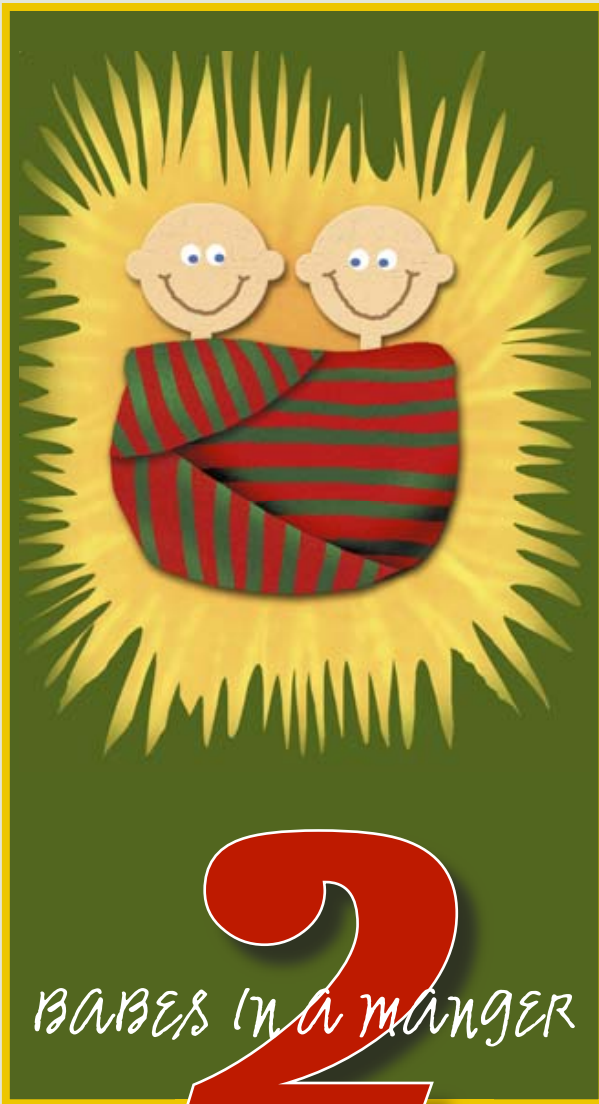


THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.
—CICERO

Gratitude is the memory of the heart.
—MASSIEU

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. —MELODY BEATTIE



IN 1994, TWO AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS ANSWERED AN INVITATION FROM THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION to teach Bible-based morals and ethics classes in several schools and institutions, including a home for about 100 orphaned, abandoned, or abused children.

Shortly before Christmas, the volunteers told the children at the home the story of the first Christmas—a story that most of them had never heard before. The children listened in rapt amazement as Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, found no

room in the inn, and ended up taking refuge in a stable where Mary gave birth to baby Jesus and laid Him to sleep in a manger.

Afterwards the volunteers organized an art project. They gave each of the children a small piece of cardboard to make a manger, part of a yellow napkin to cut up for straw, a piece of beige felt from which to cut baby Jesus, and a scrap of fabric to wrap Him in. As the children assembled their mangers, the volunteers moved around the room, interacting with the children and offering a little help where needed.

When one of the volunteers came to six-year-old Misha, she found that he had already finished his project. But as she looked closer, she was surprised to see two babies in his manger. When she asked him about this, Misha crossed his arms, knit his brow, and began explaining very seriously. For such a young boy who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related it all quite accurately, until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then he started to ad lib.

“Baby Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told Him I have no mama and no papa, so I don’t have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with Him. But I told Him I couldn’t, because I didn’t have a gift to give Him like everybody else. But I wanted to stay with Jesus very much, so I thought about what I could maybe use for a gift. I asked Jesus, ‘If I keep You warm, will that be a good enough gift?’ And Jesus told me, ‘If you keep Me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave Me.’ So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and said I could stay with Him for always.”

As little Misha finished his story, tears filled his eyes and splashed down his cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, he dropped his head to the table and sobbed. Misha had found Someone who would never abandon or abuse him, Someone who would stay with him “for always.”

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

unconstrained motherly love

By ANA ALCASAS

IT WAS AN UNSEASONABLY HOT, humid June day on the East Coast of the United States. Summer had enfolded us in her sticky arms, and the kids at Calvert Country School had decided that the most appropriate activity of the day was cooling off in the lawn sprinkler system.

Three friends and I, all part of the Family International, had been invited to this school for mentally and physically challenged children to participate in their annual graduation barbeque. We dressed up as clowns and spent the afternoon mingling, laughing, chatting, passing out balloon sculptures, and painting faces.

A highlight of my day was meeting five-year-old Melissa and her mother, Shirley. Alma, one of our expert face painters, was giving Melissa an orange-and-black tiger face, while Shirley sat on a chair behind her and gently held her arms to keep her from squirming. Melissa, a lovely little dark-haired autistic girl, always seemed to be looking off to the distance with a blank expression—always, that is, except when she turned to look up into her mother’s face.

“Pretty girl!” her mother repeatedly cooed when Melissa looked up at her for reassurance, and Melissa soaked up the love and approval with expressions of total joy. The tenderness and total acceptance that Melissa’s mother communicated to her daughter had my eyes misting up. Here I had come as a volunteer to give encouragement, smiles, and approval to each child I interacted with, and I found myself unexpectedly moved by this beautiful example of motherly love.

I saw other beautiful mother-child relationships during my afternoon at Calvert Country School, and was touched by the selflessness and unconditional love that seemed so much a part of each of the parents and counselors there. The experience left me with a renewed desire to communicate that unconstrained motherly love to my own young son each and every day.

God gives us a chance to feel His love in a very special way through our mothers. Happy Mother’s Day! ■

(ANA ALCASAS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S.)



Family volunteers Veronica Love, Keith Kleinfelter, and Ana Alcasas arrive at the scene of this happening

Everybody knows that a good mother gives her children a feeling of trust and stability. She is their earth. She is the one they can count on for the things that matter most of all. She is their food and their bed and the extra blanket when it grows cold in the night; she is their warmth and their health and their shelter; she is the one they want to be near when they cry. She is the only person in the whole world in a whole lifetime who can be these things to her children. There is no substitute for her. Somehow even her clothes feel different to her children’s hands from anybody else’s clothes. Only to touch her skirt or her sleeve makes a troubled child feel better.

—KATHARINE BUTLER HATHAWAY

beautiful motherhood

By SASKIA SMITH

TO CHILDREN, no one in the whole world is more beautiful than their own loving mothers. Young children don't think of their mothers in terms of fashion sense, great taste in jewelry, or perfect hair and nails. They also don't notice stretch marks or gray hairs. Their little minds are oblivious to those things that tend to skew adults' perceptions and expectations regarding beauty, so they're actually better judges of what makes a woman truly beautiful.

Where do children find beauty?—In the eyes that convey pride in their achievements, in the lips that encourage and instruct, in the kisses that make small hurts bearable, in the soothing voice that puts them back to sleep after a bad dream, in the wrap-around love of a soft warm hug.

Where does such beauty come from?—With motherhood comes self-sacrifice, but from self-sacrifice comes humility, from humility comes grace, and from grace comes true beauty. A mother embodies life, love, and purity in the giving of herself to her children, and in these she is a reflection of God's love for His children. This is why I believe that nothing makes a woman more beautiful than motherhood. ■

(SASKIA SMITH IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN.)

Saskia
with her
beautiful
daughter



Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

— PROVERBS 31:10,25-26,28,30

that wonderful thing called mother

A mother is a person who, seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.

—TENNEVA JORDAN

The best medicine in the world is a mother's kiss.

—ANONYMOUS

Mama was my greatest teacher—a teacher of compassion, love, and fearlessness. If love is sweet as a flower, then my mother is that sweet flower of love.

—STEVIE WONDER

To a child's ear, "mother" is magic in any language.

—ARLENE BENEDICT

Youth fades, love droops, the leaves of friendship fall; a mother's secret hope outlives them all.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

A mother is the truest friend we have when trials, heavy and sudden, fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends who rejoice with us in our sunshine, desert us when troubles thicken around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts.

—WASHINGTON IRVING

God sees us through our mothers' eyes and rewards us for our virtues.

—GANESHAN VENKATARMAN

Mother is the bank where we deposit all our hurts and worries.

—UNKNOWN

My mother's love for me was so great I have worked hard to justify it.

—MARC CHAGALL

No influence is so powerful as that of the mother.

—SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

The strength of motherhood is greater than natural laws.

—BARBARA KINGSOLVER

Mothers are instinctive philosophers.

—HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

A good mother is worth hundreds of schoolmasters.

—GEORGE HERBERT

The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom.

—HENRY WARD BEECHER

Mother-love is the fuel that enables a normal human being to do the impossible.

—UNKNOWN

A mother loves her children even when they least deserve to be loved.

—KATE SAMPERI

Mother is the one we count on for the things that matter most of all.

—KATHARINE BUTLER HATHAWAY

A mother understands what a child does not say.

—JEWISH PROVERB

All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual, and physical education I received from her.

—GEORGE WASHINGTON

The noblest calling in the world is that of a mother. True motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece or write a book that will influence millions deserves the plaudits and admiration of mankind, but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters whose immortal souls will be exerting an influence throughout the ages, long after paintings shall have faded and books and statues shall have been destroyed, deserves the highest honor that man can give.

—DAVID O. MCKAY



gifts to last a lifetime

BY DAN JOHNSTON

THE GREATEST GIFTS MY MOTHER EVER GAVE ME WERE THE GIFTS OF COURAGE AND FAITH.

Some parents teach their children courage, determination, or any of a number of other virtues by reading to them of the great deeds done by great men and women of the past, in the hope that it will motivate them to find such things on their own.

But not my mother.

It is said that an example speaks louder than a sermon and that a picture is worth a thousand words—and it's true. Of the "pictures" I have from my childhood, many amaze me when I think back on them. As a single mom of three children doing full-time Christian volunteer work, how did my mom manage to not only raise us, but to do so as we traveled all across the U.S. and to foreign lands?

Like the time our car broke down in the Bighorn Mountains. With no one in sight for miles and an unexpected snow storm settling in, she must have been pretty desperate.

**SHE HAD
THE FAITH TO
BELIEVE AND
THE COURAGE
TO ACT ON
THAT BELIEF.**

Yet what I remember most from that situation is her faith that the Lord would bring us through. And He did.

Where did she find the courage to move our family across the Pacific to Communist China in obedience to the call she received from God?

And there was the day my older brother Joe got separated from us on a Hong Kong subway. We had only been in the city for two days, and it seemed there was no way he could find his way back to where we were staying. How did Mom manage to not get hysterical? Her prayers and faith paid off; Joe made it home before we did.

Mom knew that it would be difficult at best, and yet she chose to leave her comfortable home for a country she knew little about, with her kids in tow, simply because God told her to share His love with the people there. She had the faith to believe and the courage to act on that belief.

As a young adult and Christian volunteer in Central America, I now face many problems of my own every day. Some are bigger than others, of course, but every time I run into a situation that seems utterly impossible, I remember those moments from my childhood where my mother's faith and courage shone brightest, and that puts things into perspective. A verse in the Bible says, "With God nothing shall be impossible," and that sums up the most vivid lesson from my childhood—thanks to my mother, who taught through her example. ■

(DAN JOHNSTON IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN GUATEMALA.)



interview with *Mom*

MOTHERS GIVE SO MUCH. Their entire lives are a gift of love to their families. We journey far from our beginnings, and then something tugs at our heartstrings and draws us home to rediscover who we are and where we came from.

I sat down with my mother a few months before she passed away and asked her some questions about her life. If you haven't ever done that, I suggest you do. It's sure to help you appreciate your mother even more.

Mom told me much about her life and dreams, both fulfilled and unfulfilled.

"Do you have any regrets?" I asked her. "What would you major on if you could live your life again?"

She answered by showing me something she had written in her journal: If I could, I would find more country lanes to walk, bake more cookies, plant more spring bulbs, swim at dusk, walk in the rain, dance under the stars, walk the Great Wall, wade along sandy shores, pick up sea shells and glass, glide through fjords in northern lands, sing country ballads, read more books, erase dismal thoughts, dream up a fantasy.

"Is there any message that you would like to pass on to your children and grandchildren?" was my next question.

Again she flipped through her journal and found the answer already written there: Stop waiting to live until your car is paid off, until you get a new home, until your kids are grown, until you can go back to school, until you finish this or that, until you lose ten pounds.

Flipping a few more pages she came to this entry: Pray for what you wish. God loves to answer because answered prayer deepens faith and adds glory to His name.

And again: Savor the moment. Savor your walking and talking with friends, the smiles of little children. Savor the dazzling light of morning that holds the multicolored way. Savor God's great earth, rolling hills, the birds, the blooms, the diamond dewdrops glittering on a crab apple tree—all His wonders from His hand.

When I asked how she managed to stay so upbeat even though her health was failing, she turned to this one: What special poet makes your heart ring? Who shines a light on the dark corners of despair, easing the ache, chasing out care? Who makes your feet to dance and your hands to clap? When you have found this one, you will have found a treasure.

As for me, I found my special poet a few months later when I read this, Mom's farewell poem:

My love to souls whom I have known,
With thanks for tender mercies shown
That kindled hope at winter's door
And sprinkled petals on the floor
To soften summer's way.
Be not dismayed nor weep for me,
For I am now forever free
From body's confines, toil and pain.
Now let me soar to Heaven's plane
And there with angels play. ■

(CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST.)



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: Lately my children have become quite disrespectful. It also seems that whenever I try to correct the situation, I only make matters worse. What can I do?

A: The first step in correcting such misbehavior is facing the hard truth that it's partly your fault that your children got into that state. As with most problems, you need to start by examining your own attitudes and actions and determining to make whatever changes you need to make first, before you can expect to help others change.

Though children will naturally become more questioning and challenging as they grow older and need more explanations, outright disrespect and disobedience is usually the result of being too lenient, because leniency teaches children to manipulate rather than respect their parents. The solution is to learn to be firmer, but making such a change is usually easier said than done, because the unacceptable behavior has become a bad habit and because you probably felt at the time that your motives—love for your children and wanting to see them happy—were good.

Those are good motives, but if the results are bad, it's the wrong form of love for that situation. Firmness is also

a form of love, and sometimes it's the best form. Children usually think in terms of what will make them happiest in the short term, so their parents need to take the responsibility of judging what will be best for them in the long run, which often means saying no.

Next you need to have the issues clearly sorted out in your own mind. Exactly what constitutes acceptable behavior and what doesn't? Before you can hope to convince your children that certain changes are needed, you need to be fully convinced yourself.

If you aren't sure what to do in a particular situation, pray and ask Jesus to show you. Or if you aren't sure what general approach is best for each of your children, ask Him to reveal that to you. Or if you feel rules that are needed are going to be difficult for you to enforce, ask Him to strengthen your conviction. Whatever your question or need, He's ready, willing, and able to help you. He loves your children even more than you do, so you can be sure that He's going to do everything He can to help you become the best parent you can be.

In implementing the rules you feel are needed, you'll get a lot further by discussing them with your children and rea-

soning with them, trying to win their cooperation, than you would by merely laying down the law and demanding their respect. Your discussing it—which includes hearing them out and being willing to show yourself flexible and make modifications if needed—conveys your respect for them. Most likely, they will respect you back, and that is the first step in the right direction.

How you explain things will depend on your children’s ages and levels of maturity. Again, there’s no substitute for asking the Lord for His counsel, because what could help one child may not work with another.

Begin by taking your share of the blame and explaining why the change is needed. “Because I didn’t put a stop to it from the beginning, you’ve gotten in the habit of talking back and being disrespectful. That needs to change, because it’s not acceptable behavior in a loving household, which ours should be.”

Be sure to make not only the rules clear, but also the consequences for breaking them. “If you talk back or are disrespectful, you’ll have such-and-such privileges suspended.” Be sure to enforce the consequences consistently, or your rules will become of no effect.

Along with the promised punishment, you should also promise rewards for good behavior. “As soon as you correct the problem, we’ll be able to reinstate the suspended privileges and possibly add some more.” End your discussion on a positive note.

Lastly, pray for patience. Remember, you’re trying to do more than change behavior; you’re trying to change the attitudes that have led to that bad behavior and build positive new habits to replace their old ones. That takes time. Prayer, consistency, and firmness, tempered with love, are the keys. So commit to making the change together, and keep at it until it happens! ■

FEEDING READING

Motherhood as God sees it

God’s idea of a virtuous woman is also His idea of a good mother.

Proverbs 11:16
Proverbs 12:4
Proverbs 19:14b
Proverbs 31:10-31

A godly mother shines in the home and with her children.

Proverbs 14:1a
Proverbs 31:27
1 Timothy 3:11

A godly mother brings love and harmony to the home.

1 Corinthians 16:14
Colossians 2:2
Titus 2:4
1 Peter 4:8

A good mother applies discipline when needed and isn’t overindulgent.

Proverbs 19:18
Proverbs 22:15
Proverbs 29:15b

A good mother imparts godly values to her children through God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 6:7
Deuteronomy 31:12-13
Proverbs 22:6a
John 21:15b

Examples of motherly love:

Hagar with Ishmael:
Genesis 21:15-16
Moses’ parents:
Exodus 1:22; 2:1-2; Hebrews 11:23
Hannah with Samuel:
1 Samuel 1:22-28
King Solomon and the two mothers:
1 Kings 3:23-27
The Shunammite woman and Elisha:
2 Kings 4:17-20,27
The Canaanite woman pleads with Jesus to heal her son:
Matthew 15:22-28
Mary at the cross of Jesus:
John 19:17,18,25

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

The secret to raising happy, well-behaved, and well-adjusted children is actually quite simple—love. It's knowing how to apply that love that isn't always so straightforward or easy. Here are ten tips that are sure to help.

Ten Keys to Successful Parenting

1

Lead your children to receive Jesus.

There will be times when the natural love God has given you for your children won't be enough to satisfy your child's needs. Your children need their own connection with the source of all love, God Himself, and they make that connection by receiving Jesus.

Connecting with Jesus is so simple that even two-year-olds can do it. All you need to do is explain to your children that if they will ask Jesus to come into their hearts, He will be their best Friend, forgive them for having been bad sometimes, and help them to be good. Then lead them in a prayer like this one: "Dear Jesus, forgive me for sometimes being bad. Please come into my heart and be my best Friend forever. Amen."

2

Give your children God's Word.

What could help your children more than teaching them to find faith, inspiration, guidance, and answers to their questions and problems in the Word? "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Daily time in the Word is the key to spiritual progress, and that's true at any age.

If your children are quite young, you can start by reading to them from a children's Bible or Bible storybooks, or by watching Bible-based videos with them, explaining things when needed. Be consistent and make it fun, and your children will soon be "built up in [Jesus] and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). Then they will be less likely to be led astray by ungodly influences or search elsewhere for answers, because their lives will be built on the rock-solid foundation of God's Word.

3

Teach your children to be motivated by love.

God wants us all to do what's right, not out of fear of punishment but because we love Him and others and therefore want to do what's right. If you've led your children to receive Jesus and taught them to love and respect both Him and others, they will develop that right, loving motivation over time if given enough positive reinforcement.

You can teach your children from a very early age to put love into action by being unselfish and considerate of others' feelings and needs. Jesus summed it up in Matthew 7:12, in what is now known as the Golden Rule. The following paraphrase makes a great starting place in teaching little ones to be motivated by love: "Treat others the way you would like to be treated."

4

Promote honest, open communication.

If your children know that they can expect you to react calmly and lovingly no matter what, they will be much more likely to confide in you. And if you build a relationship of mutual trust and understanding while your children are small, they will be more likely to keep that line of communication open when they reach their preteen and teen years and their emotions and problems become much more complex.



Put yourself in your children's place.

5

Try to relate to your children on their level and not expect too much of them. Also remember that children tend to be more sensitive than adults, so it's important to be extra considerate of their feelings. We all know how demoralizing it is to be embarrassed, hurt, or slighted by others, so realizing that such unpleasant experiences can be even more traumatic to children should cause us to do our best to spare them from such incidents.

Set a good example.

6

Be the best role model that you can be—not by trying to appear perfect in your children's eyes, but by being loving, accepting, patient, and forgiving, and by striving to demonstrate the other virtues and live the values you want your children to have.

Set reasonable rules for behavior.

7

Children are happiest when they know their boundaries and those boundaries are lovingly and consistently enforced. A spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible child becomes a spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible adult, so it's important that children learn to take responsibility for their actions. The goal of discipline is self-discipline, without which your children will be at a great disadvantage later in school, business, and the social world.

One of the best methods of establishing the rules is to get your children to help make them,

or at least to agree to them. It takes more time and patience to teach them to make the right decisions than it does to punish them for their wrong ones, but it goes a lot further.

Give praise and encouragement.

8

Like the rest of us, children thrive on praise and appreciation. Build their self-esteem by consistently and sincerely commending them for their good qualities and achievements. Also remember that it's more important and bears far better results to praise children for good behavior than to scold them for bad behavior. Try to always accentuate the positive and your children will feel more loved and secure.

Love unconditionally.

9

God never gives up on us or stops loving us no matter how far we've strayed, and that's the way He wants us to be with our children.

Pray for your children.

10

No matter how hard you try or how well you do at everything else, some situations will be beyond your control or require more than you have to give—but nothing is beyond God's control or His power. Tap into His limitless resources through prayer. He has all the answers and can supply every need. "Ask and it shall be given" (Matthew 7:7). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

Happy parenting! ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Thank you, mothers!

A mother's love is one of the best examples of My love for My children, because a godly mother loves unconditionally, continually, and despite the circumstances. It is a special love that I place in each mother's heart because I knew that through the love that mothers have for their children, all of you would better understand My love.

You may feel incapable in your task as a mother. You see your faults and know that you aren't perfect. But, oh, there is so much beauty surrounding a mother! You mothers resemble Me in the way you unselfishly give, sometimes without seeming to receive much in return, and in the way you pray for your children and support their dreams.

I knew when I gave you children that there would be times of disappointment, desperation, and heartbreak, but I also knew that there would be times of great joy and love beyond measure, and that in your children you would find much of the meaning to your life.

Being a mother requires a lot, but it also has its rewards—the joy of holding a newborn, the smile of a little child, the happy moments shared as a family, the appreciation and respect shown by your grown child, and the love exchanged all along the way. These and many more are My blessings for all that you give up to be a mother. And one day here in Heaven you will receive the ultimate reward for all that you have given. It will be the greatest family reunion ever, untarnished by tears or earthly limitations, where unveiled love will envelop you. In that moment you will experience the rewards of motherhood to the full.

all things are possible

By Paulo and Rosa Rodrigues

ANA WAS TWO YEARS AND EIGHT MONTHS OLD WHEN WE FIRST NOTICED IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HER TO PUT WEIGHT ON HER LEFT FOOT.

It was almost undetectable at first, but grew worse by the day. When neither her orthopedist nor her pediatrician could diagnose the problem, they ordered a CAT scan.

The test results and prognosis were devastating. Ana had three malignant tumors in her brain—medulloblastoma, a very aggressive type of cancer, already in the fourth and final stage and already affecting the bone marrow in various parts of her body. The doctors urged us to have great courage, but to prepare for the worst, as this cancer usually advances very rapidly in children. Our world went dark.

Ana was admitted for emergency surgery. Due to the size of one of the tumors, we were told that she could slip into a coma at any moment. The surgery lasted seven hours and didn't go well. It was only possible to remove one of the tumors—the largest. How much longer would we have Ana with us?

The doctors suggested chemotherapy to slow the inevitable growth of the remaining tumors and to give Ana

more time. We showed Ana's records to other doctors, and they confirmed that chemotherapy was our only recourse.

The next twelve months were a daily fight for Ana's survival, with many side effects from the chemotherapy treatments and subsequent surgeries. Eventually the progression of the cancer slowed, and the treatments were suspended.

Six months later, one of the tumors began growing rapidly again, and Ana underwent another emergency operation. It was getting harder and harder to restrain the cancer.

As Ana's condition continued to worsen and the doctors offered no hope, we needed a miracle from God—the kind we'd heard that other people had experienced when they were beyond medical help. How wonderful it would be, we told each other, if God were to do such a miracle for Ana! For a year and a half we had pleaded with God to heal Ana, but He hadn't answered. Why? What were we doing wrong? We had to find out!

**WE GAVE
OUR
DAUGHTER
TO THE
LORD, FOR
HIM TO
TAKE CARE
OF AS ONLY
HE COULD.**

We began studying the Bible and some books and audio materials that we had gotten from a member of the Family International, and the more we studied, the more our faith grew. We had been praying, but we hadn't been praying in full faith, truly expecting the answer. *That* was why our prayers had fallen short! We had both believed in Jesus from childhood, but He had always seemed far removed from our present world and its troubles. Now, as we searched the Word of God, we began to comprehend that Jesus truly is alive and working today.

We dug deeper and found other promises: "To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2). "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

If God could do what medical science couldn't, how could we avail ourselves of His help? Once more we found the answer in the Word: "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). "Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:23-24).

We memorized and clung to His promises with all our strength, and we claimed them in prayer. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

We gave our daughter to the Lord, for Him to take care of as only He could. We talked to Him about everything, asking for the treatments to go well and seeking His guidance for the difficult

decisions we faced each day, but we left the outcome entirely in His hands.

As soon as we gave our daughter to Jesus, when we surrendered completely to His will, Ana's physical condition started to improve and the aftereffects of her last surgery—infections and fevers—started to clear up. God took care of every aspect of her life until the day, four years later, when another scan showed no tumors whatsoever. The cancer was gone!

The only explanation the doctors could offer was that "the sickness had behaved abnormally," but we know that God had intervened in answer to our desperate prayers. "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Six years after our ordeal began, Ana is a God-blessed child—happy, healthy, and with faith the size of the world. This was without a doubt the most difficult time of our lives, but it taught us that there is a living and all-powerful God, a God for whom there are no impossibilities, a God who stands ready to work on behalf of all those who trust Him and claim His promises as their own. "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). ■

Paulo and Rosa Rodrigues are Activated subscribers in Portugal.



*Ana
with
a new
hairdo,
July
2005*

"Glafaf"

BY JESSICA ROBERTS

"GLAFAF!" ONE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD GRACIE EXCLAIMED, tugging at Miguel's pants leg. "Please glafaf!" she repeated in her sweetest tone. Miguel looked baffled. It was his first morning helping me to care for a group of toddlers, and he hadn't yet learned to decipher their preschool dialect.

Gracie's pleading became more insistent. "Please glafaf, Miguel!"

Puzzled, Miguel asked me, "What is she saying?"

"She wants a flannelgraph," I said with a laugh. "That's story time using cutout figures on that flannel board over there." I bent down to Gracie's level and asked, "Which story would you like, honey?"

"Flowcake!" came the contented reply.

"Snowflake," I told Miguel. Gracie smiled happily, and she and the others got in their chairs as I took out the Snowflake figures and story outline and handed them to Miguel. "It's a story about a wayward lamb named Snowflake that learns it doesn't pay to stray from the shepherd's side," I explained. "I need to take care of a couple of things, but I'll be back in a few minutes. You can do this!"

Miguel wasn't so sure. "How do you understand them? Most of it sounds like gibberish to me."

"You just have to have patience and care enough to listen for what they're really trying to tell you, not just the words they say," I answered as I bounded out the door.

Miguel did just fine, but a few hours later my day took a turn for the worse. I'd had another disagreement with my boyfriend, and I was ready to call it quits. I was still fuming when Rebecca, the mother of one of my young students, asked what was wrong.

"Men!" I said, releasing a torrent of pent-up frustration. "They're impossible! My boyfriend can be wonderful, but sometimes I just don't understand him! Half the time it's great, but the other half



it seems like we don't speak the same language! What *does* he want?!"

Rebecca nodded sympathetically while I vented, and as my tirade was winding down she said, "I know how you feel. Sometimes I feel the same way about my husband."

I stared at her. Rebecca is one of those gentle, calm people who seem impossible to upset. I couldn't imagine her getting angry or frustrated with anyone. "What's the secret?" I asked. "How do you deal with it and stay so unruffled?"

She thought for a minute. "Well, I've learned to just have patience and care enough to listen for what my husband is really trying to tell me, not just the words he says."

Hearing my own words directed back at me started me thinking. How many times had I failed to show my boyfriend or others the same love and patience that I had learned to show the children? That day I determined to be a better listener. Instead of being put off by annoyed tones or words spoken in frustration, I would listen for what the heart was trying to say. And I found that it works with grown-ups too! □

JESSICA ROBERTS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO.

"Children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

One of the most precious gifts any of us could ever receive is to become a parent and receive God's love in the form of a little child, so sweet and beautiful. They're all *His* children, really, but He entrusts them to our care and wants us to love and train them. They're a gift of God but, like flowers in our garden, we've got to take care of them. It's a case of God's gift also being God's work.

God Himself has set the example of how He wants us to be with our children. He is just and merciful and loving and patient, but He also deals with us firmly when He sees that we're getting off the track. Like a shepherd with an errant sheep, He sometimes has to let us feel His shepherd's rod in order to turn us off the wrong path. He is a loving God, but He's also a very good Father who knows how to correct us when we need it.

If we teach, train, and lead our children right and set the right example, they will carry that all through life. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG



WHEN MY DAUGHTER KARINA WAS PRESCHOOL AGE, I wondered what I could do to help her learn to not misbehave. She would often make a big scene, whining and crying when being corrected, which left me frustrated.

Then I had an idea that helped Karina over this hurdle. When she acted unkindly to her little sister, or was disrespectful to her father or me, or fussed or cried without reason, I would take her by the hand and explain that what she was doing was not very nice. Then I would lead her to a quiet adjacent room, where I would explain that she needed to stay there for a while in order to think and pray about her actions, as well as how she could

remedy the situation if it involved someone else.

It was difficult for both of us in the beginning. Her crying would usually become more dramatic, but I would leave her there for several minutes, after which I would return and talk to her about her behavior. I would then say a prayer with her for her to do better and close our little lesson-learning session with hugs and kisses of understanding and forgiveness. If her misbehavior had hurt, offended, or annoyed someone else, I would have her go to the person and apologize. After several months of doing this consistently, I saw a noticeable change for the better in Karina's behavior.

When I began using this tactic, I was concerned that Karina would resent having to go to another room and be alone, even for a few minutes, so I used it carefully and in moderation. I always said a short prayer first, asking the Lord if it was warranted or not, and I think that was a key. Praying first helped me keep my composure and follow through lovingly, and it helped Karina to be more accepting of this course of action. Despite some initial protests, it worked well and still does. That was a relief, as other disciplinary measures had not been effective with Karina.

I still use this method with Karina, and it has helped her to have a more mature attitude and she learns from the discipline, as opposed to only fearing it. Having a little time alone in the room where she can collect her thoughts and calm down, and then following that up with a simple talk and prayer with me, where I verbalize the reasons she needs to be loving to her little sister, obey her parents, or adhere to the rules helps her grasp the reason behind the discipline.




At the end of each of these little sessions, I express how proud Jesus and I are that she learns so much, and I encourage her to do good things for others so she can continue to make Jesus and me and others happy. During these little discussions, I also shower her with extra affection so she knows that her mistakes are forgiven. Receiving correction in this way has given Karina a sense of security and makes her willing and happy to try to do better.

We parents are often so busy that we think we don't have time for long, drawn-out discussions with our little ones. I've found, though, that even if it takes longer to pray and discuss problems on the spot, so that my children understand the lesson, it saves time in the long run. But most important, it implants important life principles in their hearts and minds, and is a wonderful means for them to develop a better personal relationship with Jesus. It may take a little more time, but it will pay off later when they are more obedient and learn to make the right choices for themselves. □

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**PRAYING
FIRST
HELPED ME
KEEP MY
COMPOSURE
AND FOLLOW
THROUGH
LOVINGLY**

IT HAPPENED TO ME



perfect | A world

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY

IT WAS JUST A LITTLE THING, THAT SMILE ON MY BABY'S FACE, BUT IT CHANGED MY PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE.

As he woke and looked up at me, he was looking at what mattered most in the world to him—me! He didn't care that his diaper needed changing or that I was dressed in mismatched pajamas, my hair a mess. He just loved me and loved being with me. He didn't need perfection; love made it all right. That moment of holding him and taking in those rays of love clarified something I'd been thinking about earlier.

The lack of perfection in life has always rubbed me the wrong way. When someone said or did something that irked me, I'd often argue my case against it in my mind. *Why do there have to be things like personality clashes, carelessness, inconsideration, injustice, pes-*

simism, putdowns? These things are real, and they are wrong! I wish these things wouldn't exist. If everyone, myself included, could just get their act together, my life could be one of blissful perfection. Perfection, I reasoned, was the only thing that could ever relieve my irritations. But I also knew that could never be. This was real life. I needed another option.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I really wanted was for the world to revolve around me—my wishes, my feelings, my preferences, my priorities. Something had to change, and this time it had to be me, regardless of the faults of others. But how? I'd tried before.

Then that morning, as I held my baby, a whisper of a thought came to me. *Would you want your baby to be perfect right from the start?*

After pondering that thought, I couldn't imagine something I'd want less. If he'd been able to walk and run the day he was born, I'd never get to see the look of thrill and accomplishment on his face when he took his first steps, and I'd also miss that special feeling of holding him in my arms, knowing that he was completely dependent on me. If he had been able to talk perfectly from the time he was born, I'd never experience the joy of hearing him speak his first word. If he knew everything that an adult knows, I'd never get to see him overcome with wonder at some new discovery and I'd never have the fulfillment of teaching him something new. So many things I'd miss. No, his imperfection makes him just perfect. I wouldn't have him any other way!

What is it then, I asked myself, that makes his imperfection



different from the other imperfections around me?

And the answer came. *It's love.*

That was it! That was what I was lacking. That was what I needed more of in order to cope bravely and cheerfully when confronted by problems I wished didn't exist.

Think how much you'd miss if you and everyone around you were perfect from the start. You'd miss the unpredictability of life that adds the sense of surprise; the joy of forgiving and being forgiven; the strong, abiding bonds of friendship that are formed through adversity, and the positive character traits that are formed much the same way.

Adding negative thoughts to a negative situation, I realized, never brings positive results. I determined then and there to look for and find the positive opportunities and experiences that are hidden behind the mask of imperfection.

When my baby couldn't sleep later that day, I decided to make the best of a difficult situation by putting my new lesson into practice. I put what *I* had been sure was best for him and me on

hold, and my husband and I took some time to sing and laugh with him. It was a perfectly happy moment that we all would have missed had everything been "perfect" that day.

Every situation and person we encounter can make our lives a ride of joy and surprise, if we look beyond. Difficulties, losses, hurts, lacks—think of each as a clue in a treasure hunt, the door to a secret vault where you will find beautiful treasures from God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). ■

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**IF YOU ARE FINDING MORE
DIRT IN THE GARDEN OF
YOUR LIFE THAN FLOWERS,
MAYBE YOU'VE GOT YOUR
EYES TOO CLOSE TO THE
GROUND. LOOK UP!**

INFLUENCE

By Anaik Alcasas



What many people fail to realize is that the world of tomorrow is what the adults of today make it, according to what they choose to give or not give the next generation.
—David Brandt Berg

WAS A SCRAWNY, ASTHMATIC EIGHT-YEAR-OLD living in India with my family in the early 1980s when an old family friend visited and informed me with a smile that she had taken care of me when I was a baby. I felt a special link with her. As she reminisced with my parents, I knelt behind her and silently braided her honey-colored hair. It was my first attempt at braiding, and it turned out quite loose and unsymmetrical. But when I finished and I asked her how she liked it, she felt the back of her head and said, “It’s lovely! And it’s much more comfortable in this heat. Thank you for doing that for me.”

An eight-year-old who thought she wasn’t very good at many things gained a sense of worth and learned the reward of helping others in little ways.

A year or two later, also in India, we went for an all-day outing up a local “mountain” with a thousand stone steps. My asthma forced me to rest often, but it was worth the effort. When we reached the top, we explored a fascinating old museum that had once been a magnificent palace and observed the lifestyle of bygone Indian royalty in the carefully preserved, fully furnished rooms and lush, immaculately kept gardens.

The next day our teacher asked us to write an essay about our excursion, and I became completely absorbed in painstakingly

documenting every event of the day—the hike up the mountain, the monkeys we met on the way and how they took peanuts from our hands and ate them, the massive statue of a fierce warrior at the entrance of the palace, and every detail of the palace itself. I was pleased with my essay and so was my teacher, but she gently explained that it’s usually better to not begin every sentence with “then.” She suggested some alternatives, and I liked the way they sounded. Such constructive criticism and collaboration were new concepts to me, but the encouragement and help I received that day steered me toward a fulfilling career in writing and editing.

So whether you’re are a parent, teacher, caregiver, or “bystander,” never underestimate the influence you have on the children who share your world. Sometimes all it takes is an approving smile or an encouraging word to change a young life, and the love you give will come back to you. ◀

Anaik Alcasas is a member of the Family International in the U.S.

HOW TO HAVE A HAPPIER HOME



Adapted from Virginia Brandt Berg

What is the greatest weakness in most families? According to Dr. James H. Bossard, a former professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who spent 40 years probing what he called “neglected areas of family life,” it is the way parents talk in front of their children.

After studying extensive recordings of table talk, he wrote, “I had no idea I would discover a real pattern in the [mealtime] conversation of families. I just wanted to learn what families talked about, but to my amazement I have found that family after family had definite, consistent conversational habits, and that the *critical* pattern was the most prevalent.

“These families rarely had a good word to say about anyone. They carped continuously about friends, relatives, neighbors—almost every aspect of their lives, from the lines of people in the supermarket to the stupidity of their bosses.

“This constant negative family atmosphere had a disastrous effect on the children, because a high percentage of [these

families’] children were antisocial and unpopular. And this pattern of the family’s hostility many times turned to quarreling amongst themselves. Without fail, their meals were a round of insults and bickering. The children absorbed that pattern, and it caused the children trouble.

“Long ago,” Dr. Bossard continued, “a great Teacher pointed out that what comes out of the mouth is a great deal more important than that which goes in to it.” That Teacher was Jesus, and that wisdom is found in Matthew 15:11.

Jesus also said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). If your soul is superficial, egotistical, and mean, all those qualities are going to permeate your words as they flow from your lips. But if the Holy Spirit has control, the words you speak will be filled with divine light, just as Christ is light (John 1:4; 8:12).

Words flowing from a soul filled with God’s Spirit of love will have a magnetic quality that will draw others. When the heart is burning with divine love, you don’t need to *try* to put pathos or tenderness into

your conversation. All your words will have a savor and a power that comes from an inner depth.

Do you want to always speak just the right words at just the right moment in just the right way so that they will have a lasting good effect? That probably seems almost impossible—and it *is* humanly impossible. But it's *not* impossible when you let the Spirit of the living Christ speak through you.

How can this be? How can you be so filled with the Spirit of Christ that He can guide you in all that you say? It can only happen through you taking time with Him, getting filled with His Spirit and His love. You must take time to read His recorded Word, the Bible, and partake of His Spirit by letting Him speak to you personally in prayer and reflection.

But if you don't do those things, then just when you want and need them most, the right words will not come forth. What will come forth will more likely be shallow, lukewarm, or negative. But if you let Jesus live in you and take time in His presence, soaking up His love and Spirit, "from your

innermost being shall flow continuously springs and rivers of living water" (John 7:38 *Amplified Bible*).

So the root of the problem isn't actually the tongue, but the heart. Words only convey what's in the heart. Jesus taught that our words reveal our heart's character. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).

There is no way under the sun to change the quality of our words except to change the spirit from which those words flow. There has to be a change of heart.

If you need such a change of heart, begin by praying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Then as you spend time with Jesus, the fountain of all goodness and kindness and gentleness, your relationship with Him will deepen and you'll soon find your words to be conductors of His Spirit, making you a greater influence for good in the lives of those nearest and dearest to you. ◀



JUMP-START

A Message from Jesus

The surest way to help your loved ones get off to a great start each day is by starting the day with love. Easier said than done, you might say, when you're just waking up yourself! But if you pray for that extra oomph you need and give it a try, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Don't just eat breakfast together in silence, staring at your plate, the newspaper, or the back of the cereal box. Count your blessings together. Thank Me for the wonderful things you're sure I'm going to do for you that day in answer to prayer and because I love you. Read a short passage from the Bible. Pray for each other and the different things you expect to face that day, and claim a promise from My Word for each victory you need.

Tank up on Me! I am love and light, My strength is unfailing, and all things are possible for Me. Fill up on Me first thing, and you and your loved ones will be ready for any challenge the day may bring your way.

Those few minutes you have together in the morning are also a great time to give encouragement. Tell her how nice she looks. Tell him you're sure he's going to do great in school. Give a parting hug or kiss that conveys "I can't wait to be with you again!"

Start the day with love, and love will carry you through the day. ◀

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

When Parents Aren't Perfect

Q: As my children grow older, it's getting harder and harder to be the good parent I want so much to be. The issues are more complex, and my inadequacies are more apparent to both me and my children. What advice can you give me?



A: PARENTS KNOW FROM THE START that they don't know all the answers and aren't perfect, but babies and small children are so innocent and trusting that they don't even notice. That begins a few years later and peaks in the teen years. The solution is not in striving to reach the unattainable standard of "perfect parent," but rather in learning to use your imperfections and inabilities as steppingstones. Here are three advantages of that approach:

First, when you know you are weak and insufficient in yourself, you are quicker to seek and accept God's help. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). When we are weak, then He is strong in us and for us (2 Corinthians 12:9). Dependence on God will equip you with strength and wisdom that you could never attain on your own.

Second, weakness helps to keep you humble. When you are humble, you are more patient and understanding with your children. You are also usually more open to suggestions from others who, being a bit removed from the situation, can sometimes see things more clearly.

Third, you set a wonderful example by showing your children that you know you are weak and fallible and in need of God's help, just like they are. This also puts you in a position to develop a closer relationship with them.

So don't let a few weaknesses discourage or hold you back. You can be your weak, imperfect, human self and still be a great parent. In fact, that's the only kind of great parent there is.

That said, the best way to know what your children need and how to help them

is to ask Jesus. Next to having His love, the most important thing that you as a parent can do is to learn to ask the Lord for guidance in each situation. He always has the answer you need. Having Him as a parenting partner lifts a great deal of the load off of you.

For example, if your child is in a difficult phase and you're losing patience, ask Jesus for help. His Spirit will calm your own, bring solutions to your mind, and help you to ride out the storm of difficulties that may arise. He can fill your heart and mind with His love, which enables you to have patience beyond your own abilities. Or if your child has a habit of talking back, ask Jesus to show you why the problem got started and how to best correct it. He understands your child inside and out, and He has all the answers. ◀



Teaching children consideration

By Maria Fontaine



ONE THING THAT KIDS DO ALL THE TIME is argue amongst themselves. Often it is more a matter of contradicting what the other has said, almost for the sake of contradiction. Other times they do it to show that they're superior, to show that the other is wrong and to make themselves look better. Children do that all the time, almost constantly.

They need to be shown that trying to put themselves up by putting down others is wrong. Maybe they *are* right sometimes, maybe their point of view *is* right—usually they *think* they are right, if they're arguing—but whether they're right or wrong, they need to learn it's *wrong* to argue.

Children need to learn to put themselves in other

people's shoes. Ask them, "How would you feel if you were to give the wrong answer to a question or make a statement that wasn't right and someone told you, 'That's wrong! How could you be so stupid?' Well, that's how your brother or sister or friends feel when you contradict them or point out their mistakes."

Give your children an example to drive that point home, how it makes people feel, because they need to realize that. Most children, once they understand what effect their words have on others, will try to be more careful about what they say and how they say it.

Explain, "If you do this to your friends—try to put yourself up by putting them down—it makes them feel like crawling under the rug. That's the quickest way to

lose friends,” or, “Think how terrible that makes your sister feel. She’s going to feel like never saying *anything*. And worse than that, it tells her that you don’t love her enough to care about her feelings.”

We adults need to make sure that we’re not guilty of the same offense. We also need to help our children see that *not* doing this is a part of love—that this is one way in which they can and should show love to their peers and younger children.

Giving the other person the benefit of the doubt and building them up instead of tearing them down is one way of showing love. There are a lot of loving deeds that children are unable to do for others because they’re so young, like cooking a meal by themselves or nursing a sick loved one. But one way they *can* show love and consideration is by lifting others up instead of putting them down.

There are some situations, of course, when older brothers and sisters feel that they have to correct the younger ones. If a little one says cows are blue, the older child feels obligated to correct him or her, but they can learn to do it gently and lovingly. They can learn the distinction between when they *need* to do it and

when they don’t need to do it, when it’s necessary to teach them something and when to just let it pass.

The older ones can learn that distinction. Maybe it’s not necessary to correct a three-year-old’s misconception of the color of cows. She’ll learn soon enough by seeing them in pictures or in real life.

Or when one child does need to correct—in other words, contradict—another child, they can learn to do so in a nice way. “I think you’re mistaken. Cows are usually black or brown or white, not blue,” or, “I thought that, too, when I was your age, but I learned that cows are black or brown or white, not blue,” or, “Let’s go look for a picture of cows in one of your books and see what colors they usually are.”

Like the rest of us, children have a much easier time accepting correction if it’s done nicely, but most children contradict each other in a vindictive, scornful, or sarcastic way, sad to say.

Love, instead of tearing people down, lifts them up and makes them feel good, not embarrassed or humiliated. That’s what contradicting and arguing does—embarrasses or humiliates. Sometimes the children don’t realize this. They realize what it

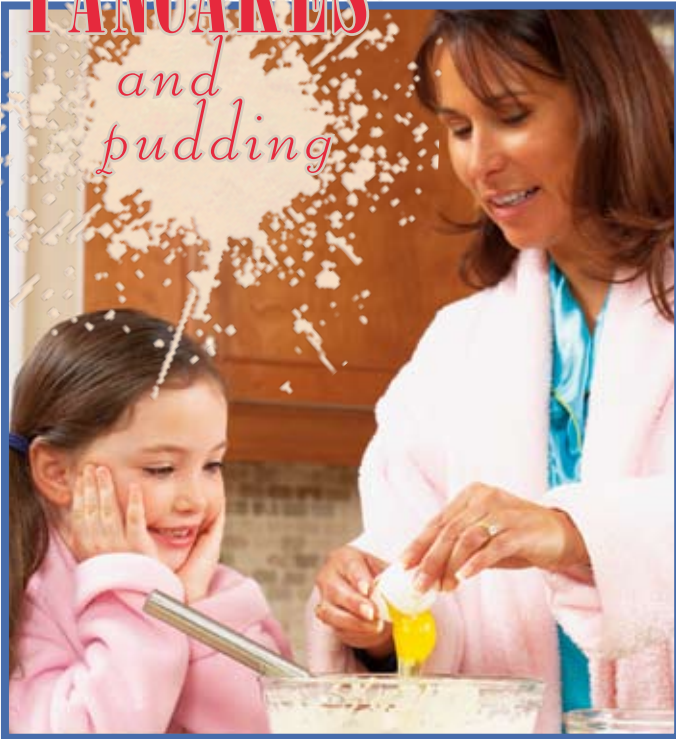
does when *they’re* on the receiving end, but it just doesn’t seem to sink in that it makes other people feel just as bad when it happens to them.

If adults have the tendency to immediately contradict or correct one another and to argue—and this is something we’ve all been guilty of—we can’t blame the children when they do it. But we can be more careful to set a good example, and we can teach our children to be more loving and considerate in this way too. It’s the difference between having arguing, fighting, bickering, contradicting children and children that really love one another and cooperate and work together in harmony. It makes all the difference in the world!

There are a lot of other aspects of showing love and consideration, of course. It’s a big subject! It’s also one of the most important things we can teach our children, because children who fail to learn to be loving and considerate in their speech and actions grow up and continue to have the same habit of bickering and contradicting people. If we want our children to be successful in life, what could be more important than teaching them to love? ◀

PANCAKES

and pudding



By Misty Kay

MY NINE- AND TEN-YEAR-OLDS came whining to me again.

“Mommy, Chalsey’s taking all the LEGO blocks!”

“Davin always gets the best pieces!”

Kristy, my five-year-old was crying. “It’s not fair. I want to build an airplane, but they don’t want to.”

This had been going on all afternoon. It was one thing after another. No matter how many toys they had, they couldn’t have fun. Something was missing. I shot up a quick prayer for an illustration that would

help us to get a grip on the problem.

“Who likes plain, dry pancakes?” I asked. The kids froze and looked surprised at my sudden change of subject. “Who likes plain pancakes with nothing on them—just dry, get-stuck-in-your-throat pancakes?”

“Not me!” they all cried in unison.

“I see. So when you asked me to make pancakes yesterday, you didn’t want plain pancakes. You wanted pancakes *and pudding*.” It had been a special Father’s Day breakfast of hot pancakes smothered in

creamy white chocolate pudding. It was a melt-in-your-mouth treat.

“And when you say you want to play with toys, you don’t mean you want to play with plain toys, any more than you wanted plain pancakes. It was the pudding that made it special. Your friendship is like the pudding. Without the friendship, the game is no fun. Even if you got every LEGO piece you wanted, your playtime would still be dry. No fun. What makes it special is when you all play the game together. That’s when you really have a good time. You need ‘pancakes *and pudding*.’”

The children understood the illustration perfectly and decided to play a game together. It worked like magic. We were stuck in the house for the next few days due to bad weather, but no one seemed to mind. The children played with every game and toy in the house. Any time tempers flared, I’d tell the kids, “The pancakes need some more pudding.”

As I thought more about it later, I realized that lesson wasn’t only for my children. I sometimes work so hard to accomplish the goals I set for myself, and view everything else as a distraction. “I need to do this! I have to get that done!” I want plain, uninterrupted work time, and then I wonder why my work feels so dry and unenjoyable.

How often we all try to eat our pancakes dry. We put such an importance on things we need to do that we forget that pancakes aren’t enjoyable without a topping. We can’t let our work or play crowd out the friendships that make our lives complete.

So if you find that your day is crowded with worries, stress, and work upon work, if you feel you’ve lost that spark, if you’re feeling a little dry, perhaps all you need is a heaping scoop of sweet, fresh “pudding” to make your day complete. ◀

Misty Kay is a member of the Family International in the U.S.

FEEDING READING

Children

CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING FROM GOD.

Genesis 49:25

Psalms 113:9

Psalms 127:3–5

GOD LOVES AND KNOWS CHILDREN, EVEN BEFORE BIRTH.

Psalms 22:10

Isaiah 49:1

Jeremiah 1:5

EARLY TRAINING WILL GUIDE CHILDREN ALL THROUGH LIFE.

Proverbs 22:6

IF YOU NEGLECT YOUR CHILDREN FOR OTHER THINGS, YOU AND THEY WILL SUFFER.

Proverbs 29:15b

YOU SHOULD TEACH YOUR CHILDREN GOD'S WORD.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7

Isaiah 38:19b

Joel 1:3

John 21:15

2 Timothy 3:15

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO TRUST IN GOD.

Psalms 22:9

Psalms 34:11

Psalms 78:6–7

LEAD YOUR CHILDREN TO RECEIVE JESUS.

Mark 10:14

John 1:12

ONLY GOD CAN TEACH LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS.

Psalms 25:5

Proverbs 8:32–33

Isaiah 54:13

TIPS ON PARENTING

By David Brandt Berg

LITTLE CHILDREN DON'T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING that's going on, but they trust you that *you* understand, that what you say goes, and what you say is true; they believe in you. That's why it's so important to handle their hearts prayerfully and with utmost care.

WHEN LITTLE CHILDREN ARE IN A CONTRARY MOOD is no time to ask them anything. They'll say no to *everything!*

RULES ARE NEEDED, but don't make more than you have to. The fewer hard-and-fast rules that merit punishment, the better.

EACH CHILD HAS A UNIQUE PERSONALITY, and each one has to be dealt with on his or her maturity level and according to his or her individual characteristics and personality.

PUT YOURSELF IN YOUR CHILDREN'S PLACE and you'll have a better understanding of their problems.

YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT RULES MUST BE OBEYED without fail, without exception, and what rules can sometimes be relaxed. It takes the wisdom of God to know the difference, so as much as possible such decisions should be made prayerfully in consultation with Him and His Word, and not on the spur of the moment.

IT TAKES WISDOM TO KNOW WHEN to try to persuade teenagers to do what you know from experience will turn out best, and when to agree to do things their way. Sometimes the encouragement they receive from being trusted with the decision or seeing that you're willing to take their desires and opinions into consideration will more than make up for what they might gain by doing it your way—and of course experience is sometimes the best teacher.

GOD'S GIVEN US AN EXAMPLE, and we should do with our children as He does with us. He tries to persuade us to do the right thing, the best thing, but He's given us free will and lets us make our own decisions. Do that, when appropriate, with your children when they are small, and they will be in a better position to know how to make good choices when they get older and the stakes are higher.



A PARENT'S **BEST** INVESTMENT



A successful young attorney said, "The greatest gift I've ever received came in a very small package that was light as a feather. My dad gave it to me one Christmas. Inside the box was a note that read as follows: 'Son, this year I will give you 365 hours. An hour every day after dinner is yours. We'll talk about what you want to talk about, we'll go where you want to go, play what you want to play. It will be *your* hour!' My dad not only kept that promise, but every year he renewed it. That was the greatest gift anyone ever gave me. I am the result of his time."

—Cited in *Moody Monthly*

Your children will never forget the special times they spend with you. Aren't those some of the memories you treasure most from your own childhood—when your parents showed their love in the form of time and attention?

Children thrive on personal attention, and if they don't get it, just like the rest of us, they feel bad, unimportant, or even rejected. You don't always have to spend a great deal of time with children to make them know you love and appreciate them, but you do have to spend *some*—and the *quality* of that time is just as important as the *quantity*.

Time spent with your children is not only the greatest gift you can give them, it's also the greatest investment you can make in them. Nothing else will make a more lasting difference in their lives. As someone once wisely said, "Your children need your presence more than your presents." Play with your children, read with them, hold them, encourage them, enjoy them. Go for walks or just sit around together and talk. Ask questions and listen to their answers—*really* listen.

If you're like most parents, you have more demands on your time than you can possibly meet, and time with your

children gets crowded out when emergencies come up. You rationalize that there's always tomorrow for them, but your children need you today.

Determine how much time you need to spend with each of your children each day or each week, and schedule it. Consider it a top priority, an appointment that must be kept. If a genuine emergency happens, you may need to reschedule your time with your children, but don't cancel it. If you find that you frequently have to postpone your time with your children, rethink your priorities and plan, and come up with another plan that will work.

When older children are having problems, they need even more of your time and you need to be even more attentive. Don't be too quick to offer solutions or advice, and try not to sermonize. Hear them out completely before you say anything, and help them reach their own right conclusions, if possible. Then pray and take time to hear God's still small voice in your heart and mind. He's always ready to answer your questions, and you'll be amazed at the solutions He will give. (See *Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers*, in the *Keys to Parenting* series, the sections entitled "A Parent's Best Friend" and "Listening to Jesus Time." Also *Hearing from Heaven*, from the *Get Activated!* series.)

In addition to the time you spend with your children, you also should set aside some time to pray for them. This is another thing that won't happen unless you treat it as a priority. You have to make time. Praying for your children is a wonderful way to gain a better understanding of them. God is able to show you things about them that you could never learn any other way. You'll also discover how great His love is for them, and that will cause you to love them all the more. He will fill you with His love, which can carry you and them through anything.

Many parents of grown children will tell you that their greatest regret is that they didn't spend more time with their children when they were small. You'll have to sacrifice other things to do it, and in the beginning you may feel it isn't the best use of your time, but keep it up and you won't be sorry. Every minute you give your children is an investment in the future. The rewards will last for eternity.

Being there for your children makes a great difference in their lives, even when you don't think you are doing a lot for them or accomplishing much. ◀

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THE BEST INHERITANCE A PARENT CAN GIVE TO HIS CHILDREN IS A FEW MINUTES OF HIS TIME EACH DAY.

—Orlando A. Battista



If we "train up a child in the way he should go ... when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). We need to educate and inspire and encourage our children, and most of all we need to point them to God and build their faith in His Word. If we will do these things and set the right example, they will have what they need to carry them through life.

—David Brandt Berg



THE PROBLEM

WITH MODERN
ENTERTAINMENT

By David Brandt Berg

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW AUDIENCES THESE DAYS LAUGH THE MOST when the actors make cutting remarks and try to embarrass or hurt each other? That's supposed to be funny. Well, to me it's offensive! When I was young, audiences would be stunned and offended at that sort of thing. Now they just roar with laughter.

You can hardly find a movie or TV show about a family with chil-

dren where the kids aren't fussing and fighting like mad. The parents do it too. Husbands and wives are constantly arguing and putting each other down in front of their children—and in front of *your* children. Because this has become the norm among families in the media, the children watching naturally assume that it's normal and acceptable for families to behave that way.

Sad to say, it probably *is* typical of the average U.S. home, since that's where most of those shows originate and that's who the producers are appealing to. It's normal in that sense, but it certainly shouldn't be considered acceptable. It's unloving, hurtful, and wrong—and it's contagious! It's also rapidly becoming a picture of home life almost anywhere, largely due to the influence those shows have as they spread around the world. Isn't that horrible?

Children imitate what they see and hear, and they seem to have a penchant for copying the negative. Young children, especially, can't always tell the difference between good or bad, and it's even harder when those guilty of some of the worst behavior are made to look so enviable, so "good," in other ways—good looking, affluent, popular, smarter than the adults, and free to do as they please.

Children are in the process of forming the values that they will carry with them through life, and it's their parents' responsibility to guide that process. Parents are failing at that job if they let their children watch what they want without any parental guidance or explanation as to what is acceptable civil behavior and what isn't. And that goes for shows that are supposedly geared

to children, even the ones that are meant to be educational.

Just because a movie or TV show is rated for children doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for *your* children. Parents need to take personal responsibility for that decision. They also have a responsibility to steer their children away from the negative, either by not exposing their children to it in the first place, or by explaining why it's bad and not to be imitated.

What a mess the entertainment world is in! It could be such a good tool for teaching about life, as it once was, but instead it's getting worse by the year!

Today's mainstream media rarely mentions God except in profanity, the occult is intriguing and "cool," and religious people are usually portrayed as kooks. When I was growing up, many movies had positive, reverent references to God and prayer, and often even the most wayward characters would wind up learning their lesson and reforming. Movies back then usually had happy endings, with morals and lessons being taught.

Not now! Sometimes you can hardly tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys. What I *really* hate are those stories where the evil wins out in the end.

In Greek drama, European opera, and Shakespearean plays there were lots of tragedies, but there was always a lesson to be learned. The Greeks believed that the emotions tragedy released, sadness and grief, were good because they had a purgative, purifying effect. Shakespeare's tragedies were insightful and meaningful. Every *Aesop's Fable* had a moral at the end.

But most of today's music, movies, television, videos, and other entertainment have nothing sensible to teach, no lesson to be learned. They leave you with a feeling of hopelessness. "Everything's a mess! The world's a terrible place! God must be a monster to have created such a thing!" They blame it all on God. Even if they don't mention God, that's what they mean. "Why me? This is unfair! Why does this have to happen to me?"

Cartoons have always had their share of violence—cartoon characters hitting each other and blowing each other up and that sort of thing—but some of the latest cartoons are even worse because they introduce children to the occult and other evil supernatural stuff. I love the supernatural—the *good* side—but many of today's cartoons portray and promote the *other* side, a full array of Satan's goods! It's like stepping back into the Dark Ages. It's terrible!

It's the same with much of today's music and music videos. You can hardly ever understand the lyrics—at least most *adults* can't without really making an effort. But if you make that effort, or if you read the lyrics [most can be found online], in many cases you'll be shocked and appalled at the perversions and warped values that songwriters and bands are preaching to young people through their music.

If you're a parent, you need to take a long, hard look at what's out there and decide if that's how you want your children to turn out, because what they watch and listen to and imitate today, they will become tomorrow. ◀

PROACTIVE PARENTING

How to get the most from TV

- Don't let your children watch unmonitored TV.
- Preview or read reviews on a movie or TV show before showing it to your children. Be selective.
- Strive to make watching TV shows, documentaries, or movies both fun and a learning experience by watching and discussing them together. It will help your children develop the right perspectives.
- Talk with your children about what they do with their friends for entertainment, not in a way that suggests you don't trust them, but to help them build and be true to their values.
- Balance TV with fun activities other than TV viewing, such as playing games together, sports, outings, etc.

parenting by example

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

PARENTING HAS NEVER BEEN EASY, but all parents have one great thing going for them from day one: Their children love and look up to them more than anyone else in the world. This is an important part of the grand scheme of things, because while your children are a gift from Heaven, they are a work in progress. It's your job to help them grow into loving, responsible adults.

The love and respect your children feel for you are inborn, but love and respect aren't static. They increase or diminish day by day according to how you interact with your child. So don't betray your children's trust. Set the kind of example they will be proud to follow.

If you want your children to be outgoing and genuinely concerned about others, be that way yourself. If you want them to be unselfish, be unselfish. If you want them to be honest, be honest. If you want them to be optimistic and solution oriented, let them see you approach life's challenges and disappointments positively. If you want them to love, respect, and have a genuine connection with Me, keep your own connection strong through spending time with Me and reading My Word and putting what it says into practice. If you want them to have thankful hearts, thank and praise Me for My goodness at every turn.

If you set the right example for your children during their formative years, those bonds of love and respect will be unbreakable, no matter what may befall you or them. They will also be equipped to grow into adults that both you and I can be proud of. Then when you come home to Me, you'll hear Me say, "Well done, good and faithful parent!" (Matthew 25:21, *paraphrased*).



“I Was
Here
First!”

PARENTING
FROM THE
HEART



Alondra and Manuel having fun on the farm

M

By Jorge Solá

Y THREE-YEAR-OLD

SON MANUEL was playing an educational game on the computer when his six-year-old sister Alondra demanded that he let her have a turn. Manuel's response was typical. "I was here first!"

I don't know where Manuel picked that up, but it got me thinking. It's a generally accepted principle of human society that those who "get there first" have more rights than those who get there after them. The first one to set foot on virgin land is entitled to take possession of it. The first one to find a pearl in the sea, or strike gold or oil may claim it as his own. The first one to make a scientific discovery or invention may patent his find and claim any profits that may result. The first one to sit at a restaurant table has more right to it than the fellow who arrives later. The first one to settle in on a particular

spot on the beach becomes the owner of that spot for the day.

In my children's case, if one of them has been playing for half an hour at the computer, I tell him or her that it's time to let the other one have a turn. Most other parents probably do something similar. But if we applied that principle to every aspect of society, there would be absolute chaos. Can you imagine a landowner saying, "I've had this plot of land for quite a while, so it's time to let someone else enjoy it"? Or can you imagine a man who has a good job giving it to someone else who is out of work and short of money?

Those examples are rather extreme, but

what about little acts of selflessness? How often do you see people who have a seat on the bus or subway offering it to able-bodied others who have just boarded, simply because they look like they'd appreciate a chance to rest their weary feet? Are little sacrifices like that too much to expect?—Or do we fail to make them simply because we don't see anyone else making them and no one really expects us to do so either?

It's a matter of selfishness, when you get right down to it, and selfishness is part of our sinful human nature. But the love of Jesus can help us break out of that mold, overcome our selfish first



FEEDING READING

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

GOD LOVES US, SO WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

John 13:34
Ephesians 5:2a
1 John 4:7a
1 John 4:11
1 John 5:1b

Ephesians 3:17,19
Colossians 3:14

LOVE ONE ANOTHER FERVENTLY.
1 Thessalonians 3:12
1 Peter 1:22b
1 Peter 4:8

GOD GIVES US LOVE TO LOVE OTHERS.

Romans 5:5
Galatians 5:22
1 Thessalonians 4:9
2 Thessalonians 3:5
2 Timothy 1:7

LOVE SINCERELY AND GENUINELY.
Judges 16:15a
Romans 12:9
1 Peter 1:22a
Philippians 1:9-10

TO LOVE IS THE GREATEST LAW OF GOD.

Matthew 22:37-39
Mark 12:33
Luke 10:25,27-28
Galatians 5:14

THE BENEFITS THAT LOVING OTHERS BRINGS US:

John 13:35
Ephesians 3:17-19
1 John 2:10
1 John 3:14
1 John 4:7b
1 John 4:12
1 John 4:16

LOVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT VIRTUE.

1 Corinthians 13:2,13
Galatians 5:6

reactions, swim against the tide, and do the loving thing. Jesus said, “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away” (Matthew 5:42), and “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38). Those are certainly revolutionary concepts in this day and age. How we cling to our selfish rights! But that giving, selfless kind of love is actually what God wanted for us all from the beginning—and His love can help us achieve it. If we would practice this kind of love, so many problems would disappear. The world would be a different place. So why not try it? Give what you can, then get ready for God to flood you with more! ⇐

Jorge Solá is a member of the Family International in Chile.

CHEERFUL GIVERS

God likes cheerful givers—those who give voluntarily because they know it pleases Him and they’re helping others, expecting nothing in return. That kind of giving can be the greatest of all pleasures, because as the purse is emptied, the heart is filled. “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:25). “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The richest people in God’s kingdom are going to be those who shared the most. ⇐

—David Brandt Berg

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

OVERCOMING FEAR IN CHILDREN

Q : My daughter is almost three years old, and she's started something new: the "Mommy, I'm scared" phase. For example, she has become frightened of dogs—even our docile old family dog—and she asks questions like, "Does the dog have sharp teeth?" and "Do dogs eat little girls?" Even the sound of a dog barking in the distance is enough to send her running indoors. No amount of reassurance seems to help. How can I help my little girl overcome her fears?

A : **FEAR CAN BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR ANYONE** at any age, but especially for young children because their frame of reference is quite limited and they haven't yet developed the reasoning capability to determine which fears are rational and which are irrational. It takes prayer, patience, understanding, and wisdom on the part of parents to know how to help their children learn to deal with fear.

One point to keep in mind is that some fears are normal, rational, and healthy. Some are with us from birth, such as fear of loud noises and fear of heights. Other rational fears are learned through experience. For example, a child who has been

stung by a bee is likely to be afraid of bees. Other rational fears are learned through parental warnings, such as fear of hot stoves, sharp knives, and moving cars. On the other hand, irrational fears, such as fear of imaginary monsters, don't have any basis in the material world.

Many childhood fears fall somewhere between the rational and irrational, and they are usually linked to a particular phase of the child's mental and emotional development as he or she is exposed to new experiences and learns to reason and exercise imagination.

It's very important not to make light of children's fears, as that won't make them any less fearful; it will only add a level of shame and low self-worth to the difficulty they are already facing. To make them feel that it's wrong or that they're being bad when they're afraid, as though they had a choice in the matter, will only compound the problem.

The first step to helping children overcome their fears is to take the matter to Jesus in prayer. Ask Him to fill your child with the light of faith to overcome the darkness of fear. Also pray an upbeat prayer with the child, focusing on God's faithful, loving care. Because every child and every situation is different, it helps to ask Jesus to show you what to do to help your child overcome the fear. He can show you the cause of the problem, the best solution, and how to present it to the child. For example, He may show you to relate a similar situation that happened to you when you were small, when everything turned out fine. Or He may tell you to read your child a story in which someone overcame a similar fear.

He will probably also remind you to not expect overnight results. Weaning children from irrational fears takes time, but love and prayer never fail. ←

PARENTING FROM THE HEART

ANXIETY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

**COURAGE
IS ANXIETY
COMMITTED TO
THE LORD IN
PRAYER.**

BY JOSIE CLARK

I GREW UP AROUND CREEKS, LAKES, AND RIVERS, but when I was sixteen I went to Atlantic City, New Jersey, and saw the ocean for the first time. At the boardwalk the night we arrived, I walked out on a wooden pier. As the first thunderous waves crashed beneath my feet, I grabbed the railing, terrified. Since then I have had a cautious fondness for the ocean. I've never been a strong swimmer, but I love the look of the ocean, the feel of sand between my toes, and even the weightless feeling of being lifted from my feet and carried about by gentle

waves—as long as I have something buoyant to hang onto.

So when we spent a summer near the beach and my two teenage sons developed a keen interest in boogie boarding, I could relate. I was happy to see them securely tethered to their boards a hundred yards out in the water, waiting for that perfect wave. But as time went on, they got braver and braver, insisting that the perfect wave was to be found further and further out to sea. I would sit on the shoreline watching the dots that were my sons in the midst of all that blue ocean and try to control my anxiety.

Sometimes a mistake parents make is letting worry be the guideline for deciding what their children are able to do. If something causes the parents to worry, they won't let their children do it. Worry seems almost a necessary

part of parenting. It is a sign of love and concern. It is also a warning signal that it's time to pray. I think worry can actually be a good thing when it causes us to channel our negative, anxious thoughts into a prayer that can help bring about a positive outcome in that situation.

It is our responsibility to train our children and lead them in the right direction, but at a certain point we need to pull back and trust God to keep them from serious harm. As children grow, they need to be able to learn through an ever-broadening range of experiences; they need to learn to take responsibility for themselves, and they need to learn to pray themselves when "out in the deep blue sea."

It gives them a sense of security, though, to know that their parents are "on the shore," still looking after them and still vigilant in prayer—like the time when one of my sons experienced a moment of sheer panic after a wave caught him off guard and knocked him for a loop, and the cord that tethered him to his boogie board slipped off. He thought he was going to drown, but he remembered that I was on the beach praying for him, and he called out to God himself. He knew in that instant he was going to be okay, and he was.

As my kids grow up and move away, I think it's important that they know they have a mother who prays for them. That also reminds them to turn to God in moments of anxiety. I can't be there to hold them up, but He can. I can't meet all their needs or solve all their problems for them, but He can work miracles when they exercise their faith and pray.

An acquaintance once told me about how he had been at the beach with some friends and their kids when one of the girls was caught in a riptide. As she was being pulled out to sea, he realized she was in trouble, dove in, and began swimming out to rescue her. The current was stronger than he expected, and it took him a long time to reach her. By the time he did, she was near drowning.

He tried to help her back, but realized in one desperate moment that he was worn out himself and wasn't going to make it. He called out to God, and the Lord told him to stop struggling and reach down with his foot. He found what he thought was the tip of a sandbar and managed to stay there, holding onto the girl and bobbing with the waves until a U.S. Coast Guard rescue team arrived.

When they were safely on shore, one of his rescuers said, "What I don't understand is how you could be out there for so long, hanging onto that girl and treading water." My friend told him about the sandbar that he could just barely reach with his legs outstretched. "I don't know what you are talking about," the man replied. "We know this area, and where you were the water is many meters deep. There is no sandbar."

Even in the middle of the deep blue sea, God will give us something to plant our feet on, even if He has to create it out of nothing in answer to our earnest prayers. ●

JOSIE CLARK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S.

NEW YEAR'S WISHES

What shall I wish you?
Treasures of earth?
Songs in the springtime?
Pleasures and mirth?
Flowers on your pathway,
Skies ever clear?
Would this ensure you
A happy new year?

What shall I wish you?
What can be found
Bringing you sunshine
All the year round?
Where is the treasure,
Lasting and dear,
That shall ensure you
A happy new year?

Faith that increases,
Walking in light;
Hope that's abounding,
Happy and bright;
Love that is perfect,
Casting out fear;
These shall ensure you
A happy new year.

Peace in the Savior,
Rest at His feet,
Smile of His countenance
Radiant and sweet.
Joy in His presence!
Christ ever near!
This will ensure you
A happy new year!

—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL
(1836–79), ADAPTED

NOT A PROBLEM!

BY ANGELA HERNANDEZ

IT WAS THE END OF ANOTHER LONG, HECTIC DAY. My husband had been away on business for almost three weeks, and caring for our eight-year-old son and a two-month-old baby on my own had been a new and challenging experience. I was looking forward to some much-needed sleep, when my baby became fussy. In a matter of minutes he developed a high fever and vomited. For the next couple of hours I comforted him and tried to calm him down.

Finally he seemed to be going to sleep, which meant I would be able to get some sleep too, but by the time I got myself ready for bed and was about to lie down, he started vomiting again.

I got up, changed him, and cleaned up the mess, but no sooner had I finished when he threw up again—this time all over me. So I went through the entire cleanup routine again, only to have to go through it again a fourth time a couple of minutes later.

Thankfully, after that he fell into a peaceful sleep. As I lay there watching him sleep, I thought about what had just happened. Although he had made a mess of himself several times, I didn't mind having to clean him up over and over. I didn't feel disgusted at him in the least, and the thought of distancing myself from him because of his messes never crossed my mind. To the contrary, love compelled me to take him into my arms, care for him, and make him feel safe and loved.

Jesus, I reflected, is like that with us. Regardless of how many times we mess up, He's always there, ready to take us into His arms, clean us up, and make us feel loved and secure. His love for us isn't in any way diminished by our sins and shortcomings, and whenever we turn to Him for help, He's always there for us. He understands our frailties and loves us anyway, and nothing can separate us from His love. •

“The loving-kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to those who reverence Him” (Psalm 103:17 TLB).

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15).



The Chinese have traditionally counted a baby as one year old when he or she is born, and they have a point. The baby has already been alive before birth, and what has changed is merely the baby's environment. Thanks to pioneering medical imaging technology, such as 4D ultrasound, we can watch a fetus as it sucks its thumb, blinks, yawns, smiles, and moves inside the womb, leaving no question that it is a unique living soul before birth.—ABI F. MAY

Advanced scanning means we have a window on the secret life of fetuses. At 11 weeks we can see them yawn and even take steps. At 22 weeks, they begin to open their eyes. Between 20 and 24 weeks we watch as they seem to cry, smile, and frown. ... When I see a fetus that can smile at me, I know absolutely that we should not tear it from the womb.—STUART CAMPBELL

Imagine yourself as the world's tallest skyscraper, built in nine months and germinating from a single brick. As that brick divides, it gives rise to every other type of material needed to

POINTS TO PONDER

construct and operate the finished tower—a million tons of steel, concrete, mortar, insulation, tile, wood, granite, solvents, carpet, cable, pipe, and glass, as well as all furniture, phone systems, heating and cooling units, plumbing, electrical wiring, artwork, and computer networks, including software.—ALEXANDER TSIARAS AND BARRY WERTH, FROM CONCEPTION TO BIRTH: A LIFE UNFOLDS

The spark of life is a miracle of God, not some kind of physical accident. At conception, God combines a new human body with a new human spirit to create a new immortal soul with a distinct personality, different from anybody else in the whole world.—DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)

Science has its explanations for how children come into being, but when you first hold your baby and look into those little eyes, you know that you are holding a miracle. You are looking at one of the great mysteries of the universe—a glimpse of Heaven and the creative power of God. There in your arms is tangible proof of the love God has for you, for He has chosen you to parent a new soul.—DEREK AND MICHELLE BROOKES, KEYS TO BABY

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.
— WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

IT HAPPENED TO ME

The **Giovanna** Solution



BY VICTORIA OLIVETTA

AFTER FOUR YEARS AND A 44-HOUR BUS RIDE, I WAS FINALLY VISITING MY DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW AND SEEING MY YOUNG GRANDDAUGHTER, GIOVANNA, FOR THE FIRST TIME. She had my heart instantly—so cute, so smart, so active. Other grandparents will understand if I say that my granddaughter is the most adorable, wonderful girl in the world!

I spent as much time as I could with her, trying to get to know and understand her. It was amazing to see how much Giovanna looked and acted like her mother had at the same age, but at the same time she very definitely had her own unique personality and ways.

I put great emphasis on my children's education and started early, and my daughter and son-in-law have enthusiastically started doing the same with Giovanna. At 20 months Giovanna can already read a few words, counts to 20, knows the basic colors, is starting to learn geometric shapes, and has memorized a number of simplified Bible verses. She is very bright, but still exudes the innocence of a toddler.

One day she was running around, playing, and being a little rowdy. In a flash she went from doing her famous "A-frame" exercise on the bed (head and feet firmly planted on the mattress, bottom up, arms crossing the A) to landing on the floor with a thud. She looked surprised, but thankfully wasn't seriously hurt. She sat there for a moment with an expression that was a mix of shock, disbelief, and embarrassment.

After she recovered and stood up, I offered to pray for her because I was sure that such an unexpected fall must have been at least a little painful. As soon as I finished the prayer,

Giovanna opened her big brown eyes, and there it was—that unmistakable sparkle of playfulness. She unfolded her hands and was ready to get back to the important affairs of her young life: more jumping and playing.

A few days later her father needed to travel to another city and be gone for a couple of days, and she missed him. He has made a habit of spending one-on-one time with her at the same time each day, whenever possible, and that was when she missed him most while he was away. One day my daughter told Giovanna that instead of being upset, she should pray for her daddy, and they prayed together. Immediately her expression changed from one of worry and loss to one of peace and trust; she was her happy, playful self again.

Her simple faith made me reevaluate my own. It's one thing to pray and trust that God will answer (that's why we pray in the first place, because we expect some kind of answer), but it's often something else to pray and immediately stop worrying about the situation because we truly believe the answer is already on the way. Giovanna really believed, so she could happily get on with life.

So why worry? We can apply the Giovanna solution to our own problems and disappointments. We simply need to commit those situations to Him in prayer, trust that He will work them out, and then not worry about how or when the answer will come.

VICTORIA OLIVETTA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ARGENTINA. •



IT PAYS TO BE AS A LITTLE CHILD. In fact, Jesus said, “Unless you ... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3) and, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). We’re to be like little children—loving, sweet, simple believers, in childlike faith believing and receiving all that the Lord has for us.

Children are samples of the citizenry of Heaven, like little angels dropped from the sky. They’re so fresh from Heaven that they understand prayer and other spiritual matters better than most adults. They talk to God and He talks to them. It’s that simple. They have no

problem at all getting His ear with their pure, simple, childlike faith. It is given to children to be rich in faith. Faith just comes naturally to them. They have faith to believe anything God says, and with them nothing is impossible.

The problem with many grown-ups is that they know too much. They’ve been educated out of their childlike faith. But there are others of trusting childlike faith who are daily doing things that doubting intellectuals say can’t be done. So be like a little child, and anything wonderful can happen! •

CHILDLIKE FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PARADOX

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



SNAIL PATROL



Getting acquainted.
Jordan (2) and
Cherise (5) with a
newfound friend

BY JAY PHILLIPS

TODAY I WENT FOR A WALK WITH SOME OF MY FRIENDS' KIDS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE SURROUNDING THE VILLAGE IN WHICH WE LIVE, an area consisting of farmland, dirt paths, and small woods. The weather was great, so it was a good opportunity for the kids to get some fresh air and exercise as they ran around looking for the little creatures that are abundant in spring and summer.

It was an enjoyable break for me, away from the beehive of activity in our house, which doubles as living space and office for our local foundation and volunteer work. Out on those country trails there are no computers, no pressing work, no phone calls, no chores, no meetings, no messes to clean up, and none of the myriad of other things that keep us quite busy most of the day.

Time can seem to stand still while out in nature—at least until the kids excitedly holler, “Ladybug!” or “Spider!” But even such sudden alerts are okay, because just a few minutes of peace is usually all I need to clear my head. Then I’m ready to jump back into action and run into the bushes to get a photograph of the latest “cool bug” they found and to take in the moment with these little explorers.

When Jesus said that unless you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3), maybe He wasn’t just talking about Heaven to come, but also about the peace and little bit of heaven we experience in our hearts here and now when we take the time to put our cares aside, quiet our minds and spirits, and tune in to His voice speaking to us through creation.

The children I was with seemed to do that naturally. They weren’t worried about the work that still needed to get done back home, or the bills that needed to be paid; they were simply full of energy, excited about life, and happy to have a big guy along to watch out for them and take snapshots of their activities. How much more peace should we have, knowing that we have the ultimate Big Guy looking out for us and, I’m sure, taking snapshots of our lives too?

OUT IN THE FIELDS WITH GOD

By Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The little cares that fretted me,
I lost them yesterday,
Among the fields above the sea,
Among the winds at play;
Among the lowing of the herds,
The rustling of the trees;
Among the singing of the birds,
The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might happen,
I cast them all away
Among the clover-scented grass,
Among the new-mown hay;
Among the husking of the corn,
Where drowsy poppies nod,
Where ill thoughts die and good are born—
Out in the fields with God!

JAY PHILLIPS IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CROATIA. ■

MAKE IT MAGICAL



THEY SAY IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE THAT OFTEN BRING THE GREATEST JOY. This is true of the hour I spend first thing each morning with three toddlers so their mothers, all fellow volunteers from the Family International with whom I live and work, can get on top of their day. I must admit, though, that this hasn't always been the case.

It was a great plan in theory, but with all three still in diapers, one or the other of them usually had a smelly "surprise" for me upon arrival, while another would be a bucket of tears, crying over the fact that her mother was leaving her with me for a while. "Believe me," I often found myself muttering, "I wish this wasn't happening more than you do!"

In those early days of this venture, I would greet them with a cup of coffee in hand, and as soon as I could I would plop myself down in my beanbag chair and prepare to wait out the next hour. Of course that state of affairs usually came to an abrupt end when a toddler fight would break out with screams that could be heard within a five-mile radius. What was I supposed to do with the three of them for a *whole hour*?

After a few days of this, one morning one of them picked up a book from the floor, walked over, and sat herself down in my lap. "Book?" she said, looking at me with her big round eyes.

"Okay, why not?" As I began reading, the other two waddled over and sat down beside us.

BY STEPHANIE PAONE

As I read to them, I was surprised at how much they already knew. Each would point to something familiar on the page and identify it using their baby language, or try to imitate the sound of one of the animals.

We read book after book, and I discovered anew that toddlers are like sponges, absorbing everything. They were learning just by me reading to them, and I found myself enjoying it as well. I decided then to put my heart into my times with them and to come up with other activities to do together.

Now that hour with them is one of my favorite times of the day. Whatever it is we're doing, without fail one of them will shout out "Den!" ("Again," in their baby language) each time the activity ends, and they all break out in fits of laughter when I start it up again.

Being able to help them learn and discover new things and hearing them laugh in delight is far more rewarding than anything I expected in the beginning. There are still some smelly surprises and the occasional toddler tantrum, but I've learned that my times with them are what I make them, and they can be magical!

STEPHANIE PAONE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO. ■

START EARLY

The Need for Loving, Consistent Discipline

BY MARIA FONTAINE

PARENTING IS MORE THAN COMFORTING CHILDREN WHEN THEY FALL DOWN, or making sure they get proper nutrition, and brush their teeth, and so on. Parents are responsible for their children's *spiritual* training as well, and the foundation stone of that training is loving and consistent discipline—and when I say “loving,” I mean reasonable, even-tempered, and nonviolent. Children begin forming behavior patterns and their ideas of right and wrong very early in life, so the earlier you can start teaching them, the better.

Discipline means training your children to lead a disciplined life, and eventually to discipline themselves. If discipline is something that you only do “to” children, the end result will be that as soon as they get out from under your control, they will go wild. But if you discipline them in the sense of consistently trying to teach them to lead disciplined lives, eventually

they will be able to discipline themselves.

Discipline is not only about correction or the consequences for unacceptable behavior, although those are each a very important part of it. Discipline starts with step-by-step teaching, setting clear boundaries and guidelines, setting a good example in your own behavior, and being consistent.

If you're like most parents, it was initially difficult for you to administer correction, and perhaps it still is. You love your children and don't want to see them unhappy. You wish with all your heart that there was some way around it, that they could learn the lesson some easier way, but because you do love them, you correct them because you know it's what they need and what will keep them from being hurt worse later. As the Bible says, discipline “yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

You can't expect children to learn good behavior on their own; it's a long-term process that requires consistency, love, and fairness. It's probably the biggest challenge and the hardest job you'll ever face as a parent. It's easier in some ways to just let them run wild and entertain themselves, but in the long run you'll find that it's much more worthwhile





to do the hard work that is needed to discipline your kids. In fact, you're in for a lot of heartache if you don't.

Until children learn the simple, basic lessons of obedience, respect, concern for others, self-control, and discipline, they won't mature or reach their full potential. They'll also be less happy and fulfilled in life, and they'll probably make those around them less than happy too.

And if you don't give children loving, consistent discipline when they're young, then when they get older they'll be much harder to handle. You'll wind up having to really crack down on them to keep them from hurting themselves or others—and it won't be their fault. It will be your fault for not teaching them earlier, when the stakes weren't as high.

When you look at it that way, you'll see that the loving thing to do is to teach your kids from the beginning, gently, lovingly, and consistently showing them how to make the right decisions, laying the boundaries for acceptable behavior, and administering some form of consequence when they cross those boundaries.

So the first step is to believe that discipline is

necessary, that your children not only need it in order to grow up to be productive and useful members of society, but also to be happy and secure in their relationship with you, their parent. Deep down inside, children know they need boundaries and want their boundaries to be defined, and they're happier and more secure when they receive consistent, loving discipline.

Once you make the commitment to be faithful in the training and discipline of your children, there's another hurdle to cross, which is consistency. There will be times when you're busy with other responsibilities, times when disciplining would be inconvenient or you will worry about what others would think, times when you don't want to "spoil the moment," and times when your children will try every trick in the book to talk you out of it. Unless you're careful, situations and your own mood or energy level will have a greater bearing than they should on how you mete out discipline; you will either ignore misbehavior because you feel that would be more expedient, or you will resort to sharp words or nagging. But inconsistent discipline,

for whatever reason, is confusing and even damaging for children and will only make it harder on you and them. By disciplining consistently, you will need to discipline less, because your children will learn their lessons quicker.

If you're going to discipline your kids, you have to be involved in what they're doing. When you make the commitment to train your children to lead disciplined lives, you're also making a commitment to spend more time with them, because it does take being with them and tuning in to them. You might not enjoy the moments when you have to correct them or discipline them, and at the time it will seem like a lot more work to teach them the right way to do something rather than just letting them do what they want to do. But in the long run, you'll find that you've saved yourself a lot of work, and you'll enjoy your times with your children much more.

Consistently administering loving discipline has great rewards. In the end, not only will your children love, respect, and enjoy being with you more, but you will feel the same way about them, because you will have helped bring out the best in them. ■





ONE OF A KIND

BY ELISABETH SICHROVSKY

ALMOST ANYONE'S LIST OF "PEOPLE WHO HAVE INFLUENCED MY LIFE" includes at least one teacher. What kind of teachers are these?—The kind who use their talents to help develop their students' talents, the kind who strive to shape not just the mind but the heart. For me, it was a teacher we students came to affectionately call Auntie Marina.

At the time, my family was living in Japan, where my parents were involved in administrative work for our international Christian fellowship. Auntie Marina was my first- and second-grade teacher.

She was level headed and stricter than most of our other teachers and caretakers, firm in her sense of right and wrong, and at first we kids grumbled about that. Before long, however, we learned to trust her because we sensed that she cared about what kind of people we would become. We felt secure with Auntie Marina because she clearly defined our boundaries.

While she set limits and enforced the rules, she demonstrated equal amounts of positivity and love, and she also had an appropriate sense of fun. School with her wasn't limited to worksheets and textbooks. She took us on excursions and trips to the park, and used her artistic talent in order to get us interested in arts and crafts. One day we children asked, "Can we have coffee like you and the other adults?" and the next day for snack we were delighted when she served us "kid coffee"—milk that she had turned coffee color with molasses.

She also had a knack for making each of us feel special, and one way she did this was by speaking positively about us to others, often even when we were within earshot. I can still recall the pride I felt upon overhearing her tell another teacher how well I was doing in spelling. It was satisfying to know that my efforts had not gone unnoticed.

Auntie Marina's care and love extended beyond the school years. For quite some time after our family moved to Taiwan, she sent me notes and cards. Ten years later, I still have several of them. When I reread one of those notes recently, I marveled at the concern and interest she had shown in corresponding with an eight-year-old: "Yesterday I came across your picture as I was preparing a photo album of 'the children in my life'—those I've cared for and taught over the years—and I was reminded of how much I love you, my dear young friend."

On my ninth birthday she wrote: "A very happy birthday to you. I pray that it will be a wonderful, special day for you, and a great new year of your life, full of good surprises and love-filled experiences. I'm happy to know you!"

On June 9, 2005, after a prolonged struggle with cancer, Auntie Marina passed on to Heaven. I know I am only one of many who are better for having experienced her love, which she always reminded us was *God's* love poured through her.

ELISABETH SICHROVSKY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. ■



What to do when you feel **frazzled**

BY DEREK AND MICHELLE BROOKES

THERE ARE GOING TO BE TIMES IN THE DAY-TO-DAY ROUTINE OF PARENTING when you feel overwhelmed by situations and circumstances. You've had an especially trying day at work, your eight-year-old won't do her homework, your teenager's stereo is shaking the house, your toddler didn't make it to the potty in time—and your dinner guests will be here any minute! You feel pushed to the brink.

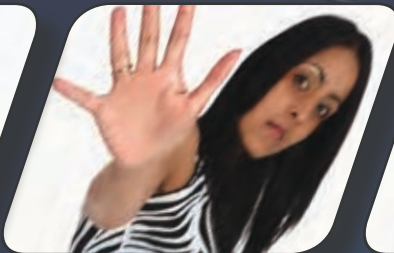
Every parent faces days like this. You're not alone. And you're not alone in a greater sense: Jesus is right there with you. He understands, and He waits with encouragement and solutions. If you have the opportunity, talking with someone else—maybe your spouse or a friend—can help you see things differently, calm your spirit, and give you a chance to pray together for the Lord's help. You can even ask your children to pray with you. Their faith and simple prayers can be a wonderful encouragement.

Whatever you do, don't give in to feelings of frustration and discouragement. Shoot up a prayer and ask Jesus to give you power for the hour and grace for the space, and He will. Ask Him to help you see your children as He sees them, to see what they are going to become. He will help you view the situation optimistically and with hope. The outlook may be bleak, but the "uplook" (looking up to Jesus) is always bright.

Because children are often a reflection of their parents, it's very easy to get discouraged and feel that you have failed when one or more of your children isn't doing well in some area. But remember they're also God's children, and they are a work in progress, just like you are. "It is God who works in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

All He expects is that you try your best, give them your love, and leave the rest up to Him. Now that doesn't mean you should just throw up your hands in despair, let "God take care of it," and quit when the going gets rough. He probably intends for you to be part of His solution. You need to find out from Him what He wants you to do, and do it; then put the rest in His hands and let Him do what you can't do.

"WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL FRAZZLED" IS EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOKLET *POWER FOR PARENTING* BY AURORA PRODUCTION. ORDER YOUR COPY FROM ONE OF THE ADDRESSES ON PAGE 2. ■



TIGHTROPE TANDEM

Decision Making in the Teen Years

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

BY THE TIME CHILDREN REACH THEIR EARLY TEENS, they have grown to nearly the physical stature of adults, but often still think and behave like children. That's the age when a lot of young people do wild, crazy things and get into trouble, and of course if they start going that direction and no one is there to help turn them around, things are likely to go from bad to worse.

Teens are at the age of decision, and that's a troubling, perilous time. They're trying to find their place in life, where they fit, and it worries them. They can be pretty difficult to live with, and they even find it difficult to live with themselves, because they are in a quandary, in a state of flux. They can be very idealistic, and at the same time very critical of their parents and other adults who aren't perfect.

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood can be like walking a tightrope, a high wire, and teens need someone there, a parent or other strong role model, to help them find their footing and steady them as they cross over.

Teenagers may not act like it, but they actually *want* leadership, they want direction, and they know they need it. They want help,

but you've got to win their confidence. They've got to know that you love them and are trying to help them.

When children become young teenagers, they start wanting to make their own decisions and run their own lives. That's a natural part of coming into adulthood. Of course, by that time their parents should have taught them how to make *right* decisions, and if they haven't, things are likely to go haywire. When that happens it may seem like it's too late, but better to start late than not at all—and it's never too late, with God's help.

When my first four reached their teens, I tried to guide them through the decision-making process, but then I'd get them to make their own decisions. I'd say, "*You* know what's right and what's wrong. What do *you* think you ought to do?"

They'd often try to get me or their mother to make the decision for them, so they wouldn't have to take the blame if things went wrong. Or they'd try to persuade us to say yes to them doing something that they knew they shouldn't do, so we'd be guilty and not them.

But I would tell them, "Don't ask me. You know what's right and wrong. What do *you* think you should do?" Afterwards they were usually glad that we made them decide, because they knew that was the way it was supposed to be and it helped them feel trusted and respected, which is a very important thing at that age.

Most of the time they knew what was right, and they wound up making the right choices. Even after they had made a wrong choice or two, they usually turned around and made the right one after a little wisely presented advice. I believe that most teens will do the same, if shown enough love and patience and understanding.

Parenting or mentoring teens is a difficult, sacrificial, and sometimes scary job, but it also has thrills and rewards that are all its own. ■



THE GREATEST DISCOVERY THAT ANY OF US CAN MAKE IN LIFE is that we can have a close personal relationship with our heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus, because that connection puts us in touch with every other good thing we need.

Such a relationship is not only possible, it's only a short prayer away. "Jesus, I need You. Come into my heart and life. Forgive me for my sins, and be my Savior, my ever-present companion and counselor, my unfailing help. Amen."

Making that connection is instantaneous, but that is only the start. Like any other meaningful relationship, it develops and matures over time, and it grows the quickest through daily interaction. As you learn to turn to Him in prayer and get to know Him and His plan better through reading His Word, you will come to understand how deeply He loves you personally, how much He wants to see you happy, fulfilled, and living up to your full potential, and how directly He wants to be involved in your life. You will be amazed at how ready, willing, and able He is

to supply not only love and understanding in trying times, but also practical solutions to the problems you face.

For parents, the only thing more wonderful than having that kind of personal relationship with God themselves is knowing that it's just as freely available to their children. "For the promise is to you and to your children" (Acts 2:39).

Families that share that common connection with God, whom the Bible calls love itself (1 John 4:8), are closer, more loving, more unified, and have far fewer serious problems among themselves than families that don't. Why?—Because they have the most important things in common, besides a clear standard of right and wrong—the spiritual guidance and support they need to make the right decisions and stick to them. When problems and irritations arise, real solutions and heavenly help are only a prayer away.

If you want more for your family and haven't yet discovered Jesus, connect with Him and start growing together.

KEITH PHILLIPS IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE UNITED STATES. ■

GROWING TOGETHER

BY KEITH PHILLIPS



Things every parent should know

(But shouldn't have to learn the hard way)

We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.—*Stacia Tauscher*

You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.—*Franklin P. Jones*

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.—*Rabindranath Tagore*

There's nothing that can help you understand your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child.—*Frank A. Clark*

There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million.—*Walt Streightiff*

Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.—*Elizabeth Stone*

Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories.—*John Wilmot*

To bring up a child in the way he should go, travel that way yourself.—*Josh Billings*

It's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it myself.—*Joyce Maynard*

Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.—*Robert Fulghum*

If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.—*C.G. Jung*

Children have more need of models than of critics.—*Carolyn Coats*

Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.—*Charles R. Swindoll*

What a child doesn't receive he can seldom later give.—*P.D. James*

If you want your children to improve, let them overhear the nice things you say about them to others.—*Haim Ginott*

In bringing up children, spend on them half as much money and twice as much time.—*Author unknown*

What's done to children, they will do to society.—*Karl Menninger*

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

Kids spell love T-I-M-E.—*John Crudele*

The guys who fear becoming fathers don't understand that fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man. The end product of child raising is not the child but the parent.—*Frank Pittman*

If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise all over again,
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
—*Diane Loomans*

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING BOTH HANDS

BY HÉCTOR MEDINA

MY GRANDPA USED TO SAY, “If you see well-behaved children, you can be sure that someone is using both hands in bringing them up—the right hand of love and the left hand of discipline.” In the 25 years that I have been a teacher, that maxim has been a cornerstone of my daily interactions with my students.

Perhaps you’ve heard the analogy that likens youngsters to small plants. Plants need water and sunshine, but they also need attention in the form of fertilizing, pruning, fumigating, transplanting to larger pots, etc.—attention that requires work on the part of the gardener and can be a temporary shock for the plant. In the case of young people, that means giving them tender loving care first and foremost, while not neglecting the other things that are necessary parts of character building, like providing a healthy environment for their social development and emotional and spiritual growth, setting limits, teaching them to take responsibility for their actions, and allowing them to learn through suffering the consequences of their own poor decisions, if necessary. These more difficult aspects of parenting and mentoring are usually also the ones that are the most difficult for young people to accept, especially in the beginning, but we owe it to them and to God, to

whom they and we will ultimately need to give account of our lives.

There is a lot of talk these days about troubled teenagers and the exponential impact they have on society as their influence spreads to their peers, younger children, and eventually their own children. And the same questions keep being asked: How did we get in this state? And how do we get out? Can we steer our ship back on a godlier course, or is it too late?

I believe there is always hope, with God’s help, because all things are possible for Him (Matthew 19:26). But He can’t and won’t do it alone. He needs us parents, teachers, and other adults to be mentors and role models for our young people. Our part is to buck the trends of passiveness, permissiveness, and a general lack of definite moral standards that sadly have become norms in parenting and education today. But if we will each do what we can, God will do what we can’t. He will bring about the inward changes that our children need and help them *want* to do their part, to do the right things with the right motivation. With time, they can become forces for positive change themselves, but it starts with us adults. We need to take the reins—with *both hands*.

HÉCTOR MEDINA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN COLOMBIA. ■

THE EVOLUTION OF A MOTHER

BY MARIA DOEHLER

WHEN MY HUSBAND SAM AND I HAD ONLY ONE CHILD, I thought I had a handle on parenting. I needed to adapt and bend and give up some of my independence, but not too much. I was absolutely on top of Cade's appearance, and he never wore dirty, stained, or soiled clothes. Cade was very "portable," and we toted him with us wherever we went. When something needed to get done, we calmly set out to do it and got it done. I knew things would get harder as we had more children, but I wasn't worried; I was pretty good at this.

Brooke arrived next. Brooke was an angel of a baby, waking only to gurgle and coo, and putting herself back to sleep. I had gained less weight during that pregnancy, so I was back in shape in no time. If I could ace it with two, I reasoned, I could handle anything. I was at the top of my game.

Enter Zara. Exit all parenting confidence. It's not that Zara was difficult on her own, but suddenly "spontaneous" meant 45 minutes later. I often had kids crying in three different parts of the house. Doing anything as a family required the painstaking planning and execution of a mission to the moon. We began hearing comments like "Just watching you wears me out!" But babies aren't babies forever (before you can brace yourself, they're toddlers!), and we learned to work with it. We learned that we didn't have to be perfect. Neither did our kids.

At this point I think I started to better understand that being a mother goes far beyond giving birth and caring for my children physically; it means living my life through my children—not by imposing my



FEEDING READING

PARENTING GOD'S WAY: LOVE, UNDERSTANDING, INSTRUCTION, AND DISCIPLINE

Children are to respect and obey their parents.

Exodus 20:12
Ephesians 6:1-2
Colossians 3:20

Parents are responsible to both teach and set a good example for their children.

Deuteronomy 4:9
Deuteronomy 6:6-7
Ephesians 6:4

Pray for God's guidance and help in raising your children.

Judges 13:12
Proverbs 3:5-6
James 1:5

Parents are responsible to correct their children when necessary.

Proverbs 3:12
Proverbs 19:18
Proverbs 29:17

Treat children gently and in love.

Luke 1:17
Ephesians 4:32
Colossians 3:21
1 Peter 4:8

Godly parenting will guide children all through life.

Psalms 37:31
Proverbs 6:20, 22-23
Proverbs 22:6
John 10:27-28
2 Timothy 3:15

Patience, mercy, and reasoning are the most effective.

Proverbs 16:6
Romans 2:4
1 Thessalonians 2:11

NEVER OUT OF STYLE

—A Message from Jesus for Mothers

OLD-FASHIONED MOTHERHOOD NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE BECAUSE IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE. I made people to need love, and I intended for them to first experience that love through their mothers. Mothers are the embodiment of love and care and tenderness—love that even the tiniest baby can feel and respond to.

So if you think you're missing out on life because you're stuck at home "just" caring for a baby or raising small children when you could be furthering your career, think again. Love is the best thing in life! To be able to love to the full is the most important lesson anyone can ever learn, and love is the greatest gift anyone can ever receive—and mothers teach love and give love like no one else. Life would go on fine without many things, but not without mothers. "Old-fashioned" motherhood is here to stay! ■



ideas and dreams on them, but by rejoicing at and taking pride in their triumphs. Everywhere we went, people would tell us "Enjoy them while you have them. They will grow up so quickly!" That truth started to sink in.

Four kids. Emma is every bit as special as her brother and sisters. Spontaneous now means at least an hour. We still have to plan everything, of course, but we only plan one activity a day, max. We have lots of play clothes and just a few "special" clothes. Once when Zara got blue marker on Cade's shirt just as we were finally ready to go out, I found myself thinking, *Well, at least it's on a blue shirt. It almost matches.* We are a spectacle, but a *happy* spectacle that people seem to enjoy watching.

I'm continuing to learn about love in ways that are slowly changing the most stubborn parts of my nature. Each child and each day reshapes me a little more, but I wouldn't have it any other way. It's fun to be a family!

MARIA DOEHLER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO. ■

HOME OF

hearts

Love has creative power, and in the home love does its magic by engendering unselfish acts and helping each family member see the others in a positive light. Everyone wants to be understood, accepted, and loved for who he or she is, and the home is a God-created environment where these things can thrive.

There are also things that work against love in the home—enemies of love, if you will. Disagreements between children and parents and sibling rivalries are a couple of the obvious ones, but there are other problems that are more subtle and therefore even more dangerous—selfishness, laziness, indifference, criticalness, nagging, taking one another for granted, and thinking and talking negatively about one another, to name a few. These usually begin with small, seemingly innocent incidents—finding excuses to not help out, squabbles over petty issues, little putdowns and sarcastic remarks—but unless you recognize these as attacks on your family's love and unity, they will develop into bad habits that will take a terrible toll on your family.

The root problem is a lack of love. The only thing that will cure a lack of love is love itself, so ask Me to bring more love into your home, and then work with Me on it. If you ask Me to give each of you genuine respect and appreciation for the others, I will put that kind of love in your hearts, but then it's up to you to cultivate that love through loving thoughts, words, and actions.

My two-year-old, Teddy, and Jesus

By Becky Hayes

I HAD BEEN PRAYING FOR MY SON, DENITH, to develop a close and personal relationship with Jesus while he was young, capitalizing on how much faith and capacity to believe two-year-olds have. I prayed that he wouldn't only come to know Jesus as his Savior, but also as the close and personal Friend that Jesus desires to be to everyone. I wanted Denith to sense His Spirit and to hear His voice.

One night something very special happened that encouraged me and made me determined to teach my son more about how to hear from Jesus on his own.

Denith had received a teddy bear when he was a baby, affectionately named "Teddy," and he was very attached to his stuffed friend. Everywhere Denith went—to preschool, to lunch, or to the supermarket—Teddy came along. One day Teddy was misplaced and could not be found. For three days we searched the house. I pulled everything out from under the bed in case he had fallen behind the bed and gotten stuck.

The third night that Teddy was lost, I was putting my nine-month-old, Leilani, and Denith to sleep. The lights were out, and the children were all tucked into bed and ready to pray for the night,

when Denith asked, "Mommy, where's Teddy?" "Honey," I said, "Teddy's lost. We need to look for Teddy during the day when there's light. Right now it's dark and we can't see. But why don't we ask Jesus to give Teddy a good night, and to help him be warm and cozy and sleep well." "Mommy, where's Jesus?" asked Denith. "Jesus is in your heart," I replied. "He's also in my heart, and He's all around us. If you talk to Him, He can hear you speak, and if you listen, you can hear Him talk to you." Without any further questions Denith promptly asked aloud, "Jesus, where's Teddy?"

A short pause followed, and then in an excited but matter-of-fact manner, Denith exclaimed, "Oh, Mommy, Teddy is in the crib!" My body tingled with excitement. I knew that my son had heard Jesus answer his question. I didn't hesitate for a second. I began removing the toys and stuffed animals from the baby's crib. Sure enough, under the other toys, I saw Teddy.

I was so touched by Jesus' love for Denith in rewarding his faith by answering him so clearly. It was also a good opportunity for me to show Denith that Mommy and others can fail—we couldn't find Teddy—but that Jesus *always* has the answers.

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Real Friends

BY THERESA LECLERC

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, I thought I knew it all. I was full of insecurities, but I was also full of opinions—strong ones! Looking back, I feel sorry for my parents. I'm sure I wasn't an easy child to raise, especially as a teen. I didn't like the fact that I had stricter parents than some of my friends did, and I pulled away from my parents, as many teens do. I was sure they didn't understand me, and I was right—they didn't! None of my older siblings were anything like me. I questioned everything and had trouble keeping the rules. I have to admit, I wasn't very deep. My main goal in life was to have fun. My mom and dad were loving parents, but I wasn't sure I wanted to follow in their footsteps as a full-time Christian volunteer. I was tough on the outside, but on the inside all I ever wanted was to find someone who truly understood me.

One day I found myself at a gathering where I was the only teenager. While the adults talked in small groups, I sat off in a corner by myself, watching, until a woman

named Joy came over and struck up a conversation. Eventually I opened up and told her about all my troubles. I half expected her to lecture me, but instead she just listened. She cared about me, and I could feel that. Never once did she put me in my place or try to change my opinion; she simply tried to understand me.

That conversation was the beginning of a friendship that continued for seven years, until Joy passed away. She stuck by me through thick and thin. We took long walks together and would sometimes write notes to each other about things that were harder to say in person. Even after she moved to a distant city, we

kept in touch by phone and mail. For much of those seven years, Joy was so sick that she could have died at any time, but I never heard her complain. She was always bubbly and had a passion for people.

Joy taught me something important—that it was okay to be myself. And in the process, she also taught me to try to understand people in a deep way, to look beyond appearances and sometimes even beyond what they say, to accept them for who they are, and to show them unconditional love. Though we all seem so different, we're all made from the same stuff, and we all need love, understanding, and acceptance. When someone sees our need and fills it, we blossom. •



THE DAY

THE BOUNCER BROKE

BY BONITA HELE

I WAS THRILLED TO BE A NEW MOTHER AGAIN. Allen was one of those happy, mellow little guys. I would put him in his bouncer, and he would be happy to sit there, awake or asleep, while I rocked the bouncer with one foot and sat in my chair and worked. I had a desk job and worked part-time at home, so I was happy for the opportunity to continue my work, even with such a young baby in tow. I took pride in being able to multitask so well, and others commended me. Even when Allen grew older and chubbier and was awake for longer spells, he still loved to be in his bouncer.

Then one day it seemed to rest closer to the ground. I thought Allen's older sister, Jessica, who was a toddler at the time, might have sat in it and bent it. I tried to return the heavy wire frame to its original shape, but it would not comply. Poor Allen's bottom would hit the floor if I tried to rock him.

I asked my husband to look at it, and his conclusion was that it would need to be re-welded. "Don't bother," I replied. It would be easier to get a new one.

Then came Allen's nap time. I was used to bouncing him to sleep as I continued

my work, but now I had to rock him in my arms until he fell asleep. I first tried rocking him while I walked back and forth across the room, and then while I sat in a rocking chair. When he finally went to sleep, I didn't want to put him in his crib for fear that he would wake up. So there I sat, feeling useless. I thought about everything I needed to get done, and got even more frustrated.

Then a different thought came to mind. *Pray*. I remembered reading a book once titled *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something*.¹ So I did. I prayed for my baby, for my husband's work, for my daughter, for my various responsibilities, for friends and family members. By the time the baby woke up, I felt surprisingly refreshed

and upbeat. I actually felt as though I had accomplished more than if I had been sitting at my computer typing away. And I probably had.

Jesus said that we "always ought to pray."² Okay, so I'm not even close to that level of prayerfulness, but maybe if I spend my son's naptimes upholding others in prayer, I might come closer to that ideal. And so I discovered once again that "all things work together for good to those who love God."³ Through this interruption in my accomplishment-driven routine, He was able to get through to me about something of much more lasting value: the power of prayer.

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¹ Ronald Dunn, *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001)

² Luke 18:1

³ Romans 8:28

THE PERFECT GIFT

BY GABE RUCKER

I RECEIVED THE PERFECT GIFT
LAST CHRISTMAS—THE LOVE OF A
LITTLE CHILD.

On Christmas night, when it seemed that all of the gift-giving and festivities were over, I was tucking four-year-old Jade into bed and praying with her for the night when out of the blue she said, “Daddy, I love you more than all my toys and things!” My heart skipped a beat.

A few nights later, we were visiting relatives when I needed to check my email. I found a place to hook up to their network, but there wasn’t a chair handy. No problem. This would just take a minute, I told myself as I sat on the floor and started up my laptop computer. Just then Jade came running through the room, tripped, and fell right onto the computer, sending a million colored lines across the screen.

As each person present assessed the damage, I heard comments like, “*That’s* going to be expensive to fix!” and “Too bad it’s no longer under warranty!” When Jade realized what she had done, she started crying. I picked her up and hugged her. “Don’t worry, Baby,” I whispered in her ear. “I love you more than all of my things!”

No matter what happens this year, what things may come and go, just remember that Jesus loves you more than anything.



A mother’s love for her baby boy
A sacrifice to bring others joy
A father’s care for one not his own
A message sent from a royal throne
A seeming wrong that was turned to right
An angel’s song in the dark of night
A prophet’s vision at last fulfilled
A miracle because God had willed
A gift of love from a caring heart
A bringing together what was apart
A reaching out to comprehend
How another felt by a sincere friend
A seeking soul that journeyed far
To find a dream, to follow a star
A bridegroom claiming a bride as his
All these things are what Christmas is.

—Ian Bach

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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!

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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. ☘



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.



problem solving with my teen

BY PETRA LAILA

NOW THAT MY OLDEST, CHRIS, is 13, I have found that I need to change in how I communicate with him. He is not the child he was a few years back. All of a sudden, he is taller than me. How time has flown! It seems like just yesterday he was a constantly active two-year-old, getting into everything.

Like most parents, I suppose, my tendency has been to think that I instinctively know what's best for my children, and to take action accordingly. That worked well enough when Chris was small, but now that he's reached a stage where he wants to make more of his own decisions, I've found that I need to take a different approach and involve him more in the decision-making process—to treat him less like a child and more like a teammate.

When an issue comes up, it's more important than ever that I take time to listen to his ideas and understand both his viewpoint and his needs, as well as to explain mine. Then we try to come up with a solution together that will be good for both of us, as well as for anyone else involved.

When I fall into my old habit of trying to tell him what to do without considering his side, he feels squelched, pulls away, and misses a learning opportunity—and I lose his full cooperation. But when I remember to consult rather than give orders, things go well, he takes another step toward learning to make wise, responsible, loving decisions, and our bonds of love and mutual respect are strengthened.

PETRA LAILA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CANADA. ✎

HIGH WIRE ACT

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood can be like walking a tightrope, and teens need someone there, a parent or other strong role model, to help them find their footing and steady them as they cross over.

When my children reached their teens, I tried to guide them through the decision-making process, but then I'd have them make their own decisions. They'd often try to get me or their mother to make the decision for them, so they wouldn't have to take the blame if things went wrong, but I would tell them, "Don't ask me. You know what's right and wrong. What do *you* think you should do?" Afterwards they were usually glad that we made them decide, because they knew that was the way it was supposed to be and it helped them feel trusted and respected, which is a very important thing at that age.

—David Brandt Berg





1 CORINTHIANS 13 FOR TODAY

ADAPTED FROM MARIA FONTAINE BY JOSIE CLARK

JESUS GAVE US the key to happiness and harmony when He said, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). What exactly does that mean, in practical, everyday terms? One of the best explanations ever given is found in the Bible’s “love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. Times and terms have changed, but the underlying principles are as true as ever. Here’s how the apostle Paul might have put it if he were writing to us today.



1. Though I can speak five languages and talk intelligently on dozens of subjects, if I don’t have enough love to keep from gossiping or putting down others, I’m not just making so much useless noise, I’m being downright destructive.

2. And though I read the Bible regularly and even know parts of it by heart, and though I pray daily and have a lot of faith and other spiritual gifts, if I don’t have enough love to sometimes sacrifice some of my personal desires for others’ sakes, then all of my “spirituality” amounts to nothing.

3. And though I work two jobs to provide for my family, and though I give to charity and volunteer for every community project that comes up, if I don’t show love and kindness to those I live and work with, all my hard work and self-sacrifice are worthless.



4. Love has a long, hard, frustrating day at the office, yet doesn’t get snappy and short tempered. Love is happy for the other guy when he gets all the breaks. Love doesn’t have to drive the flashiest car, live in the biggest house, or have all the latest gadgets. Love doesn’t always have to be the boss or have the last word.

5. Love isn’t rude or crude, isn’t selfish, and doesn’t gripe or pressure others to get what it wants. Love is too busy being concerned about the needs of others to spend much time worrying about its own. Love doesn’t freak out when things don’t go its way. Love is quick to believe the best about people and slow to believe the rest.



6. Love hates to hear gossip and instead wants only to talk about others’ good qualities and the good that they’ve done. Love knows that what it listens to, watches, or reads will affect its attitudes and actions and thereby have an effect on others, so it’s careful about how it spends its time.

7. Love is flexible, takes things in stride, and can handle whatever comes its way. Love is always ready to give others the benefit of the doubt and looks for the best in them. Love wants to see others reach their full potential and does all it can to make that happen. Love never runs out of patience, even with those who are slow to get with the program or do their share. Love doesn’t keep looking at its watch when others are talking.



8. Love never fails. I fail others, and others can fail me. We all can be mistaken, misguided, or confused at times. Our words and deeds often fall short, and our bright ideas don’t always play out the way we want or expect them to.

9. We're frail, fallible, and often foolish, and our understanding of the world we live in, not to mention the world to come, is only partial at best.

10. But when God's Spirit of love lives in us, that changes everything.

11. We're really just children when it comes to practicing real love, but God can help us outgrow our childish ways.



12. Without Him we're clueless when it comes to love and the other things that matter most in life, but when we live in His kingdom—the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus said is even now within us—we can see things as He does, get our priorities straight, pull out the stops, and live and love to the full.

13. There are lots of nice things in life and lots of good things, but none are as good or as important as love! ✨



Love Power

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal. No door that enough love will not open, no gulf that enough love will not bridge. No wall that enough love will not throw down, no sin that enough love will not redeem. It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble, how hopeless the outlook, how muddled the tangle, how great the mistake. Sufficient love will dissolve it all.

—Emmet Fox

Meet the Man

If you haven't yet met the Man of Love who has power to forgive the past, transform the present, brighten the future, and grant heavenly happiness forever, you can by sincerely praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can have eternal life. Please forgive me for every wrong and unloving thing I have ever done. Please come into my heart, give me Your gift of eternal life, and help me to know Your love and peace. Thank You for hearing and answering this prayer and for being with me always, from this moment on. Amen.

“Sorry-ness”

BY JOSIE CLARK



I THINK I HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF SAYING “I’M SORRY” TOO MUCH, AND THAT SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN MY CHILDREN THE WRONG IDEA. Years ago, for example, when my five-year-old fell off his bike, I said I was sorry. I had specifically told him to not ride up the hill on his newly acquired used bike until his dad had checked the brakes and taught him to use them, but he went up the hill anyway.

The brakes worked fine, as it turned out, but he didn’t know what to do and panicked. He sailed down the hill, veered into a cornfield, and caromed back onto the road, where he crashed. He doesn’t remember anything after that, but he was found chin down on the asphalt and needed some stitches. When I arrived at the scene of the accident, I said I was sorry.

Of course, I was sorry. I felt terrible for not having watched him more closely. I felt his pain as we rushed him to the hospital. I still feel sorry every time I notice the scar it left. But somehow, my “sorry-ness” caused a misunderstanding.

A few weeks ago we talked about this event that took place years ago, and he still thought that accident was somehow my fault. He didn’t remember the clear warning. He didn’t remember disobeying. He only remembers me saying I was

sorry, which he took at the time to mean that I had been to blame, not him.

Sorry-ness is an easy habit to fall into, and it can develop into a pattern where teens blame their parents for the consequences of their own bad decisions. In reality, if the parents have been doing their job of teaching their children to make smart, responsible decisions, when accidents happen or things go wrong, it is usually the children’s fault for not listening to their parents.

I’m sorry my son disobeyed. I’m sorry he got hurt. And I’m sorry I allowed that misunderstanding to happen. I’m sorry for my sorry-ness. I should have said, “I’m so sorry *you* disobeyed. I’m sorry *you* didn’t listen. I’m sorry this happened, but I’m sure you learned a good lesson and won’t make this same mistake again.”

The happy ending to this story is that I was able to clear up this misunderstanding with my son, who is now a teenager facing much bigger decisions than where to ride his bike. He knows he will always have my help, love, and sympathy, but he also understands that ultimately he bears the responsibility for his decisions.

JOSIE CLARK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ✨

WHAT MAKES A DAD GREAT

REMEMBER HOW THE FATHER [IN THE PARABLE JESUS TOLD OF THE PRODIGAL SON] ACTED WHEN THE BOY RETURNED HOME?¹ 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.

This story of a father's love is immortalized in the Bible primarily, I believe, to tell something of how God accepts us. Should we not consciously use His example in dealing with our children? Can we afford to neglect giving them hugs of loving acceptance each day?

This love is the warm blanket each parent can weave for his or her children—a blanket of love that accepts each child for what he is. Such love is never content to stop assisting the youngster to climb higher and higher toward the plan God has for every life.

—*Dr. Bob Pedrick*

One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters.
—*George Herbert*

When I was a kid, my father told me every day, “You’re the most wonderful boy in the world, and you can do anything you want to.” —*Jan Hutchins*



Every dad, if he takes time out of his busy life to reflect upon his fatherhood, can learn ways to become an even better dad.

—*Jack Baker*

My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person: he believed in me.—*Jim Valvano*

[My father] didn't tell me how to live; he lived, and let me watch him do it.

—*Clarence Budington Kelland*

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

—*Author unknown*

Small boys become big men through the influence of big men who care about small boys.—*Author unknown*

There's something like a line of gold thread running through a man's words when he talks to his daughter, and gradually over the years it gets to be long enough for you to pick up in your hands and weave into a cloth that feels like love itself.

—*John Gregory Brown*

A dad is respected because he gives his children leadership.
A dad is appreciated because he gives his children care.
A dad is valued because he gives his children time.

A dad is loved because he gives his children the one thing they treasure most—himself.

—*Author unknown*✻

1. Luke 15:11-24

teaching children to control negative feelings

BY NATALIA NAZAROVA



RAISING CHILDREN IS NO EASY TASK, AND THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS. The ever-shifting ocean of emotions that children go through at various ages and stages poses one of the greatest challenges to parents. Here are a few things that I have found helpful in teaching my children to deal with the negative emotions they experience.

Encouraging positive traits such as kindness, appreciation, gratefulness, integrity, and unselfishness at an early age will help prepare them to deal with negative situations they will encounter later.

Reading or watching classics that show the rewards of being positive and solution oriented—*Pollyanna* and *Heidi*, for example—impart important life lessons in an enjoyable, memorable way.

Being a friend and confidante in good times makes it easier

to discuss and find solutions together when problems arise.

Older children can be shown the futility of giving in to negative emotions. Balance reasoning with lots of encouragement, as well as humor when appropriate.

When I notice negative trends in my children, I first ask myself if they are a reflection of what they see in me. If so, we talk about it from that angle and agree to work on it together. For instance, I'm prone to stress and the negativity it can lead to, but explaining that has helped us avoid problem situations. They understand now that it triggers a negative reaction when they stay up too late or don't clean their rooms, so they give me more cooperation at those critical times.

When I feel overwhelmed, I stop and pray. That has at least four good effects: It releases frustration, puts things in perspective, gives God an opportunity to

straighten out my mess, and serves as a lesson to my children on crisis management.

My husband and I try to not be too quick to provide our children with solutions to the problems and frustrations that cause them to get negative, but rather to help them define the problem and find their own solutions. Games that teach problem solving are also helpful.

There are upsides to most negative situations. When children are discouraged or become negative over something that has happened, try to steer their thinking toward the positive aspects. Again, if they can reach these conclusions themselves, it's usually more effective than you providing the answers for them.

NATALIA NAZAROVA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ARGENTINA. ■

beware of the

NEGABUGGER

BY MISTY KAY

RESEARCH REPORT

SCIENTISTS HAVE RECENTLY MADE A FASCINATING DISCOVERY ABOUT AN UNSEEN AND LITTLE UNDERSTOOD PARASITE, THE NEGABUGGER—SO CALLED BECAUSE OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECT IT HAS ON ITS HUMAN HOST'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

It is too small to be seen by the naked eye, yet the symptoms of infection are plainly evident. It lives by attaching itself to the soft membrane of the inner ear. Its tiny buzzing wings vibrate at a frequency undetectable by humans, but which interferes with brain waves and leaves the victim feeling confused and depressed.

These negative vibrations can be difficult to distinguish from one's own thoughts, and the subject may easily be led to believe the buzz of negative self-talk. In more serious cases of infestation the negabugger can move into the brain of its host to lay its young, breeding thousands of little negabuggers that can

quickly become airborne and infect others via negative words uttered by the host.

The negabugger is a serious pest, and treatment should be administered at the first sign of contagion. The negabugger must be dislodged and shaken out of the victim's ear.

In standard cases, treatment can be self-administered by tilting the head in the direction of the negabugger and hopping vigorously while pounding the opposite side of the head. If it is unclear which ear the negabugger is residing in, apply this technique to both sides of the head to be safe. If more than one negabugger is present, it may be necessary to repeat the process.

In extreme or stubborn cases, the victim may need assistance. If a bop on the head with a pillow fails to dislodge the parasite, it may be necessary to shock it out of hiding. A splash of cold water is nearly always effective. To prevent re-infection, place the subject under headphones and play uplifting music and inspirational readings. Also practice positive self-talk exercises with the subject.

(Warning: Pillow and water treatments should only be administered by qualified adults. If children attempt these maneuvers, it may result in injury or damage to property.)

Clinical study

In a clinical study involving my children and young teenager, I have found the prescribed treatment to be quite effective in helping them pull out of bouts of self-pity and other negative emotions.

For example, one day I entered the kitchen to find my then 13-year-old sobbing over a sink of dirty dishes. I sympathized, saying, "I am so sorry you're not happy. I want you to know how much I love you. In fact, I love you so much that I have to do this. ..." Producing a pillow from behind my back, I went to work. My daughter laughed and begged for mercy. Post-treatment, the patient appeared to have made a miraculous recovery.





HAVE A LAUGH

“A merry heart does good, like medicine”¹—and is not just good for your spiritual uplift. Many studies have shown that it’s also good for your physical body. If you stop and have a good laugh, it can help to pull you out of the doldrums. Have a sense of humor. Relax. Laugh. Have fun—some outlet that lets you forget your problems and enjoy life.

She returned to washing the dishes, but to my dismay she quickly relapsed. Time for step two. I went for the cold water. She saw it coming, but never thought I would really do it. After a brief chase around the house, I had her cornered and ... *splash!* Even she thought that was funny. A few rounds of laughs, and the dishes were almost done.

As the mother of an emotional teen girl, I have spent many hours reasoning, cajoling, comforting, and praying in various attempts to pull her out of her hormonal bouts of gloom, but lately I have found the negabugger treatment to be even more effective and faster working.

Once the negabugger’s unsuspecting targets are made aware of the danger, they can learn to recognize and take steps to protect themselves from it by not entertaining negative or destructive self-talk. An ounce of awareness is worth a pound of cure. Beware of the negabugger!

MISTY KAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. ■

FEEDING READING

Positiveness

Count your blessings.

Psalm 40:5

Psalm 103:2

Psalm 126:3

Look for the good even in tests and trials.

Psalm 119:71

Habakkuk 3:17–18

Romans 8:28

1 Thessalonians 5:18

James 1:2-4

1 Peter 4:12–13

Cultivate positive attitudes towards others.

Romans 12:10

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:12

1 Peter 4:8

Make thankfulness and praise a habit.

Psalm 35:28

Psalm 100:4

Ephesians 5:20

