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Christian *family*

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from the editors



Everyone today, it seems, is familiar with computers. Every computer has an operating system. This operating system is the basic software in a computer that allows it to turn on and allows other software to be added to the hard drive. A community's "operating system" is the family. It serves as the foundation of any society, even church.

Children come through families. Children are taught all the basic skills at home. They learn self-respect, respect for their belongings (toys), and respect for other people. They learn to share. These skills serve as the "operating system" within the minds of children. Later, teaching can be added.

If we do not take care of this "operating system," our society will crash, as well as the church. This issue offers advice from Scripture to strengthen your "operating system," from leadership to intimacy and affection to parenting skills.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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WHO IS

THE BOSS ANYWAY?

by Moisés Pinedo

family.

Bubba Watson said: “Why do I want somebody to tell me what to do, or tell me what I’m doing wrong? I want to be the boss!” And, yes, we like power and the boss chair; even Jesus’ disciples had frequent disputes on who was to be the boss among them (Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 9:33-34; Luke 9:46)! So, when it comes to the

family, many of us want to know **who** the real boss is.

“THE CHILDREN ARE THE BOSS!” Some families operate as if this were the case. Babies use their cry to get the attention of their parents; they cry when they want a drink, a clean diaper, or a lullaby. While this is understandable and expected from babies, some parents let their growing children take their baby’s abilities to a higher level. Toddlers, older children, and even teens are allowed to make a disaster out of their homes, they throw a tantrum when they hear the word “no,” and they demand their rights as if they were kings over a palace of servants. God warns that “a child left to himself brings shame to his mother [and father]” (Proverbs 29:15). Children cannot be the “boss” since they have yet to learn authority, power, and self-control. They are to be taught to obey and honor their parents (Ephesians 6:1-2). Just as Jesus as a child was, they are to be subject to their parents (Luke 2:51). No, the children are not the boss!

“THE WIFE IS THE BOSS!” We live in a feminist era when society does not understand the difference in gender. Basically, the cry is that women can do anything that men can, and if there is something women cannot do, then men should not do it either. This cry has entered the religious arena, as many more women are appointed as “preachers,” “deacons,” and “pastors.” The family has not been immune to this social malady, and now there are many homes where the boss is the woman. The Bible has a different perspective on the role of women—while it demands love, respect, and equal treatment to women (Matthew 7:12; 22:39; Galatians 3:28), it calls for a submissive role for them—whether in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-15) or in the

home (Ephesians 5:22-24). No, the woman is not the boss!

“THE HUSBAND IS THE BOSS!” I grew up in a society where the man was the boss. The father was a king-like figure who, when coming back from work, expected every attention from the “lower” members of his family. He demanded the TV remote control and something to eat. The woman would be the last person to sit at the table and the first to get up if the man wanted seconds. He would never clean a dish, sweep the floor, or change a diaper because that was a woman’s job. He would yell to confirm his authority, and would give account to no one but himself. There is no need to say that this is not a biblical picture of a real man. A husband is to love his wife, even to die for her (Ephesians 5:25-33), and he is to train his kids without exasperation (Ephesians 6:4). Although he is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23), he is not the boss of the home!

“GOD IS THE BOSS!” The main problem in our homes is that we frequently miss the fact that there is Someone else over the family. We love power and authority, giving orders, and when others obey what we say. This is not the case with the family. When it comes to it, God is the real boss! He commands in the home; He delegates authority; He makes the rules. Due to His perfect attributes (Psalm 119:137; 1 John 4:8), God is the only One suited for this role, since He is a “Boss” Who will never abuse authority, misuse power, or lead astray. When we let Him rule, our home is safe (Psalm 127:1). In fact, our homes will function well when each member understands his/her God-given role in the family unit (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). Although the wife is to be submissive to the husband’s headship, and both are over the children, they are more like managers of the home, making derivative rules and decisions to implement God’s sobering rule and will for the family. Yes, God is the boss! ■

parenting.

THE PARENT **PACT**

by Mike Johnson

According to the *Encarta Dictionary*, a pact is “an agreement made between two or more groups or individuals, either formally or informally, to do something together or for each other.”¹ That agreement places responsibilities on each party to bind them together. Our families are so important that all parents should form a pact between them to encourage and hold each other responsible in the raising of their children. The following Parent **PACT** identifies four necessities for the care and discipline of our children.

P The Parent PACT begins with the **PRESENCE** of the parents. One might think that we should not have to talk about the presence of parents in the lives of their children. However, there are many children who do not spend as much time with their parents as they would like to or as much as they need.

The presence of parents in their children’s lives provides the peace that they need. All parents have seen the anxious look of their child who has lost sight of them, if for only a brief moment, then to see that look turn to sheer joy the moment they lock eyes again! And, which of us parents has not heard the night time cry calling us to come into our children’s room because something has scared them? Our presence brought immediate peace.

God understands the power of presence to produce peace. As He brought them out of Egyptian bondage, He showed the Israelites His constant presence. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night” (Exodus 13:21). Later, He promised them, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

A The second part of the Parent PACT is **ATTENTION**. This is only possible if you are present for attention comes from presence. Newborn babies show the greatest benefits of attention from their parents. They grow in direct proportion to the attention given them from their parents; they have fewer medical complications while showing a better growth rate and weight gain.

All parents know that children crave attention. Just try sitting down and reading the newspaper with little ones running in the house. That is almost impossible as they interrupt frequently just to show you something. Children have also been known to display a small temper tantrum just to get some attention.

Children want the attention of their parents because attention produces acceptance. The Lord God knew the importance of paying

attention to His children—the children of Israel. He said, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place” (2 Chronicles 7:14-15). He knew they would want His attention, and He told them how to secure it. He is still paying attention to us today. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).

C The next part of this PACT is **CLOSENESS**. When we pay attention to our children, we will develop a close connection with them. University of Iowa’s researchers assessed the relationship of 102 infants (15 months old) with a parent and then followed up with 86 of them when they reached age eight. Their 2012 report found that “infants who have a close, intimate relationship with a parent are less likely to be troubled, aggressive or experience other emotional and behavioral problems when they reach school age.”²

How many times have you heard interviews with people in prison describing their life, talking about their absentee parents? Incarcerated people can trace their imprisonment to some moment or moments of a lack of self-control. If their parents had been on the job developing a close connection to them, maybe many of them would have learned self-control better and avoided prison.

Closeness fosters control. It is not a coincidence that at the time when the entire world had lost control of themselves and were doing whatever they wanted, there was one who still remained in control of his actions—Noah. The Bible says of him, “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). The rest of humanity had so lost control of their lives that God said, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:13). Noah’s family was the only one saved from the great flood. His self-control in the midst of an entire world gone mad came from his walking with God. This closeness helped him stay in control of himself.

T The final part of this PACT is **TEACHING**. Parents are a child’s first teachers. Children learn explicitly from their parents as they take the time to teach specific things they will need to live as adults. They also learn implicitly from their parents because they are watching closely even when we might think they are not. We parents can think of many times that we have caught our children imitating us because that is what children do. Everything about growing up is learned through the

modeling of others, and parents should take that responsibility to teach their children very seriously.

The Lord promised that He would teach His children. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Psalm 32:8). Solomon learned from his father the words that he would write for future generations. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Successful teaching grows out of closeness and develops trust between the parents and the children.

Will you make this PACT with God to be **present** in your children's lives so that you can be **attentive** to them and develop a **closeness** with them that will allow you to **teach** them what they need? The world so desperately needs us to honor this PACT! ■

1. "Pact" (2001) *Encarta College Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury), p. 1042.
2. Lewis, Richard (2012), "Parental Bonding = Happy, Stable Child," *Iowa Now*, <https://now.uiowa.edu/2012/10/parental-bondinghappy-stable-child>.

Ready to Start a Pact for Your Children? Then...

- walk like Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24);
- believe like Abraham (Genesis 15:6);
- lead like Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10-12);
- choose like Joshua (Joshua 24:15);
- pray like Hannah (1 Samuel 1:9-11);
- teach like Ezra (Ezra 7:10);
- rebuild like Nehemiah (Nehemiah 4);
- stand up like Esther (Esther 4);
- offer like Job (Job 1:5);
- praise like Mary (Luke 1:46-55);
- and love like Jesus (John 13:1).



marriage.

The power of affection

by Rachel Holland

Love is not just a feeling but actions. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). In the marriage relationship, both are responsible for fulfilling the other’s needs. This series of articles is meant to help us learn better how to do that. Men and women both have certain general needs, but effective communication between a husband and wife will help reveal deeper, more personal needs.

All people need affection even from birth. The power of physical touch is essential for well-being and life. Through the skin, we experience sensations which contribute to health. But much more than just physical touch, we communicate appreciation, admiration, and care for those we touch. For most women, affection symbolizes security, protection, comfort, and approval.¹ As a husband, you can not give her too much of that! If you fulfill her needs for affection, you also protect your marriage from an affair because she likely will not turn to other men for affection. “When it comes to sex and affection you can not have one without the other.”²

As Christians, we try to fulfill the other person’s needs; and when both people do that in a marriage, they find a fulfillment that exceeds any other! Philippians 2:3-4 tells us: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” If you are not feeling loving thoughts toward your wife (or husband, for that matter), you need to start by changing your thoughts. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:5, said love “keeps no record of wrongs” (NIV).

We must think what is pure and lovely (Philippians 4:8), always focusing on the positives and not concentrating on the negatives (or mistakes of a person). This is true especially for spouses, who must deal with each other at all times, good and bad. When we are not lovable is when we need love the most. “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6,8). He loves us when we are unlovable. In much the same way, we must love one another even when it is not easy.

As Dr. and Mrs. Milholland state, “[a] woman’s sexuality is wrapped up in how loved, adored, and cherished she feels,” and “before she can feel safe in the relationship she has to feel loved and adored and cherished.”³ How do you express your affection? Gentle touches, words of appreciation, small meaningful gifts, and thoughtful expressions of your adoration of your wife. Some have called them “love languages.” It is really a combination of these that form a lasting relationship.

So, think positive thoughts of the other person, try to remember what attracted you to one another in the beginning of your relationship, then build a strong marriage. Communicating about your needs is vitally important. It takes work and dedication, but it is well worth it! ■

1. Harley, Willard (2011), *His Needs, Her Needs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell), p. 37. 2. *Ibid*, p. 39. 3. Milholland, Tom and Sandra (2002), *Prelude to Joy* (Webb City, MO: Covenant), p. 209.

Marriage Intimacy: *Pure and Healthy*

by Paul Holland

When God created mankind, He designed them to be male and female (Genesis 1:27). There are many differences between male and female, and it takes one of each to create another human life. God designed the sexual relationship to create a unity between a husband and wife (Genesis 2:24-25; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18). As with everything else God created “good,” man has corrupted and perverted the sexual relationship; it is “shameful even to speak of those things which are done by [man] in secret” (Ephesians 5:12).

While the Bible has much to say about the sinful use of the sexual relationship, there is also much to be considered in having an intimate relationship between a husband and wife that is pure and healthy. For example, consider the picture of marital happiness in the book of Song of Solomon, a poem about married love.

Here are some thoughts and suggestions from God’s Word to help you and your spouse maintain an intimate relationship that is pure and healthy:

- 1. Keep other people out of it.** Adultery is involving someone else in your bedroom (Hebrews 13:4). Do not use pictures or videos either. The dangers of pornography will be dealt with at another time. Keep your relationship intimate, just between the two of you.
- 2. Keep your relationship healthy outside of the bedroom.** A wife does not want to share her love with someone who frequently criticizes her (Romans 14:19). Nor is it easy for a husband to want to share his love with someone who nags him (Proverbs 21:9).
- 3. Use your words to compliment your spouse, especially in those areas where he or she might feel particularly vulnerable.** Simply consider Song of Solomon 4:1-5 and 5:10-16. While your wife or husband might be different from everyone else, it is likely that he or she wants and needs to hear your words of appreciation for his/her physical attributes. Compliment liberally and sincerely.

4. Keep the level of stress in your life to a minimum. Life demands a great deal of energy, time, and mental power from us. Even if your wife stays at home, she is occupied with chores around the home. Distractions can steal intimacy from your time together. Husbands, if you need to, clean the house, wash the dishes or whatever, so that your wife can give you her mental and physical energy. Wives, if you need to, mow the yard or keep the “Honey-do-lists” to a minimum so that he can give you his thoughts and energy.

5. Communicate! In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, Paul informs us: “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” Share with your wife or husband what you enjoy and give to him or her what he or she enjoys. Do not take knowledge for granted; share it.

6. Finally, be selfless. Be considerate if your spouse is not feeling well. Be considerate if your spouse is overly distracted. Think of his/her needs before you think of your own needs: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

God designed the sexual relationship. He designed it to be good. It is only good if we follow the instructions He has set out for us in His Word. But, if we **do** follow His instructions, we can enjoy the intimate relationship with our spouse, pure and healthy, as God intended. Then it will make us **one**. ■





women.

GOD'S IDEAL OF “LEAVING” & “CLEAVING”

by Hannah Giselbach

Getting married is one of the most exciting milestones of your life—second only to committing your life to Christ. Your spouse will have a major effect on everything that happens to you for the rest of your life—where you live, your financial stability, how you raise your children, and your spiritual wellbeing. Let us be honest: it is a scary decision to make when you think about the ramifications. When you take seriously God's commandment in Matthew 19:4–6 to “leave” your parents and “cleave” to your spouse, you know that getting married means you will have to give up some pretty comforting things.

I am very close to my parents. They love God and want nothing more than to go to heaven one day and bring their children with them. While I knew I would remain close to them after I married, I also knew I would be giving up some of my favorite things about my relationship with them, including:

- **The security of living in the same house with a protective father and a nurturing mother.** Anytime I needed advice or reassurance, I could easily run to my parents' room. Sleeping at night was easy, because pretty much everything we adults stress about were things I did not have to think about, because I knew my parents were taking care of me.
- **The constant financial security.** I never feared going broke or hungry or homeless while living with my parents. I never had to think about paying for things like food, or soap, or laundry detergent... In fact, I never had to think much about laundry, period, because my mother did it for me.

Give him your trust when you give him your heart.

- **The constant attention to and concern for my spiritual and emotional wellbeing.** The most important thing to my parents was making sure my brother and I went to heaven. I always knew that they were paying attention to my feelings, my thoughts, my actions, and my walk with God. If they saw me going down a dangerous path spiritually or emotionally, they loved me enough to stop me and encourage me to make better choices.

So why would any woman want to give up that kind of security by marrying?

Here is the answer: If you choose your spouse wisely, **you will not have to give up those things.** If you choose someone who loves God more than anything else, he will fill every one of those roles your parents once filled (except for maybe the laundry part!).

As women, we are commanded to honor and reverence our husbands (Ephesians 5:22–33). If you follow God’s pattern for marriage, you will remove yourself from the constant watch and care of your parents and give yourself completely to your spouse. Your husband is not your boyfriend. He is your provider—caretaker—spiritual and emotional guide. He is, as the Bible phrases it, your “head” (Ephesians 5:23). Our command as women is to submit to our husbands “in everything.” Your trust and dependency lies in your husband instead of your parents. This shows him honor, reverence, and love—just as God intended.

How do we demonstrate submission to that kind of loving, God-ordained reign over us as wives? Here are some practical ways:

- **Make sure you stay within your husband’s family budget plan.** If you are constantly pushing the limits and overspending, he may feel that you doubt his ability to provide for your family, and that you were happier under your parents’ roof.
- **When you are worried about something, honor your husband by going to him for advice first.** It is fine to call your mom for advice, but your primary emotional care provider needs to be your husband. Give him your trust when you give him your heart. Do not call your mama every time your husband hurts your feelings. Talk to him about it and pray about it. If he loves you, he will want to resolve it with you.
- **Let your parents know that you and your husband must rely fully on one another.** It is so important that your parents know that you and your husband must depend on each other more than any others on earth. Do not run to your parents every time you struggle financially or have an argument with your spouse. Learn to lean on your husband.
- **Allow your husband to fully embrace his role as the spiritual leader of your home.** Your husband has the responsibility of making the final decisions that

affect the family. Show him that you believe in him and trust his judgment. Encourage him, support him, and pray for him, as his position in your home is a grave responsibility.

It is possible that you are thinking: “But none of this works with my husband because my husband is not a Christian.” Of course, if your husband is an unbeliever, you will not be able to submit to him if he asks you to transgress God’s law. Still, the goal is to honor him in as many of the above ways as possible. God tells us in 1 Peter 3:1–4:

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward...—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

This passage gives us God’s plan of behavior toward an unbelieving husband. While we, as women, may not think this meek and quiet spirit will work in reaching our husbands for God, we must remember that 1 Peter 3 is not human wisdom; it is God’s plan for such a divided home. Faith, after all, is not doing what seems best to me; it is surrendering to God’s plan even if His plan does not seem to me to be the best one. Remember, this may not make sense to you, but God says that if anything will bring an unbelieving husband to the Lord, it will be the godly manner of living and the meek and quiet spirit of his wife. That word “meek,” in a practical sense, means to have a cause that is bigger than yourself. It means that you will be willing to set aside your own feelings to strive toward a goal that is bigger than yourself—in this case, helping your husband find salvation.

So, a wife is commanded to honor and submit to her husband in everything, unless he demands that she violate God’s Word. (Of course, it does violate the Word of God to place yourself or your children in danger. If there is a threat of physical harm, a godly woman will, with a heart of hope and many prayers for marital harmony and with the spirit of meekness, seek for help and intervention.)

Being fully dependent on one another as a couple can be rewarding in so many ways. There is a reason God designed it that way. Marital happiness is directly proportional to the willingness of both husband and wife to submit to God’s ideal of “leaving” and “cleaving.”

featured.



the Alvarengas

...are a family of five: Willie and Lucy, their two daughters Maggie and Vanessa, and Marco (Maggie's husband). They have great love for God's Word. Willie is the Spanish Department director of the Brown Trail Preaching School in Texas. His family is very involved with the school, as well as with mission work. They worship with the Brown Trail church of Christ in Bedford, Texas. Here Willie and Lucy share their thoughts on learning God's Word and give us seven tips for family memorization of the Scriptures.

Why is it so important to learn God's Word?

(1) Because God desires it (2 Peter 3:18); (2) because this knowledge guides us in the right way (Psalm 119:105); and (3) because learning God's Word helps us to be saved (James 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:15).

When is the best time to start teaching God's Word to your children, and why?

The best time is at an early age, since this is the ideal time for them to absorb knowledge of the Word. Memorization is much easier for children, and we encourage families to make the most of this age (Proverbs 22:6).

In which practical ways has learning and memorization of the Word helped your family?

It has helped us to stay in the right way. Of course, no one family is perfect; however, knowledge of God's Word guides us in this wonderful way that one day will take us to heaven. This knowledge has also helped our daughters to be prepared to provide advice to their friends in school and to be familiar with sound doctrine.

What Bible passage reflects your commitment to God's Word, and why?

Each one of us heartedly wants our entire families to persevere in the right way so one day we can all enjoy eternity with the Father. For this to become a reality, we firmly believe constant instruction of God's Word is needed. The passage that reflects this family commitment is Proverbs 22:6. Not only will the children not depart from God's way, but also the parents who care about instilling this knowledge in them.

How did you get your family to not only know the Word, but to love it?

One of the things that has helped us greatly is being a good parental example for our family. Deuteronomy 6:4-6 reminds us of three very important points: (1) We are to love God, (2) the Word is to be first in the hearts of parents, and (3) the Word is to be repeated and taught to children. In our family, we make our best effort to love God, practice the Word in our lives, and always repeat it to our children. ■

A

Would you briefly describe each member of your family?

Willie is a faithful Christian father and example of perseverance, patience, punctuality, and hard work. **Lucy** is a godly and virtuous woman, full of love, care, and faithfulness toward God and her family. **Maggie** is a young faithful Christian woman who fights for her goals, especially

when it comes to pleasing God. Her husband **Marco** is a faithful preacher of the Word who loves Maggie and who has a fervent evangelistic spirit. **Vanessa** is loving and charming, and is always doing good to others, no matter who they are.

What is the favorite Bible verse of each member of your family?

Willie: 1 Peter 3:15; Lucy: John 14:6; Maggie: Psalm 119:11, and Marco: 1 John 2:3; Vanessa: Philippians 4:13.



7 tips for family memorization of the Scriptures

1 **Remind your children of the importance of God's Word:** Considering how valuable the Bible is will motivate the whole family to devote time to memorize the Scriptures. Explain to your children that the Bible is inspired by God and profitable for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2 **Develop in your children deep love for the Scriptures:** The psalmist wrote: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). Being "in love" with the Bible as a family will strengthen our motivation to take time to memorize it.

3 **Encourage your children to have a study Bible and underline texts they wish to memorize:** If they do not have a Bible, try to get one for them as soon as possible. Take them to a bookstore and let them pick one they like, and then encourage them to underline and color texts they are memorizing.

4 **Make sure to explain to your children the reason for memorization:** They need to know the main reason to memorize God's Word: it is not to think we are better than others, but to grow spiritually and to be of great benefit to others. Our children will be able to give advice to their friends in school if they keep God's Word in their hearts. Constant memorization of the Scriptures should keep them humble in all times.

5 **Take advantage of every opportunity to quote memory verses:** As a family, we try to quote memory verses when we have dinner together. In our home, no one starts eating until quoting a verse. We also try to quote verses while in the car. Sometimes, we ask questions on where a particular passage is found to determine how much we can remember. Other times, Willie may even quote an epistle to encourage the family to memorize the Scriptures. These methods have helped us in this noble effort.

6 **Urge your children to always memorize texts assigned in their Bible classes:** In the Brown Trail congregation, we devote several minutes before Bible class for members to quote their memory verse. This custom has motivated children and adults to memorize the Scriptures. Make sure your children memorize the text their teacher gives them as homework.

7 **Encourage your children to memorize the books of the Bible so they will not have problems in finding them:** All the family should strive to memorize all 66 books of the Bible, since this will help them find passages with ease.

“How do I look?” Aren’t those words important to us as girls? Even when we grow into women, we like to look pretty. The challenge for a Christian girl when choosing her clothing is not just asking “is this pretty?”, but “is this modest?”

Most of the time, when we are mindful of how modest our clothing is, we are concerned with how much skin is showing. We check to make sure that our shorts or skirts are low enough that we are not showing too much leg. We check our tops to be sure that the neckline is



high enough to cover our cleavage and long enough to meet our pants and cover our midriffs. But how concerned are we about how tight our clothes fit our bodies?

I asked my 14 year old son what girls wear that makes it difficult for him to keep his thoughts pure. He answered that tight clothes, no matter how long the pants or shirts, were what gave him trouble. You see, guys are wired differently than we are. They are very stimulated by things that they see. We girls enjoy admiring handsome boys, but usually not in the same way that boys and men are tempted to lust by the things that they see. Clothes that don’t show any skin, yet are tight, can show a man exactly what you look like under those clothes. Unmarried young ladies cannot understand the way men are affected by what they wear because they do not have the experience. So, you should trust older Christian women who try to let you in on the secret to modest behavior and dress.

“Aren’t men responsible for their own thoughts and actions?” you might ask. Yes. Every person is responsible for their own actions, and will be accountable on the Judgment Day.

But notice what Jesus said in Matthew 5:28: “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Women have the ability, with their actions and apparel, to cause a man to sin.

When we become Christians, we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). Living faithfully involves us taking a daily assessment of our thoughts and actions. When you are deciding what to wear, consider these questions:

- **When I wear these clothes, will I help my brothers in their Christian lives?**
- **Do these clothes help me represent Jesus?**
- **When I wear these clothes, could I talk to someone about Jesus?**

Girls, please consider how your clothing affects your Christian influence. Consider the souls of the men and boys that you meet each day at school or at work, and the brothers in Christ who you will be worshiping with on Sundays. Be sure before you leave your house that what you are wearing will not cause someone else to stumble, or interfere with the godly influence that you are called upon to exhibit. “Women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation,...which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Here are some practical tips to remember when you check the mirror before heading out of the house:

- **Use a full-length mirror to make sure enough leg is covered (you can’t go wrong using the knee as your measure.)**
- **Bend over while looking in the mirror to check your top in the front, and your skirt in the back.**
- **Sit down to make sure your shorts/skirt don’t ride up too high.**
- **Can your underwear be seen through your clothes? (If so, they are too thin.)**
- **When in doubt, change into something else.**

The heart of the modesty matter is your heart. Do you want to wear Christ and be pleasing to God? If so, you will look in the mirror and think of your brothers in Christ. ■

Sharing Your Heart with Someone Who Does **NOT**

Share the Faith *by* Moisés Pinedo

You may have heard preachers and Bible teachers tell young people: “When you grow up, you should marry a Christian!” If you have Christian parents, then most likely they have also told you that (cf. Judges 14:3). This, of course, is great advice! Although marrying a Christian does not mean that you will never have problems in your marriage and family, both of you will have the common goal of helping each other and your future children get to heaven. God has the desire for His people to marry those who share the common love and faith for Him, and He warns that marrying unbelievers has the potential to lead the believer astray (Deuteronomy 7:1-4; cf. Genesis 6:1-7; Numbers 25:1-3; 1 Kings 21:25; Ezra 9; Nehemiah 13:23-27).

Then, how do you end up marrying a Christian? Well, you start by **only** dating a Christian. You may not be attracted to anyone yet, or may not be ready to start dating (and you should not be in a hurry), but as a young person, now is a great time to start laying out your spiritual goals for you and the person with whom you will share your heart in the future. The truth is that many young Christians become attracted to non-Christians because they do not have clear spiritual direction and goals for their own lives. Answering “What is my goal in life?” will help you choose someone who can help you achieve this goal.

“But, what if...I already feel attracted to, or have started to share my heart with, a non-Christian? What should I do?” Thanks for asking! Here is some good advice:

- **First, seriously consider the potential dangers of this mixed relationship.** Carefully read and study the passages included at the beginning of this article (and others related to the subject). Think critically about the negative scenarios that can come due to this relationship (example: loose moral standards, lack of spiritual commitment, etc.)
- **If you feel attracted to a non-believer, be honest about what attracts you to him/her.** Is it only the physical aspect? If so, then you may need a change of perspective (Proverbs 31:30).
- **Before sharing your feelings with a non-Christian, share the Gospel that can change his/her life.** Do not reveal your feelings;

you do not want him/her to obey the Gospel for the wrong reason. If he/she obeys the Gospel, then allow time to discern the fruits of true repentance and Christian growth (Matthew 13; Luke 6:43-45). If someone is not interested in sharing his/her life with God, then, should a Christian be interested in sharing his/her life with that person?

- **If you have already started a relationship with a non-believer, analyze the situation and try to influence him/her to come to Christianity.** Again, do not force the non-believer to obey the Gospel by (directly or indirectly) “threatening” him/her that you will end the relationship if he/she does not do it. This is most likely to happen if the non-believer persists in his/her unbelief and you have started to consider the seriousness of marriage. However, it is imprudent to use this situation to cause a pseudo-obedience.
- **Pray and learn to unselfishly care for the soul of that person.** A sentimental relationship should not be the primary aim of any evangelistic efforts. If you learn to love the precious soul of that person (Matthew 16:26), then you will know how to emotionally love that person when the right time comes.
- **And last but not least, learn to wait and trust in the Lord (Psalm 27:11-14).** You do not have to settle for the wrong relationship just to have someone beside you! Even in our sentimental lives, we should have Jesus’ attitude: “not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

All of us will marry someone we date, so if you want a strong Christian marriage, never take dating lightly. If you choose a faithful Christian to start dating, he/she will help you stay pure until your wedding day, and after that, he/she will help you in your journey to the “wedding of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7). ■



children.

What I Have Learned from Jesus by Ana Holland

I was baptized when I was 10 years old. The Sunday after I was baptized I wanted to find a passage that would help me remember what Jesus went through for us. I tried reading verses from Matthew, some from Galatians, and I even tried Isaiah. But I could not be consistent with them. I read Luke 23 once, probably about two years ago, and I have read it every Sunday since. I love verses 39-43:

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

What I have learned from Jesus is that Jesus promises us heaven if we are faithful to Him, if we confess Him, and if we love Him.

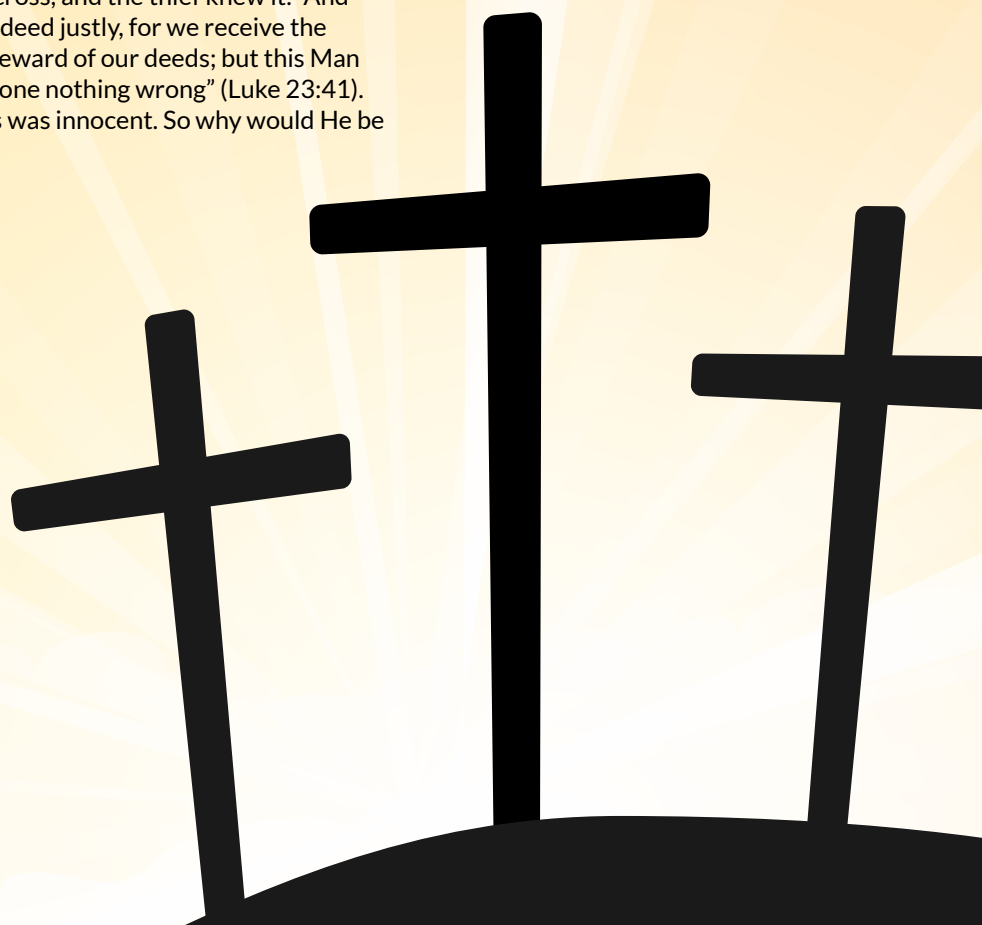
"Faithful" is defined as "having or showing true and constant support or loyalty." If we are true and constant of our support to Christ as that criminal on the cross came to be, then we are promised Paradise. Jesus taught me through His crucifixion, His ultimate show of faithfulness to our Father, that being faithful is the most important thing I can do. In Revelation 2:10 Jesus said: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Being faithful ensures a crown of life. I learned from a young age that faithfulness to our Lord means more than anything I could have on earth.

First John 4:15 reads, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." We must confess that Jesus is our Lord, just like the thief hanging by Jesus' side. The criminal was going to die anyway, but he was so bold as to side with the Man that many people wanted dead. Even Peter who loved Him, the apostle most known for speaking out and saying what he felt, denied Jesus. Yet, this criminal by Jesus' side confessed that Christ is Who He says He is. Even as the criminal was dying and the pain was wearing into him, he remembered Who he was hanging by, and he knew that this Man was the Messiah.

Loving Jesus is the last thing I have learned from Jesus. His greatest act of love ever shown was when He was on that cross, and the thief knew it. "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). Jesus was innocent. So why would He be

suffering and bleeding in agony? The answer is love. Jesus loves us so much that He willingly went to that cross, was hung beside those lowly criminals, and died in our stead. Jesus loved those criminals enough to die right beside them even though He had done nothing wrong.

What I have learned from Jesus is that I must be faithful to Him, confess Him, and love Him and I will be eternally rewarded. Jesus was faithful to us when He died on the cross, He loved us enough to die on the cross; and when we all get to heaven, He will confess us before our God and Father. He promised: "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). ■



When Jesus Was a Child...

He was a Child just like you!
He ate, played, obeyed, and grew.
He was kind, loving, and smart,
And had a special place in God's own heart.



Jesus knew how to pray and teach,
And in the temple the wise marveled at His speech.
When His parents came to Him the third day,
They found Him walking in God's way.

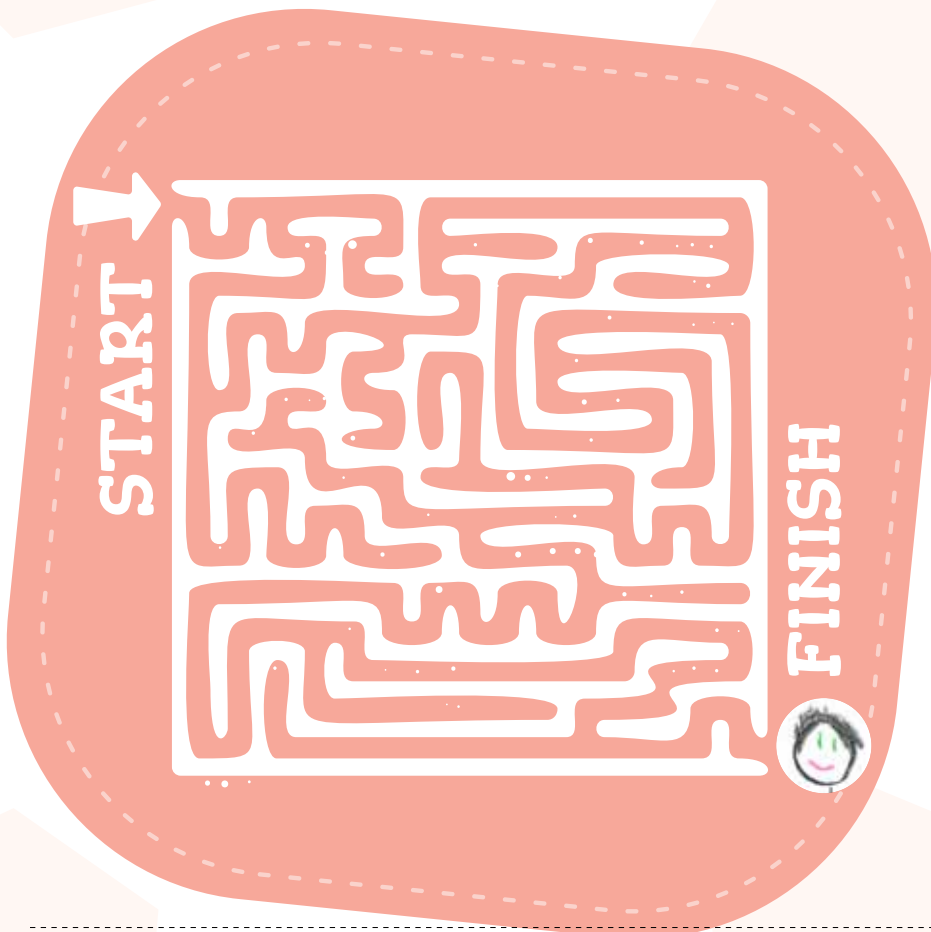


Jesus was a special Child, One of a kind,
And God had special plans for Him in mind.
But He felt the same things you do,
For He was once a Child just like you!

—Kimberley Pinedo



Jesus in the Temple When He Was 12
by Kelsey Pinedo (7)



Back to Jesus

When Jesus was 12 years old, He was accidentally left behind in Jerusalem. His parents found Him the third day in the temple. Can you find the way back to Him through the maze?

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questions.

Q&A

Q I learned the Gospel when my children were teens. How can I correct the bad example I gave to them during the previous years?
—NUEVO LEÓN, MEXICO

Q My wife and I became Christians. Our children are teens, and do not have the desire to attend services with us. What can we do?
—TEXAS, U.S.

Teenagers have a mind of their own! The teen years are those when an individual is beginning to develop a unique direction in life. If you have developed a relationship with your child, by the teen years, you will become a mentor more than an authority figure. It is good that you had the honesty and courage to obey the Gospel when you did. But, you will have to be patient with your teen.

Asking and gently encouraging your teen might work, but forcing a teen to go to worship can have negative repercussions. Rather, use opportunities to talk to your teen about why you became a Christian, why worship is important, why Jesus deserves your allegiance, etc. Of course, you should pray daily that your teen will follow your example and obey the Gospel. The importance of your daily Christian example can also work wonders (cf. 1 Peter 3:1-2). —PH

Q If I have been living for 20 years with a man, am I already married before God's eyes?
—LEÓN, NICARAGUA

While your relationship in the eyes of God is most important

(Acts 5:29), we cannot ignore and disregard the laws of our country or state. We are to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar (Matthew 22:21). Christians are subjects of governing authorities (Romans 13:1). We must obey the laws of the land in order to live a "quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2). Finally, Christians are commanded to "honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). What all this means is that Christians are to obey the laws of the land. Whatever laws your country or state requires you to follow in order to be considered married, a husband and wife, then you should fulfill those laws. —PH

Q What reasons justify divorce, and is remarriage possible in these cases?
—SUCHITEPÉQUEZ, GUATEMALA

Christians honor the Bible as the inspired Word of God (Psalm 119:160), and the New Testament as the law that binds Christian life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2-4). In this New Law, our Lord said: "whoever divorces his wife, except for **sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). "Sexual immorality" here means fornication/adultery. So, if a spouse commits adultery, the innocent party has the option (if he/she chooses) to divorce his/her unfaithful spouse and pursue a new relationship with God's approval. No other exception is given for divorce and remarriage in the New Testament. —MP

Q How can I talk about sex and sexual immorality with my children?
—MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

If your children are young, teach them about sex and sexual immorality through familiar Bible stories. Without going into details, use stories like young Mary being a virgin (Matthew 1) as a positive teaching tool. Use stories like David sinning with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) to teach the evil of immorality and its terrible consequences.

As your children grow, your teaching on the matter will be more

direct and mature. When it comes to talking about sex, never make it a taboo or a frivolous matter. If they are too young to know some things, then, be general and reassure them that you will explain more as they grow. If they are older, talk to them in a reverent manner, showing God's way always (see the book of Proverbs.) You need to understand that, if your children do not hear God's instruction on sex and sexual immorality directly from you, they may be led astray by the world's perverted view on sex. —MP

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