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Christian *family*

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Photo by Emily Moring

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talks to us about
overcoming the
loss of a child.

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from the editors



All of us seem to have experienced losing something valuable—this may be money in a wrong investment, a job in a company filing bankruptcy, or a house in a bank foreclosure. But what happens when the loss just seems and feels beyond compare? Twelve years ago, Daren and Julie Schroeder (on the cover) experienced the great loss of their newborn baby, Andrew. Through their pain and years of recovery, they have learned many valuable and hard lessons they now share with us. Their story will impact us and help us develop faith, love, and hope.

This issue is also full of additional advice to overcome anger, develop a stronger marital relationship, nurture a servant and positive attitude in children, and avoid believing the lies of this passing world. It is our prayer that you and your family will greatly benefit from this new issue.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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Dealing with **ANGER:** *family.*

by Eric Welch **C A I N and A B E L**

Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, was a farmer; Abel, his brother, a shepherd. One day each brought an offering from their yield to God. Abel offered sheep from his flock and Cain from his crops.

There was a problem: “the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering” (Genesis 4:4-5). Abel “brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat” (Genesis 4:4). He gave the best of his flock, which suggests a double selection process. He took the firstlings of the flock and then the best of the firstlings. The selection was thoughtfully planned. The text says nothing about Cain choosing his sacrifice this way. He may have just gathered up what was nearby with no plan involved, and, certainly, with no regard to God’s will (cf. Hebrews 11:4).

Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Rage is all the rage these days: office rage, internet rage, road rage, airline rage, shopping rage, and, most recently, election rage. We get angry at everything, and the American family is suffering terribly for it. What can Christians learn from this inspired story?

Only God can help us control our anger.

God gave Cain an opportunity to resolve his anger by going to its source. “Why are you angry?” He asked Cain, “And why has your countenance fallen?” (vs. 6). Ultimately Cain’s problem was not with his brother but with God. God said to Cain, “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” (vs. 7). Cain did not have to be angry. He could have resolved his anger by improving his attitude in worship and thereby drawing closer to God (vs. 7). Cain ignored God’s warning.

To control anger, we must, unlike Cain, listen to God. Jesus says to resolve disputes quickly (Matthew 5:21-26). Paul says, “do not

let the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). Resolve your anger as quickly as possible. Count to 10; recite the alphabet; seek professional counseling if you need to. Resolving anger quickly is divine advice we must not ignore.

Anger is a choice.

Although God told Cain what he needed to do, He still allowed him to choose. Emotion is the reaction to stimuli. God has given us the capacity to choose our reaction in any situation. If someone cuts me off on the road, I can choose to control my anger and react with defensive driving. We have the “response ability” to choose our reaction.

Anger can be steered in a positive direction.

Anger is not necessarily wrong. Cain could have become angry with himself so that he could do better, but he directed his anger toward Abel. God personified sin as a predator at the door waiting for an opportunity to pounce (vss. 6-7; cf. 1 Peter 5:8-9). Paul says not to “give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). Unresolved anger gives Satan an opportunity to tempt you to sin. Resist him!

Do not let your anger cause you to sin. Paul says, “be angry, and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). We need to be angry about such things as the destruction of the American family. God Himself gets angry. His love for us runs so deep that he directed His wrath against our sin toward Jesus at the cross (Romans 5:8-9). Because of God’s forgiveness in Christ, we can replace anger with kindness, a tender heart, and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:22,32). Let us be salt and light for our angry world. ■



parenting.

PARENTING THE HEART OF A CHILD

by Trent & Betty Jo Atkins

Several years ago, I came home from work to find my eight-year-old son, the youngest of three boys, sitting on the fence to the pig pen eyeing our 400-pound pig. He was wearing his hat, cowboy boots, and the new spurs we had bought at auction a couple weeks prior. I said, "Son, what are you doing?" He replied, "I'm looking for something to ride!" Now, I did not grow up with pigs, cowboy boots, or spurs but at that defining moment I realized that he was his father's son.

Back in 2006, Rodney Atkins (no relation) released a song called "Watching You." The lyrics describe a son who loved his father so much that he said, "I've been watching you, dad, ain't that cool? I'm your buckaroo; I wanna be like you." The song describes a father that realizes that his son is watching and learning everything he does—both good and bad. The song continues with the father's repentance,

**We got back home, and I went to the barn. I
bowed my head, and I prayed real hard and
said, "Lord, please help
me help my stupid
self." Then**

this side of bedtime later that night, turning on my son's Scooby Doo night light, he crawled out of bed, and he got down on his knees. He closed his little eyes, folded his little hands and spoke to God like he was talking to a friend. And I said, "Son, now where'd you learn to pray like that?" He said, "I've been watching you, dad, ain't that cool? I'm your buckaroo; I wanna be like you."

It is said that imitation is the best form of flattery, so I ask myself, "how do my children imitate me? Do I spend time with them, teaching them diligently to love the Lord with all their hearts, when we sit, walk by the way and lay down (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)? Do I teach them that God loves them and He wants them to praise and glorify Him?"

The Proverbs writer says: "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law" (4:1-2). As fathers, instruction requires patience to help our children to understand. This is not always easy, and it requires wisdom to have understanding (4:5). We must teach our children to ask for wisdom from God, through prayer, to have the understanding to know the peace within the Lord's love and to bind His Word on their hearts and tie it around their necks (6:21).

Sometimes, as fathers, we can also forget the grace that God has given us through the cross and, therein, forget to share that same grace with our children. We forget that our children do not start as a perfect piece of artwork but as a lump of clay. Our children make mistakes, and it is our responsibility as fathers to teach them not to foster negativity by severity, injustice, partiality, or unreasonable exercise of authority. This harsh, unreasonable conduct towards children will only serve to nurture evil in their heart. Our job as fathers is to teach them that God is love; and only through reverence to God and through His love, they will find peace and contentment. Peace and contentment are the result of obeying God, avoiding the ignorance and folly that Satan injected into this world.

As fathers, our job is to provide an understanding of strength, wisdom, and reverence to God. So, what is the role of the mother? My wife of 26 years will take it from here...

Trying to instill good character qualities in our children was of utmost importance to me as a mother. As parents, we tend to think of obedience first and even diligence when we think of building character. But it was not long before I realized that having a servant's heart and showing compassion toward others should be my focus in raising children who love the Lord: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). If they truly form a servant's heart, everything else will fall into place.

When our children were young, we started planting the seeds of a servant's heart and encouraged them to do things for others. We would do things as a family to help others, even strangers, being that example to our children and reinforcing the joy of having a

servant's heart. We would have them do things like making pictures for those who were sick or needed encouragement; later as they got older, they added notes to their pictures or made cards. Some simple things we also had them do were holding doors for others or helping carry things into the church building on potluck days, and going early to the building to help shovel after a snowfall or staying to clean after activities were completed. These were all easy things that young children could do, and the recognition and gratification they received helped their servant's heart to grow. As the seeds planted began to sprout, we reassured them that God knew the work they did, and they began to ask to help without being directed.

Leading by example is an important part of being a parent. A quote from Benjamin Franklin states, "Well done is better than well said." This is like what Paul is telling us in 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Having a servant's heart is making sure we have a godly attitude; but how do we know if we have a godly attitude? Here are four things to consider: (1) See what needs to be done and do it; (2) do the task cheerfully; (3) give of your time freely; and (4) serve quietly (Matthew 6:1-4; Philippians 2:3-5; Colossians 3:23). We should not be ashamed to have our children imitate us. Our children should see our servant's heart as we show compassion toward others.

There are so many opportunities for service to others. We not only need to teach our children how to see the opportunities, but how to approach the task we see—with the right attitude. We need to teach them how to emulate Christ so the world will see Him through the work of our children.

We pray that God's love will give you wisdom raising your children to become good teachers and preachers, holding fast a servant's heart that will give an example of encouragement, and allowing the world to see Christ through them every day. Amen. ■

marriage.

Men, do you want to increase your wife's deep desire for you? Here is a secret: share your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes, dislikes, past history, daily activities, and future plans. "A sense of security is the bright golden thread woven through all of a woman's five basic needs. If a husband does not maintain open and honest communication with his wife, he undermines her trust and eventually destroys her sense of security."¹ Instead of growing together, they grow apart.

Transparency is essential to growing strong communication and a stronger marriage. You should not hide things, thoughts, or feelings from one another. Your spouse should know you inside and out. Reasons for honesty is that it helps keep your marriage on track and it meets an important emotional need for women. Dishonesty is painfully offensive in any relationship. Being "brutally honest" is not necessary, but opening one's soul to someone can create feelings of vulnerability. The wife needs to respond in loving ways when her husband opens up, even if it is hurtful. If you lash out at him, he will withdraw and not be as likely to share in the future.

Mutual honesty can keep a relationship healthy. Even confessing our sins to another trusted person will help keep us faithful to our Lord (James 5:16). Should not our

Honesty and Openness:

KEY TO SECURITY

by Rachel Holland

spouse be the one with whom we can divulge our weaknesses? We can save a soul from death and keep a marriage intact (James 5:20). Psalm 15 provides a mirror for us to check ourselves against to see if we are pleasing to the Lord, specifically verses two and four which refer to honesty. If you want to develop security in your marriage, do not forget to be honest and open!

Note: A wonderful tool to strengthen a relationship and focus on God's intended design for marriage is Willard F. Harley, Jr.'s book, *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-proof Marriage*. It was referenced heavily for this series on marriage and includes questionnaires and activities to strengthen marriages. Seeking resources in our lives is a sign of strength, not weakness. ■

1. Willard Harley, Jr. (2011), *His Needs, Her Needs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell), p. 103.



THE IMPORTANCE OF AN *Attractive Wife* by Paul Holland

Let us get two points in front of us before we go any further. First, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. With the billions of people in the world, everyone has different interests and different needs. Therefore, people find different people attractive because they find different features to be attractive. Secondly, there are other matters that are far more important than physical attractiveness. We have dealt with some of those as we have discussed the husband and wife relationship.

Yet it is also true that God created women in a way that they, in general, are more beautiful while men tend to be more rugged. The Bible (NKJV) uses the word "beauty" over 100 times. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is said to be beautiful (Genesis 12:11,14). Rebekah was beautiful (Genesis 24:16; 26:7). Rachel was beautiful (Genesis 29:17). A POW might have been beautiful in the eyes of an Israelite and taken as a wife (Deuteronomy 21:11). Abigail was beautiful (1 Samuel 25:3). Bathsheba was beautiful (2 Samuel 11:2). David had a beautiful daughter, Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1; 14:27). Abishag was beautiful (1 Kings 1:3-4). Queen Vashti was beautiful (Esther 1:11). Esther was beautiful (2:7). God is even described as "beautiful" in Psalm 27:4! The Shulamite woman was called "beautiful" 13 times in Song of Solomon.

Men are warned to avoid the beauty of the immoral woman (Proverbs 6:25). Women are warned that beauty without discretion is like a ring of gold in a swine's snout (Proverbs 11:22). Beauty, in the Bible, is neither valued as a virtue to be sought nor a sin to be avoided. But it **can** become sinful if used inappropriately. The faithful woman is admonished to recognize that beauty is vain in comparison with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 31:30).

Putting too much focus on external appearance is inappropriate. It is also inappropriate to dress yourself to be attractive **to other men**. What we are encouraging here, though, is to be attractive **to your husband**. Some men do not really concern themselves with physical appearance. But many do. In the same way, some women want a physically attractive husband. It is not wrong, if it is set in its proper framework.

Beauty, as we say, is in the eye of the beholder. But it is good for a woman to dress herself in a way that her husband finds attractive. This requires communication from both as well as humility in seeking to meet each other's needs. Yes, we will all get old, get wrinkled, get gray hair and/or become bald. But nature taking its course is not an excuse for "letting ourselves go" if it bothers our spouse.

Very briefly, here are five points, related to physical attractiveness, that the wife and husband should discuss if this is an area that is impacting the marriage: one's weight, use of makeup, hairstyle, clothing choice, and personal hygiene.

Attraction, obviously, can be defined in different ways: spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, etc. Husbands and wives need to talk about what they find attractive in each other, including the physical appearance, and then work to remain attractive to each other. With love, patience, and humility, he and she can find the balance, in their relationship, between what he desires and what she finds comfortable. It is all about making a strong, healthy marriage. ■





women.

The Grief of a Christian Mother

by Julie Schroeder

Everyone expects to pick out a crib for their child, but no one expects to pick out a coffin.

—Author Unknown

One of the most difficult journeys in life is to learn how to live again after the loss of a child. The person who has not experienced it, cannot comprehend the pain, though he/she may sincerely try. Even if a person has experienced this type of loss, the road traveled is very unique to each individual. Likewise, even mothers and fathers who are dealing with the loss of the same loved one, do

For a long time, I kept asking, "When will I be myself again?" I have now answered that question: "I will not be the same." I am forever a new person, seeing the world through different glasses.

not handle things the same. Siblings, grandparents, aunts, and uncles also have very unique perspectives.

Parents lose their children in all stages of life: the unborn child, at birth, the week-old newborn, the three-year-old with leukemia, the school aged child that was hit by a car, the teenager who decides life is just too hard, the college student who is in a car accident, or the son who dies defending his country's freedom. In our eyes, parents should not outlive their child; it is simply not natural and certainly does not seem right. Even though we know it happens, we cannot comprehend the gravity of it unless it happens to us.

My sister and I have both lost babies that were a week old. My Andrew was seven days old and had complications from an omphalocele surgery. My sister's baby (Riley) was born three days after my fourth child was born (two and half years after the death of our son). He and his brother Jackson were identical twins. Riley weighed only one pound at birth. Many years have passed by since those dark days. We both do better as time passes, but how we respond to life still sometimes shows the scars of tragedy. Somedays I do not want to let my children out of my sight... desiring the security of them being nearby. Most days I tolerate just fine. However, it is still not unusual for the well of emotions to come flowing again, being triggered by the littlest of things.

I used to think of myself as a confident, extroverted person. I thought of my faith as being solid. Our journey began not when we went to do mission work in Romania, but when we returned and lost our baby. My heart hurt so much that I frequently found myself on "auto pilot," merely going through the motions. I cannot count the number of times after our loss that I have walked away from a conversation questioning myself, "Did I say, 'hello', or 'good-bye', or 'thank you'?" I question if my words were said in the right spirit. During

those early months and even years of grief, my emotions were so raw; focus was so difficult.

I began to see that there is so much that I do not have control over. I have seen through these years that I have to learn patience and compassion for those who do not understand what I have gone through. For these, their view of the world is very different and can easily be offensive to those who have suffered great loss. I truly have been learning that my confidence comes through Christ. The things that used to seem so important, are not anymore.

It was very difficult not to ask, "Why?" "Why did this happen?" This has led to great reflection over these years. My faith is not as "easy" and "naive" as it was before. I think I understand more fully that God never promised that our service to Him in life would be easy or free from sorrow and loss. Being a Christian is not a "free pass" from the burdens of life. Freedom from the burdens of life will await us when this life comes to an end, or the Lord comes again.

What He does promise us is that He will be with us through "the valley of the shadow of death" (see Psalm 23:4). In the early days and years of grief, I sometimes found it very difficult to concentrate to read much of anything, even my Bible. When I did read, my thoughts would wander and I would frequently end up sobbing. I knew Job and Psalms were the place to find comfort, but I still struggled. I tried reading a couple of books by those that had also suffered grief. This was difficult, too, because the pain these people described hit so close to home. It was like rubbing salt in an open wound. I knew in my head that my Andrew was in a place of peace and comfort. I knew he would never have to feel the shame of succumbing to temptation, or experience sickness or losing a loved one, as his brother and sister had. I knew these things in my head, but my heart still ached. I am certain that I did not always treat God properly during this

period of time, but I know He has been with me, and am so thankful for His long-suffering.

Life certainly is a journey. The things that happen change our course and even the way we view things. For a long time, I kept asking, "When will I be myself again?" I have now answered that question: "I will not be the same." I am forever a new person, seeing the world through different glasses. Like all experiences in life, this one has taught me many things. The changes that came our way were so sudden, and yet growth has been slow and difficult.

It has been 12 years now and I still cry on occasions. During that time, when a young couple from our congregation lost their premature baby boy, I could relate to the pain. I cried. I certainly have gained a depth of empathy that I did not have before. Now, I teach sixth grade, and it hit me on Andrew's birthday this past spring, that he would have been with that group of kids. He may have been in my science class.

While it is true that I am just not the same as before we lost our son, even after the passing of many years, the good news is that God is the same (Hebrews 13:8). He is still a God of love (1 John 4:8), and He is still a faithful God (1 Corinthians 1:9). In times of great struggle and in good times too, let us hold to His everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27) and the cross of His Son! My prayer is that this article will help those who have suffered the loss of a child or have gone through some other kind of tragedy, or perhaps help someone understand just a fraction more about what a dear loved one is going through.

While God certainly did not cause this horrible event to happen, in His magnificent power, He can use it for my spiritual growth, and prayerfully for the assistance of others as well (Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 1:4).



featured.



the Schroeders

...are a family of five—Daren and Julie have been married for 22 years and have three children: Braden (18), Kailey (15), and Aubrey (10). Daren has been preaching for the church in Godley, TX for 12 years. Previously, the Schroeders lived in the mission field of Iasi, Romania. Daren continues to make one or two trips a year back to Romania.

After staying home with the kids for about 10 years, Julie has recently returned to teaching. She currently teaches 6th grade science at Godley Intermediate. In addition to spending time with her family, Julie enjoys cooking and teaching Bible class.

The Schroeders have enjoyed and been blessed to do some traveling together as a family, including one trip back to Romania a few years ago. They also enjoy playing games together, having devo-

tionals, attending church events, and spending time with their extended family.

In addition to the three children mentioned, Andrew David was born on March 28, 2005 (about three years after Kailey). The December before his birth, a routine ultrasound, by a doctor in Iasi, Romania, revealed that Andrew had an omphalocele. This means his intestines were outside the muscle wall of his abdomen. After being born by cesarean, Andrew underwent two surgeries within a few days (which is pretty typical), but after the second surgery the small intestines were not receiving blood, and Andrew passed away a few days later, at one week of age.

Read Julie's article, *The Grief of a Christian Mother*, in the women's section (pp. 8-9).

MY GRIEF HER AGONY HIS HOPE

FROM a HUSBAND'S AND FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Daren Schroeder

After learning that our unborn child had a serious birth defect, we quickly consulted with our U.S. doctors and then headed back from the mission field of Romania on December 23, 2004. Though we were told the situation was very serious, it “should have” all worked out, but it did not. A couple of surgeries and seven days after birth, Andrew died.

Since that time, I have lost my mother, but with all due respect to her, there is no comparison to the depth of grief that I (and we) experienced in the loss of our newborn son.

While I grieved like I never had before, I soon understood that my wife's grief differed from mine and was deeper than mine. Perhaps this is because she lost the precious boy that she had carried for almost nine months; and as you know, the genders are simply wired differently by the Creator.

My two greatest struggles I faced are very easy for me to identify. The first one was: What do we do now? I felt a deep responsibility to my family and also to my God. I wished like never before that God was in the practice of speaking to us directly in response to prayer. Ultimately, I had to make the grueling decision (with Julie) that our family would not return to the mission field of Romania. While

we both agreed this was in the best interest of our family, it was still a grueling decision that brought its own grief.

The other major concern was for my wife. She obviously suffered and hurt worse than I did. Part of my difficulty was, like most men, I guess, if someone had a problem, I wanted to fix it—you know, like a leaky faucet! The problem was there really was no fix, just a slow day to day grinding through the sorrow that was filled with peaks and valleys.

Peter tells husbands: “dwell with [your wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7). If I had to emphasize one word to husbands that find themselves in a similar situation as I was in, it would be “**understand.**” But honestly, I struggled with “how do I understand if I do not?” It probably took a great deal of time, and I certainly never mastered it, but here is what you do if you cannot understand your spouse's grief:

- ☛ *Simply listen empathetically and believe her when she explains how she feels.*
- ☛ *Do not question how she feels.*
- ☛ *Do not seek to evaluate the worthiness of her feelings.*
- ☛ *Do not even seek to answer all her questions.*
- ☛ *Above all, do not insinuate that her faith in God must be shallow!*

Perhaps we do not give enough consideration to the great women (and men) in the Old Testament who mourned terribly for losses they experienced.

It is really easy to think, or even say, “I just do not understand why you feel that way.” Or, “Why are you doing this, or acting like that?” Here is the truth: Sometimes she does not know why! I do not mean that in a degrading way at all. Just be there for her. Make her feel safe and loved. Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing her burdens when you can (Galatians 6:2). As much as possible, simplify life and reduce stressors. Perhaps in some ways we should all do this anyway, but it is especially crucial in times of great loss.

We should not be surprised that during and after such a crisis, though perhaps sometimes faint, hope shines through. Our God has the power and the ability to use the worst tragedies for unfathomable and even eternal good. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). ■





by Moisés Pinedo

My wife and I were going to eat lunch in a nearby restaurant when a popular sign posted on the door caught my attention; it read: “Drink Responsibly.” I guess you have also seen this notice posted in restaurants and convenience stores. Maybe someone, a friend in school or a relative, has repeated something like this. With so many signs and people suggesting drinking alcohol “responsibly,” you would expect this to be a possible task, right? Can you **really** drink alcohol responsibly?

THINKING RESPONSIBLY

Imagine that there is a field full of hidden mines all over, and someone suggests to you that you only need to be responsible to walk through this field and not get hurt. I guess you would refuse to walk on it. Why? Because no matter how responsible you think you are, you just do not know when a mine will explode! In fact, if you act responsibly, you will not take the first step on that field.

Some people say “drinking responsibly” is doing it in **moderation**. They advocate social drinking; you may find advocates even in the church! They usually compare this to eating, and, as you can stop eating when you feel full, they say you can stop drinking before getting drunk. However, the difference between food and alcohol is that

food does not impair your mind, and that is why you can make the **conscious** decision to stop eating. On the other hand, “[a]lcohol directly affects brain chemistry by altering levels of neurotransmitters—the chemical messengers that transmit the signals throughout the body that control thought processes, behavior and emotion... What this means for you is that your thought, speech and movements are slowed down, and the more you drink the more of these effects you’ll feel.”¹

You do not have to be a genius to realize that, if something is altering your brain, then it is **robbing** you of the ability to make responsible decisions—which you make with your brain! This is why the expression “drink responsibly” is an oxymoron; there is nothing responsible in drinking alcohol. The truth is that a responsible person will avoid drinking the first sip.

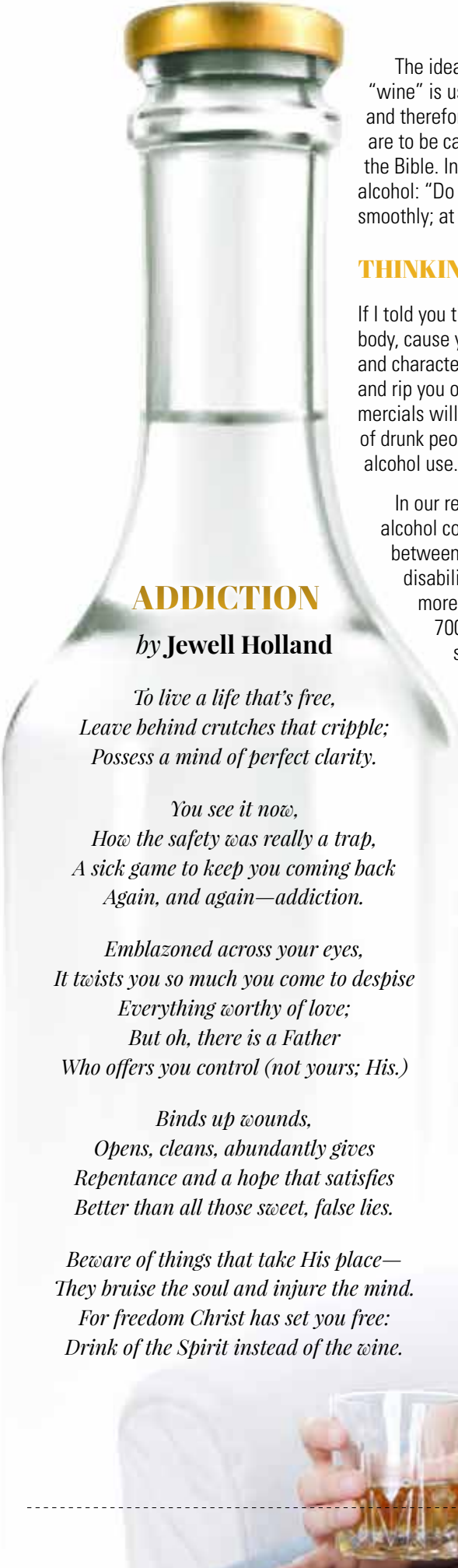
But what about those people who claim that they can drink alcohol and stop before getting drunk? Are they examples of people who have mastered the “art of drinking responsibly”? Absolutely not! They are still acting with lack of responsibility by drinking a known drug that is deteriorating their minds—getting them drunk—even when they may not reach a level of obvious impairment. A driver can choose to speed, claiming he knows **when** he is to stop before losing control. Although he may not have a wreck for years, he is still acting irresponsibly by speeding. Additionally, the fact he has not had a wreck does not guarantee he will never have one. “Drinking responsibly” is just a foolish expression to get naive people hooked with this poison.

THINKING BIBLICALLY

The Bible is an anti-alcohol-consumption book. This should not come as a surprise, since everyone knows about alcohol’s dangers and consequences. Biblical instructions are for our own good (Deuteronomy 4:40; 6:3; Jeremiah 42:6; Ephesians 6:2-3), and the teachings on alcohol clearly reflect this eternal truth.

In a very well-known Old Testament passage, King Solomon wrote, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul warned, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation” (Ephesians 5:18). Many other warnings against alcohol are found throughout the sacred text (e.g., Leviticus 10:9; Proverbs 23:29-32; Isaiah 5:11,22; Habakkuk 2:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).





The idea of “drinking responsibly” or with “moderation” is foreign to the Bible. The word “wine” is used in two senses: according to the context, (1) it may refer to grapes or grape juice and therefore it is approved, or (2) it may refer to fermented wine and therefore it is prohibited. We are to be careful not to jump to conclusions to approve alcohol when finding the word “wine” in the Bible. Interestingly, the advice of a wise inspired writer and king was to not even come close to alcohol: “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper” (Proverbs 23:31-32).

THINKING FURTHER

If I told you that I have something that you will like **but** will potentially impair your sound mind and body, cause you several diseases and hangovers, harm your liver and other organs, affect your mood and character, break your good relationships, ruin your studies and future career, get you addicted, and rip you off of lots of money, would you be thrilled to try it? Of course, not! That is why TV commercials will show images of young people having fun and drinking, but will hide real-life images of drunk people on the streets, sick people in the hospitals, and dead people in cemeteries due to alcohol use.

In our real world, more than 3,000,000 deaths are annually attributable to alcohol consumption; alcohol contributes to over 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions; and among people between the ages of 15 and 49, alcohol is the first leading risk factor for premature death and disability. In the U.S. alone, nearly 88,000 people die annually from alcohol-related causes; more than 30% of annual driving fatalities is due to alcohol-impaired driving; and almost 700,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are annually assaulted by another student who has been drinking.²

If you think responsibly, you will see that alcohol consumption is not worth the risk. Alcohol’s consequences—in this life and especially in the next (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)—greatly outweigh any passing pleasures you can obtain from it. Be responsible; stay away from alcohol! ■

ADDICTION

by Jewell Holland

*To live a life that’s free,
Leave behind crutches that cripple;
Possess a mind of perfect clarity.*

*You see it now,
How the safety was really a trap,
A sick game to keep you coming back
Again, and again—addiction.*

*Emblazoned across your eyes,
It twists you so much you come to despise
Everything worthy of love;
But oh, there is a Father
Who offers you control (not yours; His.)*

*Binds up wounds,
Opens, cleans, abundantly gives
Repentance and a hope that satisfies
Better than all those sweet, false lies.*

*Beware of things that take His place—
They bruise the soul and injure the mind.
For freedom Christ has set you free:
Drink of the Spirit instead of the wine.*

1. DiSalvo, David (2012), “What Alcohol Really Does to Your Brain,” Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviddisalvo/2012/10/16/what-alcohol-really-does-to-your-brain/#794fda8c664e>.
2. “Alcohol Facts and Statistics” (2017), NIH, <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AlcoholFacts&Stats/AlcoholFacts&Stats.htm>.

children.

“I’m just too young to make a difference!”

by Nora July & Ana Holland

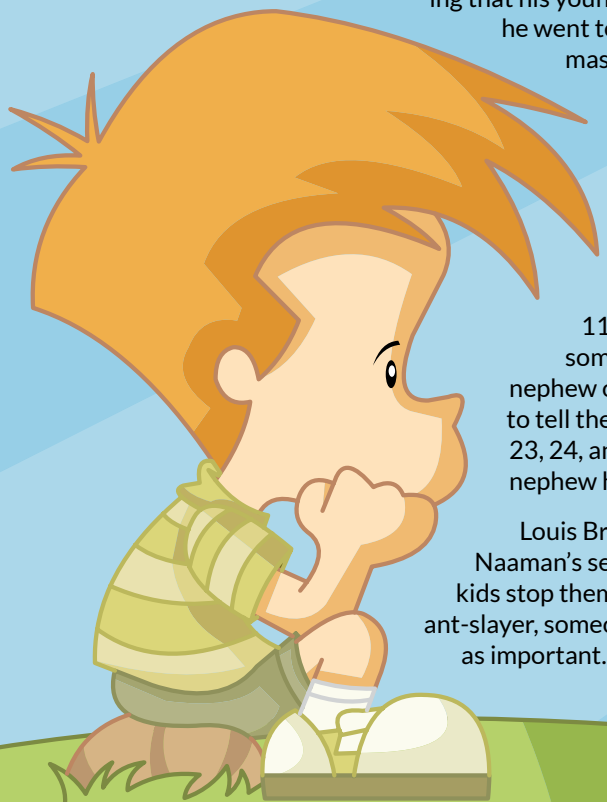
We as kids often hear the question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” But do we have to be grown up to make a difference? In 1824, Louis Braille was 15 and blind. But he didn’t let that disable him and created the Braille system of reading for the blind. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul warns Timothy not to be discouraged because he’s young and not to let others despise him for his youth. Are we too young to make a difference? The answer is a resounding **“No!”** There are many in the Bible who, being young, still made an impact on the world.

In 1 Samuel 17, David (the youngest of his brothers—vs. 14) is sent out to the battle between Goliath and the Israelites. But in verse 28, Eliab, David’s oldest brother, is very angry at David for coming out to the battle. David realized someone needed to stop Goliath, who was making fun of Jehovah. So, he steps onto the battlefield with only a slingshot and five stones. He was laughed at (vs. 42) for being young and taking on the mighty warrior, Goliath. But that didn’t stop David from fighting in God’s name (vs. 45) and defeating the blasphemer (vs. 50). David’s age didn’t stop him from achieving something big.

Second Kings 5 reads of a mighty warrior named Naaman who had leprosy, a skin disease. Naaman, knowing that his young servant girl worshiped Jehovah God, listened to her for advice. She said that, if he went to the king of Israel, he would be healed. The young girl had no authority over her master, but knowing that an all-powerful God could cure leprosy, she wanted to help. The king of Israel sent Naaman to Elisha, a prophet of God. Elisha told Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River and he would be healed. But Naaman wanted a better river in which to wash (vss. 11-12). So, when he went away, his servants told him that he should obey Elisha and wash (vs. 13). When Naaman listened to his servants and the servant girl and washed seven times in the Jordan River, he came up healed (vs. 14).

Finally, we read about the difference Paul’s nephew made in Acts 23. Verses 11-15 say that Paul was in the barracks at Jerusalem. Earlier, Paul had spoken to some men about God and they now hated him. In verse 16, the Bible says that Paul’s nephew overheard the men planning to kill him! His nephew went to Paul to warn him and to tell the commander of the army who was supposed to be keeping Paul safe. In verses 23, 24, and 31, the Bible says that Paul was safely removed from that place. Paul’s young nephew had saved his life!

Louis Braille was a young kid who made a huge difference to many people—as did David, Naaman’s servant, and Paul’s nephew. These young people didn’t let the fact that they were kids stop them from doing great things. It shouldn’t stop you either. You may not be a giant-slayer, someone who can heal others or save a life, but you can do smaller things that are just as important. You can smile at the lonely kid in your class, visit an elderly person, or most importantly, you can tell someone about God’s love for us. No matter if you’re seven or 70, if you want to make a difference for God, He can use you. ■



They made a difference!

The Bible contains the stories of many young people—some as young as you—who made a difference for God. See if you can guess the names of these young people; write their names in the vertical or horizontal spaces below. (If you need help, use the following Bible references: Genesis 37:2-4; 39:7-20; 41:39-43; 1 Samuel 2:11,18; 23:16-17; 2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chronicles 34:1-3; Esther 3:12-13; 4:15-16; Daniel 1; Luke 1:26-33; 2:41-47).

Vertical:

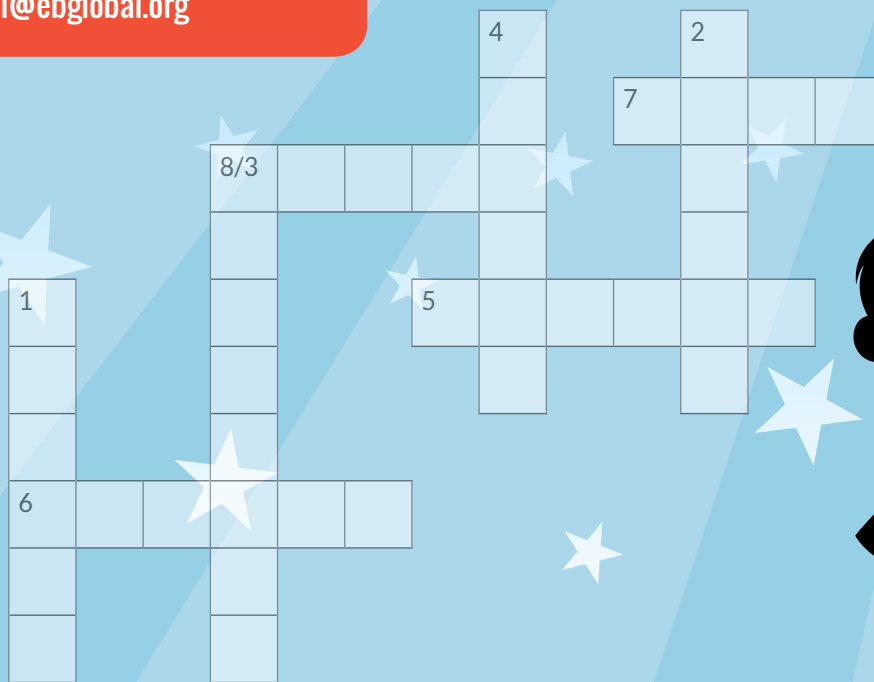
1. This young faithful man faced envy, resisted temptation, endured prison, and became the second greatest man in ancient Egypt.
2. Even as a child, this young boy ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.
3. This young man strengthened the hand of the future King David.
4. At age eight, he became king of Judah; at 16, he sought the Lord with all his heart; and by his 20s, he had made many great religious reforms. He became a king like no other.

Horizontal:

5. This young man chose to remain faithful to God even in a foreign land, and became one of the wisest and greatest men in Babylon.
6. This young woman became queen and risked her own life to save the entire nation of Israel.
7. This young woman was chosen by God to bring the Savior to the world.
8. This 12-year-old boy amazed Jewish leaders with his knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

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questions.

Q&A

Q: Will we be able to recognize our family members in heaven?

—TENNESSEE, U.S.

There is enough information in the Bible to conclude that, indeed, we will be able to recognize each other in heaven—including our family members. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus told about two men who died—a rich man and a poor man. In eternity, the rich man was able to recognize the poor man as well as Abraham. Although this is not a description of heaven but of hades—the waiting place of the dead, it gives a precedent for recognition in the afterlife. Other passages describing the spirits of those who die as being gathered to their people (Genesis 35:29; 49:29,33; Deuteronomy 32:50) and the hope to see loved ones in the afterlife (2 Samuel 12:23) confirm this understanding.

Additionally, Paul comforted the brethren at Thessalonica writing that they will meet the faithful who have died and will be in heaven with them and the Lord always (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This, of course, would not have been of encouragement if they could not recognize their loved ones. —MP

Q: What can be done to go back to the Bible in the family? —SAN MARTÍN, PERU

Start reading the Bible. Mom and Dad should read the Bible on their own and/or together. As adults, you should have a daily Bible reading schedule but also time you can spend in deeper study

of God's Word. The daily reading is quicker and more superficial, but it provides a breadth of Bible knowledge you will need as you try to get deeper into specific books or doctrines. Bible study books can help but you should always make sure that the author is using the Scripture correctly: is he drawing the appropriate lesson from the verse or importing an assumption into the text? Bible study should, of course, begin with prayer for God's blessings on your study.

When you fill your mind with God's Word, then it is going to come out in your own speech, attitude, and behavior. Use opportunities to talk about the Bible with your children as the occasion arises. Speaking of your children, read Bible stories to them. Read Bible story books that present the stories on their educational level. Then talk about what you learn from the stories. Try to live God's teachings in your life. —PH

Q: Does God want for me, as a woman, to devote myself exclusively to raising my children, or can I pursue a secular job?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

God instructed man to provide for his family and women to be homemakers (Genesis 3:16-19; 1 Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:5); this divine arrangement is not old-fashioned, but is still the best arrangement for the home. This is not to say that it is a sin for a woman to pursue/have a secular job; there are situations that may yield to a woman (or even

force her) to go out of the house to "glean in the field" (Rut 2:1-3). However, every Christian woman should seriously consider that, by pursuing or having a secular job, she is not neglecting her God-given responsibilities to her family or changing her priorities and spiritual focus in life (Matthew 6:33). —MP

Q: How can I keep a healthy relationship with my children?

—CALIFORNIA, U.S.

Some of these principles may have to be adjusted, depending on how old your children are. Act like

Christ around them, all the time. Meditate on ways you could practice the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-7). Allow them to be unique, different from you. Be patient with them. Love them despite their imperfections (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Stay calm when they are emotional. Apologize when you are wrong. Spend time with them, doing things they enjoy doing. Do not force yourself on them but ask if you may join them. Ask their opinion about your own decisions, especially if a decision may impact them. —PH

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