

Christian *family*

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Photo by
Chelsea Jones

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from the editors



Children are one of the greatest blessings God graciously concedes a family; we are to welcome them with the joy of the heart and nurture them in the fear of the Lord. Andrew and Rebecca Richardson

(on the cover) have been blessed by

God with three birth children and three children they have welcomed to their home by means of adoption. They understand the value of the souls of each of their children and share with us some insight to raising children.

In this issue, the reader will also find great advice for marriage, encouragement for daily Christian living, and reflection for the soul. It is our prayer that you will gain a greater understanding of family unity in this issue and that you will use this new understanding to help your family grow stronger in the Lord.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

VOLUME 3 • NUMBER 3 • FALL 2018

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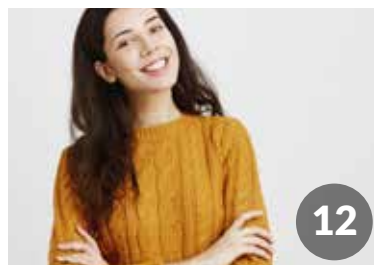
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Abraham

LEAVING A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY RELIGION

by Eric Welch

family.

In Genesis 11:27-32, Abraham is first introduced to us. His father was Terah, and his brothers, Nahor and Haran. All the family, except Haran who had died, left Ur of the Chaldees and settled in what they would call Haran, the northern extreme of the fertile crescent. Terah died in Haran, while Nahor remained there, but Abraham kept going. God had revealed Himself to Abraham in Ur before Abraham left: "Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'" (Genesis 12:1-3; cf. Acts 7:2).

God had begun His plan to create a special people who would serve Him in fulfilling His ultimate plan to redeem humanity. In order to do that, God had to bring Abraham out of an idolatrous environment. Ur and Haran were the two great centers of the worship of the moon god called Sin. Centuries later, Joshua spoke to that special people whom God created, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods...'" (Joshua 24:2). After his father died, Abraham left Haran and all that made his life secure to pursue the promise of God. He had already left his father's dysfunctional religion to worship the true God of heaven. Did Abraham betray his father by changing religions? No. Quite the opposite. To have followed his father's religion would have betrayed God. No one has any good reason to worship the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:20).

In studying the Bible with others and learning that true faith leads one to abandon sin (repentance), confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, and baptism (water immersion) for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), someone may halt and ask, "What about my mother and my father? They weren't baptized." Could Abraham not have said the same? "But, but what about my father and my brother?"

Faith in God always means giving God first place, and first place just might mean leaving the religion of our parents and grandparents if it is false. But even if it is true, we still must teach our children to have their own faith in God. They must believe in the one true God, not because their parents say so, but because it is true. They must understand not to depend on mom or dad for their faith, or because "they made them go to church." They must be able to stand on their own in faith. Thus, if children find out that the religion of their parents is not according to what God says in the Bible, should they not take responsibility and leave it just as Abraham left his? What my ancestors believed does not matter when it comes to my faith. What does matter is what I believe and if what I believe is true. I will stand on my own before God at judgment. My parents will not stand in my place, nor will I for them (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Let us give God first place, even above family. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). Will you follow the faithful footsteps of father Abraham into the Promised Land (cf. Romans 4:11-12)? ■



parenting.

"Children are a HERITAGE from the Lord" Do we believe it any longer?

by **Moisés Pinedo**

Generally speaking, this country (as well as others) is not thrilled about children any longer. Only in the U.S., we kill about 1,000,000 babies a year before they even see the light of the day.¹ Many parents talk about their toddlers like a burden and a constant source of frustration; others have already given up on their teenagers and labeled them as expected rebels; and others go as far as to view children as an inconvenience to their freedom and financial stability.

This mentality has caused the general population to adopt an "acceptable" number of children for a couple. In the U.S.,

the magic number seems to be one or two children; and although three are tolerated, more than three is deemed completely irresponsible in the eyes of many. We can see and hear this general attitude everywhere.

A while back, I went to Walmart and was ready to pay. The cashier looked around me with surprise and asked: "Are all these yours?" For a moment I thought I had brought all my teen Bible class with me, but it was just my three girls. I answered: "Yes." Then she said: "They may drive you crazy." I smiled and answered what seemed a foreign concept to her: "Not really. My wife and I like children."

A few weeks ago, my wife went to the doctor with two of our daughters. After observing them closely for a few minutes, a lady stopped by and told my wife: "I can tell you love your girls." My wife thanked her and mentioned that she had another daughter at home and was expecting one more. The lady was shocked and said: "Please, tell me this is the last one!" Well, it seems that the compliments came to an end after the number of **loved kids** increased.

How can we, as Christians, avoid ingesting this negative attitude toward our own children, the children of our Christian brethren, and our children in general? Think of them as a heritage of the Lord!

A Heritage of the Lord

Before continuing, here is a disclaimer: This article is not a push for large families, nor a disdain for small ones. Independently of the number, there are families who are raising their children in the Lord, and there are some who are failing. **This is a plea to view children as what they are: a blessing from the Lord—whether a family has several, one, or none.**

The wise king wrote that "children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Here children are compared to a gift or inheritance; but in contrast to the gifts we receive from our earthly parents, they are from the Lord! (cf. Proverbs 19:14).

Inheritance is a valuable thing; we are to honor parents who leave behind this precious and generous gift for their children—and grandchildren (Proverbs 13:22). Some parents bless their children and grandchildren by granting them early generous portions of this gift. We are to value and properly use such a gift (cf. Luke 15:11-32).

In view of the valuable nature of inheritance, what are we to say of children who are the heritage **of the Lord**? How are we to manage such a gift? Some may choose or only be able to have one or two, and others may be happy to have their "quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:5). This should be



their own prerogative and blessing. But independently of the number, we are to be serious stewards of these precious gifts.

Some common misunderstandings have guided the world, and even some in the church, to have a negative attitude toward families with more than two children. One of them is the view that **the world is "overpopulated."** The overpopulation argument is misleading and has also been used to favor abortion. An activist woman even went as far as to stay that "[h]aving children is selfish. It's all about maintaining your genetic line at the expense of the planet... Every person who is born uses more food, more water, more land, more fossil fuels, more trees and produces more rubbish, more pollution, more greenhouse gases, and adds to the problem of over-population."² It always puzzles me that this people who are "so worried" about overpopulation are still here overpopulating this world!

Christians care about this world, but reducing the amount of our children, or going beyond this to kill them (which God hates, Proverbs 6:16-17), will not save the planet. Although this article does not advocate the multiplication of worldly people, it is fit to point out that God has never been worried about His children multiplying. One of God's blessings for Israel was the multiplying of their descendants in a land that could not contain them (Exodus 1). God was able to give them more space!

A second misunderstanding is the idea that **we cannot afford several children.** Obviously, having children is also a financial decision. A Christian husband is to provide enough income for the wellbeing of the household; but, in great part, we have set an economic standard where sometimes secondary things take precedence. We live in a materialistic modern world that **can** afford, on average, 2,500sq/ft houses;³ two, three or more cars in our driveways; boats, campers, motorcycles, and other toys on our properties; TVs in every room, with unlimited internet access and cable; smart phones and tablets with unlimited calling, data, and storage; closets full of clothes, and attics, basements, and storage buildings full of things; and multiple refrigerators and freezers full of food that we cannot eat in time—but we just **cannot** afford several children!

Children are a heritage of the Lord. When did that quit being true?... when we decided we had enough people in this world? when we decided we needed bigger houses and each child needed his/her own bedroom? when we decided that our kids had to have everything they wanted or everything we wanted to give them? when we decided that we needed to give them a new car at age 16? when we decided they needed to climb the highest rung of the professional ladder? when we decided that they could not have a simple wedding or honeymoon? Does this passage still hold true?

Well, then, how many children should a couple have? That is up to them; thanks to the Lord, in this country we can still choose the number. But instead of focusing on a number, the population of the world, or the standard of living in our society, Christians should focus on God. Our decision to bring children to this world should be made with solemnity due to the serious responsibility that is placed into our hands. As Christians, we should encourage faithful parents who are raising their children in the Lord—whether one, two, or more. We should exhort and help Christian parents who are neglecting their children—whether one, two, or more. We should pray and strive for the generation of Christians to survive and influence this world so there will be more children growing in homes guided by the Lord. ■

1. "Induced Abortion in the United States" (2018), Guttmacher Institute, <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-united-states>.
2. Sweeney, Maria (2009), "Why More Women Are Only Too Happy to Stay Childless...", Independent, <https://www.independent.ie/>.
3. Perry, Mark (2016), "New U.S. Homes Today Are 1,000 Square Feet Larger..." AEI, <http://www.aei.org/publication/new-us-homes-today-are-1000-square-feet-larger-than-in-1973-and-living-space-per-person-has-nearly-doubled/>.



marriage.

Fundamental Elements of Marriage—Part 2:

COMMUNICATION, LOVE, AND EXPECTATION

by Robert and Iesia Brown

Communication

Communication is vital to the marriage relationship. One aspect of communication has become a lost art; that aspect is listening. So often we misunderstand each other because all that is said is not heard. It is very easy to cut people off before they finish expressing their complete thought. Sometimes the problem is that we are thinking of our response while they are still talking, missing some of what is said. We must obey James 1:19 and be slow to speak and slow to wrath, but swift to hear. When we do not hear all that is said, we are sure to misunderstand. Listening is one important way of valuing and respecting our spouse.

Another important aspect of communication is talking. So often it is tempting to withhold conversation (giving the silent treatment) when we are offended by something our spouse has said or done—although, it is sometimes necessary to hold our tongue to pray for the correct response to make sure that we do not answer in haste. We must remember that it is not our place to punish anyone, or “teach him/her a lesson.” So, we should not withhold conversation, affection, or any other good thing from our spouse in anger. Teaching someone a lesson is God’s business (cf. Hebrews 10:30). Our responsibility is to love God through our relationship and treat our spouse the way we would want to be treated.

We must keep God in the middle of every conversation. God hears every word that we speak and takes our words personally. We must always ask ourselves: Would I say that to God? Would I want God to hear me say that? If the answer

is “No,” then we should not say it (Matthew 12:34-37). We always have a choice to make: will we serve God or our carnal nature? Concerning communication, will we serve God with our words or will we serve our emotions with our words (Matthew 5:38-45)? Practice of God’s Word begins at home. Should we treat our spouse worse than God commands us to treat our enemy? Our home is the first field of service to the Lord.

Love

The main reason for any service to God must be love, but many are confused about what love is. Contrary to popular thought, love is not a warm fuzzy feeling or sexual attraction. In short, love is the choice to put the other person first (Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). The way to love God in our marriage is to love Him through loving our spouse. We are all unlovable at times, but God teaches us not to allow others to determine our behavior (Matthew 5:39-47; Romans 12:1-2). We should treat our spouses the way that God says, not according to what they do or do not do. Our love for God, which is obedience to His Word, determines our behavior. The motive behind everything that we do as Christians is to please God through obedience. My spouse may reap the benefits, but it is not about my spouse; it is all about God. In the judgment, we will not be able to bring our spouses with us and use the excuse that they were the reason for our poor behavior. They are not supposed to be our gods, but if we allow them to control what we do, we will elevate them to that position.



Expectation

One area that can lead to a weak or failed marriage is expectation. When our spouse does not meet our expectation, it can lead to disappointment, hurt feelings, and wrath. God never told us to expect perfection from anyone but Him (Psalms 62:5). All people, even we ourselves, are fallible; and even with the best intentions, we may not keep our word. God alone guarantees that He will keep His Word. When we recognize that every good thing comes from God (James 1:17) and that God uses people in our lives for His purpose, we can let go of the unrealistic expectations we have of our spouses and others. We must be careful that we are not trying to elevate our spouses to God's rightful place in our lives. We should not expect our spouses to do what God promises that He will do. Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), peace (Isaiah 26:3), contentment (Hebrews 13:5) are all comforts that God alone promises to provide—if we do what He tells us to do. God gets the credit for taking care of us, even if He uses our spouses to do these things or uses us to do them for our spouses. It is God Who is supplying. If our spouses are contrary, God will still supply all our true needs (Philippians 4:19).

Conclusion

We must make sure that we keep God on the throne of our hearts and seek to love Him by obeying His Word in our relationship with our spouse. Although we cannot control the other person, this active love for God will guarantee that we are doing all that we can to make our marriage successful. May God bless our efforts to please Him and accept us as sweet living sacrifices fit for His use. ■




women.

Always Abounding

by Diana Shepard

in the Work of the Lord



Have you ever thought about retiring from Christian service? I have been retired from a secular job as a public-school speech therapist for six years now. I enjoyed my job. One of my favorite areas was language-based reading problems. It was a very rewarding experience to aid a child in mastering the intricacies of our language. To share in the relief and joy on parents' faces when their children made progress in the areas of speech and language was so gratifying. When I look back on the last five years of teaching, I wonder how I got it all done. I was working full time, tutoring after school and in the summer, caring for an elderly mother with dementia, dealing with my husband's triple bypass surgery and being an elder's wife. I have co-taught the Sunday morning ladies' class for about 20 years. I have been a counselor of teen girls at Bible camp and taught 2nd and 3rd graders in VBS for several years. I am the wife of an elder, and we share a love for personal work which includes making visits and hosting Bible studies almost weekly. We were also deeply involved in a jail ministry. As I looked back, I did not think much about it, but now I do wonder how I did it all.

My decision to retire from my secular job was easy. My mother's care was overwhelming me. She passed away the year that I retired; and during that time, my husband was recovering from bypass surgery. When

I became eligible for retirement, I decided my priorities must continue being the church and my family. I knew that I would miss the children on my caseload, but I wanted to begin a new chapter in my life. I never thought about retirement as being a time to just relax. I have had wonderful older women in my life that guided me and left examples of Christian service. Many of them have passed away, but I still have older sisters in my congregation that have set the example of continuing service.

My husband's health has improved, and we are still involved in personal evangelism and in other areas of service. There are things that I can do now that I was not able to do before. I spend more time in personal Bible study. We are able to attend more Gospel meetings and Christian conferences. Our sons and their families live several hours away, so I borrow "grandchildren" from our congregation and we cook and sew together. I have also occasionally helped some of our

children with reading or speech problems just for the joy of doing it. I have spent many hours writing letters of encouragement and in Bible study with inmates in the local jail and the penitentiary.

I have been asked if I miss my secular job. The answer is “No.” I enjoy having more time to devote to the Lord. It has not been a big change, but it has been a worthwhile one!

As I was preparing to write this article, I looked at several verses dealing with Christian service. I have picked out a few to share with you.

“*But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13).*”

And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together (John 4:36).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Did you notice a retirement clause in these verses? I know that, as we get older, we will not be able to do as much physically as we have in the past; but we must not use age or even disability as an excuse to sit back and do nothing. There are many examples of older women in the Scriptures that involved themselves in the Lord’s work. Eunice and Lois influenced their son and grandson in the faith. Naomi guided Ruth in securing her place in the lineage of Jesus. Anna served the Lord in His temple in her old age. Elizabeth faithfully accepted the Lord’s plan for her in becoming the mother of John the Baptist in her old age.

Mentoring is not a Biblical word but it is such an important part of our Christian walk, and it is modeled in the Scriptures. Jesus patiently taught His disciples. Barnabas led the way for Paul. Paul lovingly mentored young Timothy. Older women are told to train the younger women.

We, as older women, have much that we can share. Many of us have been through illnesses, physical and mental suffering, the empty nest syndrome, children in the military, conflicts, widowhood and strife in and out of the church. We have much wisdom in being able to look back and see the providence of God working in our lives.

You do not have to be married to a deacon or elder to be busy in the kingdom. I heard a preacher’s wife say that she sometimes wishes that she was not married to a preacher. Then, the things that she does as a Christian would not be seen as an obligation because of her minister husband. We

should all be busy in the kingdom. Retirement or widowhood or an empty nest should not change our desire to be workers. If you are younger and thinking about retiring from a secular job and are afraid that you will be bored, look to your older, faithful retired sisters and ask one of them for advice. However, the best thing to do is to start when you are young in placing the Lord first in your life. Prioritizing important things now will make it easier to continue throughout your life in doing the Lord’s work. Remember the words of Psalm 92:12-15:

“*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of God. They shall bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*”

The rewards of being a laborer in God’s kingdom cannot be overemphasized. I received a text on Mother’s Day from a former inmate that I had encouraged. She wrote the following to me:

Happy Mother’s Day to my mom in every sense of the word! You loved me unconditionally and showed me care and concern. You mentored me and encouraged me. Thank you for being a virtuous woman who teaches those younger (and even many of the same age) to be godly women who love our husbands and our children. Love you so much.

We sent her to New Orleans to be with her family. She married a Gospel preacher and is now working in a prison ministry with him. She is a blessing in my life. We may not know how many others we have influenced through our faithfulness and good works throughout our lifetime until we meet them in eternity.

We must not use age or even disability as an excuse to sit back and do nothing... We, as older women, have much that we can share.

featured.



R

What single word would define your family, and why?

“Provisionally blessed”

(yes, we know that’s two words). Adopting three was not our original plan at all. We thought it would be best for us to adopt one child who was younger than our youngest at the time. But, the first adoption opportunity that came to us was our three children, and we were one of the only homes in the county approved for a group of three. After we met them, it took very little time for us to decide that our original plan could be modified. The story of our relationship, the timing of us entering into foster care, the story of our newer three children, and the circumstances that brought

them to our home prove to us every day that God’s providence may not be identified in every single instance, but it is clear that His providential hand has blessed us.

Did you always want to have a large family? Why?

When Rebecca was a child playing dolls, she always had at least eight “children.” We talked a lot before marriage and in our early married years about family size, but we never really decided on family size until there were eight of us. We want to foster again after the children are considerably older or fully grown. So, we know now that we want a large family, and we think that’s what matters.

Since you were able to have biological children, why did you choose to adopt?

the Richardsons

Andrew and Rebecca Richardson are the homeschooling parents of 6 children: Patience (10), Jay (10), Ariana (9), Caroline (8), Jason (7), and Cana (6). They have known each other since early childhood and have been married for 13 years. They were blessed to find three of their children through foster care and adoption and are passionate about helping to find loving homes for children who need them.

The Richardsons worship with the Wetumpka church of Christ in Wetumpka, AL, where they are active in prison ministry and teaching Bible classes, and where Andrew serves as the deacon over benevolence. They have just moved to the country to start a small homestead.

Before we even had biological children, we knew we wanted to adopt. We both had a lot of exposure to foster care growing up, so it was a shared passion from the beginning of our marriage. We knew that there were so many children who did not have the caring and Christian family that we had, and we thought we had a responsibility to share our privilege and our family.

Did you have any concerns about adopting three children about the same age of your biological children?

Sure, we did. We were concerned about many things, but the largest was probably that our oldest adopted child was (one month) older than our oldest biological child, both of whom took seriously their role as oldest. As one is a boy and one is a girl, they sorted out their separate roles fairly well, and that took care of itself for the most part.

What is a main challenge about having a large family constituted of biological and adopted children?

Parenting several children—all individual people with different personalities—can

be challenging on its own. The biggest added concern we had is that we meet each one where they are and fill their individual needs. The difference in relationship development with the family was sometimes prominent. It was often difficult for us as parents to remember that one of our newer children did not have years of the instruction, nurture, guidance, and discipline of our home. It was a great challenge to re-learn nurture and discipline, and to learn that treating them all equally didn’t mean treating them all the same. We try to honor each individual story while weaving them together into one family story.

Have you ever heard negativity from others due to the number of your children?

We’ve had very little negativity. Occasionally we run into people who make strange comments (for instance, “better you than me!” to which I always want to reply, “I agree!”), but generally speaking people are very kind, and our church family has been amazingly supportive and encouraging. We do make efforts to make sure that

everyone is clean and well-behaved when we are in public. We tell them that, when we walk into a store, we are an example of Christians, homeschoolers and large families, and therefore we need to do our best to live up to that.

Tell us a main blessing of having a house full of children.

The children have built-in best friends! Everyone has to pitch in to keep things running smoothly, so they learn to work together. There is always someone to play with, always someone to read to, always someone to help. An aunt recently described our house as an ant farm, because there is always a lot of activity. She wasn't wrong!

We love the lively atmosphere of children all over the place. Impromptu family comedy hour can sometimes be side-splitting hilarity. And, of course, there is nothing quite like hearing twelve feet run to the door to welcome Papa home from work by jumping all over him and telling him about their day. ■

6 Tips from a home full of love and full of



Limit screen time; encourage outside and imaginative play. Sunshine, fresh air and dirt are vital for raising healthy, active, content children.



Be content with less. Whether it is material things or an overcrowded schedule, it is so easy to pile things up that distract us from the most important things. Less clutter = more quality. Be selective and purposeful about the things with which you fill your home, and the activities with which you fill your time.



Organize, organize, organize. Master lists, smart storage solutions, spreadsheets... It really does make life easier.



Spend time together. The years we have with our children under our roof is so short. The importance of putting God in their hearts and building strong family bonds now cannot be overstated. The best way to do that is to be with them.



Lighten the workload with many hands. Teach them to work well (Colossians 3:23; Ecclesiastes 9:10). Train them to notice what needs to be done and take initiative to do it, and to work with others.



Don't let the pursuit of perfect keep you from the good. Don't say, "We'll never have a perfectly clean home, so let's not try," or, "We'll never be able to pay for college for that many, so let's not have a big family." We will never have everything just right, but we can and should strive to do good things and do them well. Keep in mind that we are stewards of time, money, material possessions, children, and all our blessings. We have a responsibility to use those gifts for others and the glory of God.



youth.

a POSITIVE spirit in a negative culture

by Abby Maguffee

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the onslaught of media. We see it every day on our social media feeds, on TV, and on the radio. Everywhere we turn, we see bad news and horrible stories. It can be discouraging and frightening. It is easy to focus on these negative things and become anxious and fearful. We know that Colossians 3:2 tells us to set our mind on things above, not on earthly things. But it is so easy to take our eyes off of spiritual things, and only focus on the here and now. So what is a Christian teen to do? How can we keep a positive attitude and a spirit of peace in such a negative culture? We do so by maintaining a proper focus.

We have all heard the story of Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water; but as soon as he took his eyes off of Jesus and saw the wind and waves, he began to sink. This is a powerful lesson for us as teens. We sometimes focus on school, popularity, social media, extracurricular activities, troubling stories we hear on the news, and what is going wrong all around us. Basically, we focus on the storms raging all around us. This causes a lot of anxiety and makes us feel out of control. But when we do as Colossians 3:2 tells us, we are able to keep the storms in proper perspective.

We maintain a proper focus by spending daily time in the Scriptures and in prayer. This can be difficult for us teens, between getting up early for school, being gone all day, then coming home to more homework and extracurricular activities, but it is vital to our spiritual growth. A practical way that has worked for me is having Scriptures written down in different places that I will see throughout the day. You can put Scripture cards on your bathroom mirror, in your locker, or in a textbook to use as a bookmark. Don't let Sunday and Wednesday be the only time you open your Bible.

We maintain a proper focus by taking our eyes off of ourselves. It is easy for teens to have a "me first" attitude. The world tells us to look out for number one, and to put a lot of focus on popularity. But, as Christians, we are to have the attitude of a servant. We need to look for opportunities to serve others and show the love of Jesus. Instead of seeking to be the most popular person at school, look for those who are hurting or lonely. Don't worry about what other people think. Worrying about what other people think about you causes stress and anxiety. Focus on doing the right thing. When you see others hurting, always do your best to show them the love of Jesus. When we serve others, it helps us take our minds off of our own problems.

As teenagers, many of us have multiple social media accounts, and having these accounts is not an inherently bad thing! However, when we let social media play too important a role in our lives, we can lose our peace. As Christian girls, it should be important to us to share Christ and always keep Him first. This should be the focus of the things we post. It is helpful to ask yourself a few questions before you post. Ask yourself, "Am I posting this to build someone up or tear him/her down?" "Would I want someone to comment this on my post?" "Is this post seeking to be inclusive or me trying to brag?" When we find ourselves worrying about how many likes we got,

the parties we weren't invited to, or feeling bad about ourselves, we may find we need to step away from social media for a while to gain a proper perspective.

So, when the storms around us are raging, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus. We need to stay in the Scriptures daily. We need to serve others. We need to stop worrying about being popular or fitting in. We need to take comfort in the fact that we know the end of the story and how it all turns out. We will be victorious if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and trust in Him. ■

by Ashton Jones

Being a male Christian teenager, understand how hard being a teen can be sometimes. You feel the need to fit in or be "cool." You act differently around others to fit the social standard. You are not yourself. Being a Christian is not about fitting in, though. It is about being different. Choosing not to go to the parties that put you in bad positions, using language that is hurtful to others, or judging people on how they look are just a few ways we are different from everyone else. Striving to be different starts with choices. If we make the right choices the first time, being different won't be that hard. Being different will feel good. As Romans 12:2 says, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Surrounding yourself with good Christian friends is one of the ways making the right choices can be easier. Your friends are always there for you. They want what is best for you. If you are struggling with sin, they can encourage you. Friends who have a good influence on your life help you grow as a Christian. They peer pressure you positively into making the right choice instead of making a choice that can be costly. As it is stated in Proverbs 13:20, "[h]e who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed."

Being blessed with a great youth minister and youth group have helped me grow as a Christian. There is nothing but love and encouragement that comes from that youth group—especially from some of the closest friends I have. Surrounding myself with these people has been a great choice in my life because nothing but good has come out of every situation I have been in with them.

Not everyone is blessed with close or even great friends though. That is where family comes in. Family means much to me. A strong Christian family always has God as the center of their life. That means a Christian family will bring God into a situation. This family teaches you God's Word, is there for you when you are down, and always makes sure you are making the right choices because they care for you. Without a strong Christian family, life would be harder, but God finds other ways to encourage His children.

If family and friends never seem to be there when you are in need or never seem to care what choices you make, there is still Someone Who cares; His name is God. God cares for you more than you can ever imagine. He is good. He is love. God wants

a relationship with us. He is the Person in our head encouraging us to make the right choices. God is always there for you, no matter what the situation is. Even though it may seem like He is not there because you cannot see Him, He is. Yes, family and friends that care for you and the decisions you make are great, but no one cares for you more than the Person Who created you: God.

The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17). ■

**SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH GOOD INFLUENCES
that make being different for God easier**



children.

“DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN...?”

by Kaylie and BettyJo Atkins

This phrase is often heard when families and friends get together and we are remembering times and events that we were at or had heard of in the past. We may smile and laugh at these memories; or, if it is a memory of someone that has passed on or an event that was sad, we may even shed a tear.

“Do you remember when...?” can also be heard when talking about events in history.

- My great-grandparents remembered when Pearl Harbor got bombed by Japanese planes on December 7, 1941.
- My grandparents remembered when President Kennedy got shot by Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963.
- My parents remembered when hijacked airliners smashed into

the north and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001.

Even though I wasn't alive when these events happened, I know about them. Important events in history are brought to our attention or taught to us either in school or by our parents so that we **never** forget. We memorialize them so that we **never** forget. We have days set aside, monuments built and parades to honor special people or important events...so that we **never** forget.

Do you remember Levi Morton, Chester Arthur, or Maurice Rose? Most of us do not remember these three men, unless, by some chance, their names were found in our history books that we studied from, or perhaps the History Channel may have had a program highlighting their life.

These men all served the United States of America in some capacity. Levi Morton was the 22nd Vice President of the United States. He also served as the United States Ambassador to France, and as the 31st Governor of New York. Chester Arthur was the 20th Vice President, and the 21st President of the United States upon the assassination of President James A. Garfield. Major General Maurice Rose was a United States Army general in World War II and a veteran of this war. During World War II, he served in three of the greatest armored divisions; “Old Ironsides” was one of them.

The word “remember” and variations of this word appear in the Bible 268 times (NKJV). It means to have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness (of someone or something that one has seen, known or experienced in the past). It is a verb, an action, something that we do.

We are a **forgetful** people aren't we? Why else would God our Father have said the following to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:6-9?

*And these words which I command you today, shall be in your heart. You shall **teach** them diligently to your children, and shall **talk** of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall **write** them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.*

God wanted His people to **remember** what He had told them. He even gave them the instructions for remembering: “teach them,” “talk of them,” “write them.” See them in action, hear of them, and read them; that is a great way to remember important information!

In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul quotes Christ while correcting the Corinthians:

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “**Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.**” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**”*

Christ said to do this in **remembrance of Him**; why? It appears that this is very important, and it is. When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, it was for our benefit. Christians hear it, read it in the Bible, and participate in it. All of this helps Christians understand the cross.



He wanted us to remember when:

- He went to the cross and shed His blood “for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).
- He rose from the dead. “But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see

Him. Behold, I have told you” (Matthew 28:5-7).

- He went back to heaven. “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

When we remember Christ in the light of the cross, we get a better understanding of the great sacrifice that He gave for each and every one of us—from the nailing of His hands and feet to the cross, the piercing of His side, and finally His humanly, painful death.

Christ said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Christ went to the cross for everyone, for friends and enemies. Do you **remember** this?

Paul said, in his letter to the Corinthians, “Now I commend you because you remember me and everything and maintain the traditions even as I deliver them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2).

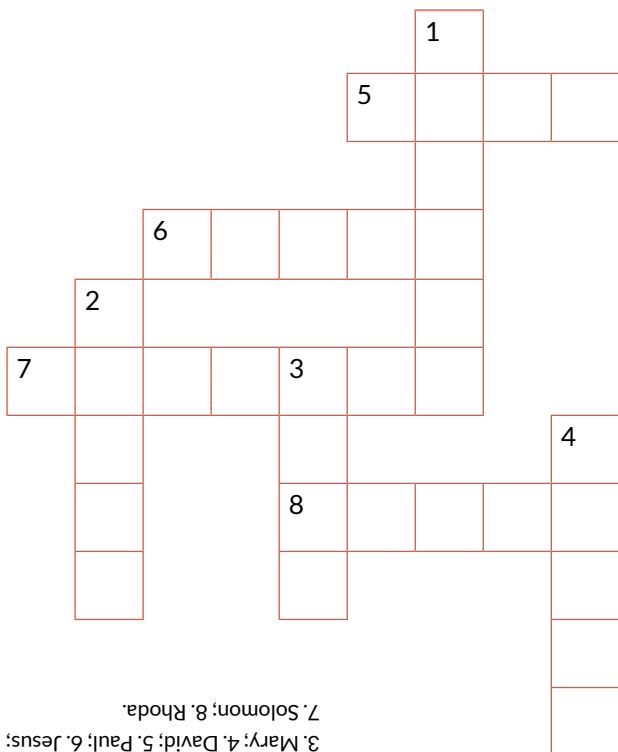
When Christians **remember** Christ during the Lord’s Supper, they are to have a reverent understanding of His deep love for us, for every single one of us. Isn’t it amazing that Christ, the Lamb of God, loves **us** so much? We should humble ourselves to Christ every time we consider that He **willingly** went to the cross.

The greatest remembrance and memorial that Christians are privileged to participate in **is** the Lord’s Supper. ■

Online and printed Spanish materials for children at: www.ebherencia.org
 Contact: editorial@ebglobal.org

“DO YOU REMEMBER THEM?”

Without looking at the answers, try to remember the following people and place their names in the correct spaces.



VERTICAL

1. Strong man with long hair
2. Man who gave the Ten Commandments
3. Young virgin from Bethlehem
4. Young man who killed Goliath

HORIZONTAL

5. The last apostle of Christ
6. The Savior of the world
7. Very wise and rich king
8. Girl who recognized Peter’s voice

Answers: 1. Samson; 2. Moses; 3. Mary; 4. David; 5. Paul; 6. Jesus; 7. Solomon; 8. Rhoda.



questions.

Q&A

Q: According to 1 Corinthians 5:11, are we to cut ties with a Christian child who has become unfaithful?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

A key expression in 1 Corinthians 5:11 is “named brother.” This refers to Christian fellowship or brotherly recognition. If a Christian is involved in a life of impenitent immorality and stays in that condition, his family should not treat him as if he were in communion with them. However, they are to remember not to count him as an enemy (2 Thessalonians 3:15a).

Christians have a variety of interactions with many people—some of them who are unfaithful Christians. These interactions should not be an approval of wrong (cf. Romans 1:32) nor a concession of communion to the unfaithful, but we are to use these opportunities to admonish them back to God (2 Thessalonians 3:15b). —MP

Q: Besides being an example and teach them God’s Word, is there anything else I can do to teach my daughters to be obedient?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

Obedience should be taught at a very early age. It requires at least three things: (1) the command, (2) a punishment for breaking the command, and (3) a reward for fulfilling the command. As your child gets older, you can include a reason for obeying the command; but, at an early age, “Because I (Momma or

Daddy) said so” is reason enough. The punishment might be physical, time out, loss of a privilege, or a scolding. Rewards should be heavy on simple verbal praise, but as specific as possible. Bribery should not be used to teach obedience, but, sometimes, tangible rewards might be used if the situation suggests it. —PH

Q: How can I train strong-willed children? —CONNECTICUT, U.S.

Strong-willed children can certainly be a handful! Solomon wrote that we should train a child “in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). Some Hebrew scholars suggest that phrase means “consistent with his personality.” We must respond to children as individuals. You must find some method of rewards and punishments that works with your strong-willed child. Know him well so that you can so guide him. You must pick your battles wisely and understand his uniqueness. You also must be consistent in requiring obedience from him just like you would from any other child. Also, don’t try to micromanage your child’s behavior. Allow him to be unique. —PH

Q: My wife has not been baptized in the church of Christ; can she be saved? —GUATEMALA, GUATEMALA

Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” The inspired apostle Peter commanded, “Repent, and

let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). In 1 Peter 3:21, this same apostle wrote, “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism.”

In contrast to modern-day Christendom, the New Testament clearly teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation. Saying otherwise would be contrary to God’s will—despite how much we may love someone who has not submitted to baptism. This baptism, immersion in water as the original word means, is unique (Ephesians 4:5)

and is performed on the believers to be part of Christ’s body (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13), which is His church (Ephesians 1:23; 5:23).

No, no one can be saved without baptism, not because a preacher or writer says so or because there is special power in the water, but because the Savior has required it. This places a great responsibility on our shoulders to fulfill Jesus’ commission by delivering His Gospel to everyone—including our family members (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). —MP

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