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Christian *family*

ESPAÑOL
A LA ESPALDA

*Special
edition*

From our children
around the world:
What they need
most from their
parents.

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from the editors



What do children need most from their parents? Due to our materialistic society, some Christian parents may find themselves spending more time and effort supplying the material for their children. When this happens, we should stop to listen to God, His Word, and our own children. In this issue, we asked children around the world (from different ages) to tell us what they need most from their parents. Not surprising, their main needs can be categorized as godly instruction, love, and time. A Christian mother who asked this question to her young son, said, "I had never asked my child this before. His answer has impacted me because now I realize he needs more time with us."

Take a few minutes to read this issue. You will grow as a parent, and your children will thank you.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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“I Want My Children to Have What I Did Not Have”

parenting.

by Moisés Pinedo

I was born in a humble home. We did not have much growing up, but my dad always made sure we had enough food to eat. I remember my dad saying that he wanted his children “to have what he did not have.”

My father was born as an illegitimate son to my grandfather, a wealthy mayor of a city in the rainforest of Peru. But after his young mother left and his father died, my father lost all protection and was sent alone, on a week’s journey, to the capital city to “find his life” at 11 years old. There, he grew up with little, working hard to try to pay for his studies and other living expenses.

So, although my father’s children (us) were poor, we still had what he did not have; he made this possible for us! I believe every good parent has the same desire for his/her children. However, I fear that when we say that we want our children to have what we did not have, our thoughts are usually fixed on the material.

A while back, my family was getting ready to have Bible time at night. I was sitting alone on the couch and began to think about all the things I did not have growing up but that my daughters now enjoy. They have a beautiful house, nice clothing, plenty of food in the refrigerator, comfortable beds, a large selection of toys, and many other amazing things. I thought, “Dad would have been proud,” and I felt satisfied.

Then, the thought hit me like a rock: “What about the things that **really matter**? What about those **important things** that **I did not have**, or that **I had**? Was it enough to give my daughters material things? Was I losing my focus?”

That night I decided this expression would have a different meaning for me. I committed myself to be a better father and to give them the things they really needed—whether I had them or not growing up.

- What about **love** (1 Corinthians 13)? Was I being insensitive to them or to their mother? Did I care enough for them? What was the real meaning of love?
- What about **patience** (James 1:4)? This was (is) a big one for me; I needed more with them!
- What about **communication** (James 1:19)? Men do a poor job on this! Was I listening to my children enough? Could they come to me and have a heart-to-heart conversation? Could they tell me something they dislike about me? Could they tell me anything and everything?
 - What about **time** (Ephesians 5:16)? Was I too busy with unimportant things and activities and was robbing my children of the time they needed from me? Could I spend more time with them to teach them, play with them, and do more memorable things with them?
- What about **spiritual leadership** (Ephesians 6:4)? Was I showing them the way? Was I teaching them the Word enough for them to develop their own faith? Did my wife have to push me to be the leader I needed to be on my own?

These are some of the things I want to give my children. Growing up, I had some, and I needed more of others. I am not perfect, and I still fail in these areas; but these things are constantly present in my mind when I think: “I want my children to have what I did not have.” How about you? ■

by Kyle Butt

Maybe you have heard this old joke: A man decided he wanted to be a monk. He joined himself to a monastery committed to silence. In this monastery, each monk was permitted to say two words every 10 years. After 10 years of silence and living in ascetic conditions, the man came before the head monk to say his two words. “Food bad,” he said, and walked out of the room. After another decade of hard life, he returned to the head monk to make his two-word statement, “Bed hard.” Another 10 years passed, and the man once again appeared before the head monk. “I quit,” he said. The head monk nodded with a disgusted look on his face and replied, “I’m not surprised at all. You have done nothing but complain since you got here!” It is a funny little story but tragically true. Many people go through this life using their quota of words complaining.

It is ironic that some of the worst complainers are the ones who have it the best. That is especially true in Christian homes. Because many Christians pay close attention to avoiding the “big” sins such as lying, pornography, stealing, or drunkenness, we often feel that gives us a pass to “complain a little.” Many Christian wives spend a bulk of their time complaining about how their husbands do not treat them as they should. The favorite subject of many husbands is how their wives ought to be doing this or that. Kids complain about the meals their parents fix, or the vacation spot they went last year, or the outdated nature of their phone, or their slow Internet connection, or the classes they have to take at school. And parents complain about how their kids complain, how their kids are not grateful, the lack of help they get from their kids, their bosses, their jobs, their clunky old car; and the list keeps going and going. Before we go further, stop right now and ask yourself, “If everything I complain about was fixed to my liking today, would I stop being a complainer?” I think we all know the answer to that question. Complaining does not come from outside circumstances; it comes from an inward spirit of discontent. So, how can we have homes that are complaint free?

Complaining Is Sinful and Harmful

God’s Word has much to say about complaining. The apostle Paul wrote, “Do all things without complaining and disputing” (Philippians 2:14). It is noteworthy that Paul wrote these words. First, remember that he was writing them to the Philippians. You might recall that, in Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison for preaching the Gospel. If any person had an “excuse” to complain, you would think it would have been Paul. He

was simply doing what God asked him to do, yet, he found himself in the stocks on the hard floor of a dirty prison. What did he do under those extremely negative conditions? He and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God—certainly not complaining. Is it any wonder that the Philippian jailer became a Christian? How many people had he most likely seen in his prison who complained about their plight, demanded justice, maligned their captors, and grumbled about their situation? Paul and Silas showed him how Christians go to prison.

Most people complain. In fact, as you read the rest of Paul’s statement in Philippians 2:14, just after his commandment to do all things without complaining, he said, “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (2:15). Non-complainers are unusual, different, special, lights in a dark world. Paul knew just how effective a grateful, non-complainer could be for the Lord. Remember that Paul had been:

- **whipped five times (39 stripes each)**
- **beaten three times with rods**
- **stoned to the verge of death**
- **shipwrecked**
- **hungry and thirst plagued**
- **endangered by of robbers and thieves**
- **unjustly imprisoned (2 Corinthians 11:22-33).**

If anyone could tell us to do **all things** without complaining, surely it was Paul.

Furthermore, Christians should avoid complaining because it is so very unchristian. What I mean by that is simply that Christ, our example, would never gripe or complain. Can you imagine a situation in which our Lord would complain? It is absurd to suggest. Try to imagine Christ saying things like:

- **“It’s too hot-uh.”**
- **“Is this all I get?”**
- **“These sandals chaff my ankles.”**
- **“Do I have to preach to these people for hours in this hot sun?”**
- **“I hate my job; I wish I was at the beach.”**

It is ridiculous to attempt to imagine. Christians are Christ followers. Since that is the case, they try their best to imitate Him and avoid all complaining.

There is no such thing as a legitimate complaint. That does not mean that all negative statements are wrong. Sometimes it is necessary to point out real problems and situations. A complaint is a negative statement about life circumstances that is not designed to be constructive and does not lead to a possible solution. Let us look at examples of complaints versus constructive negative statements:

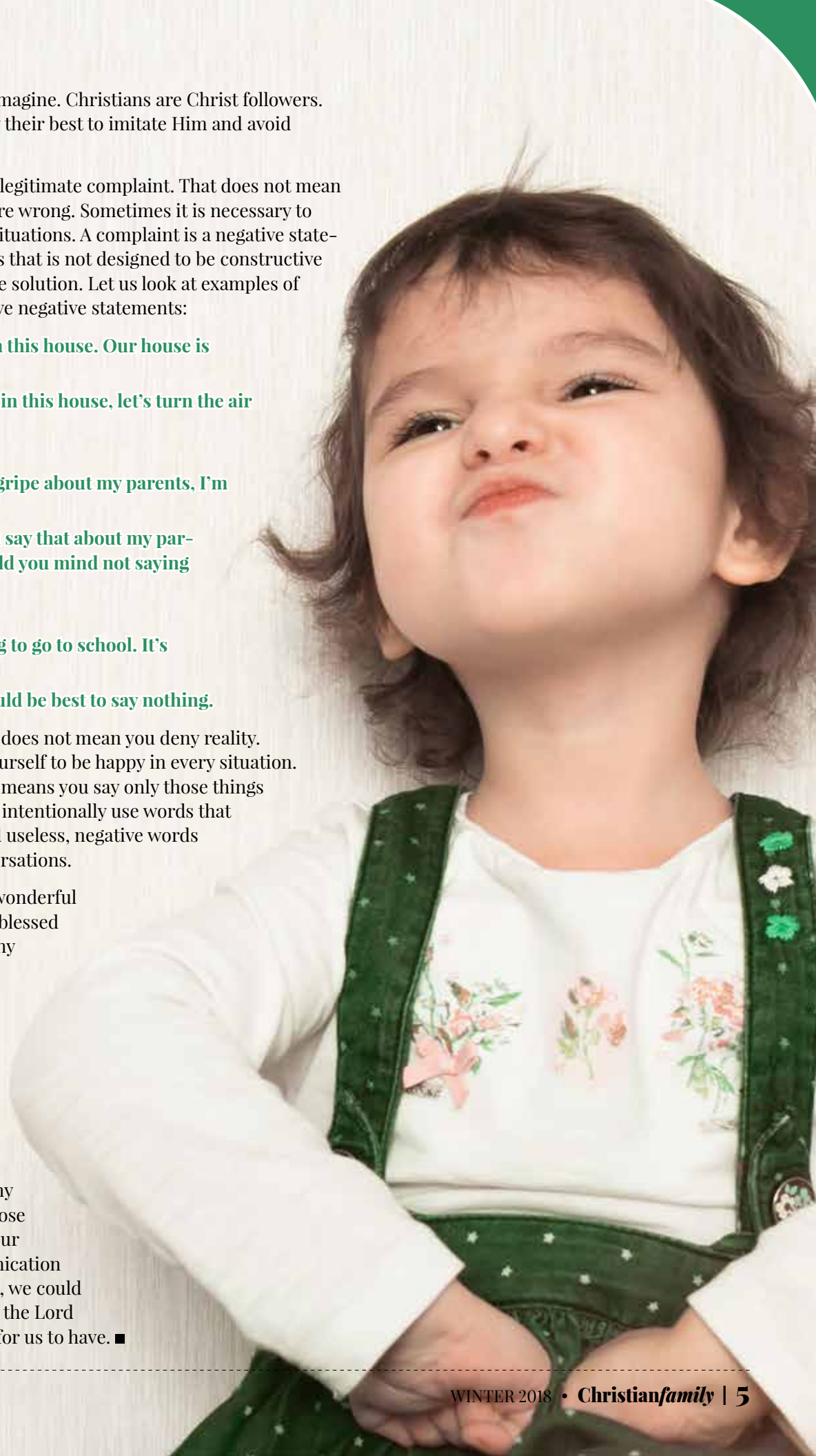
- **Complaint:** “I’m so hot in this house. Our house is always hot.”
- **Constructive:** “It’s warm in this house, let’s turn the air conditioner down.”

- **Complaint:** “You always gripe about my parents, I’m so sick and tired of that.”
- **Constructive:** “When you say that about my parents, it troubles me. Would you mind not saying those things anymore?”

- **Complaint:** “I hate having to go to school. It’s so boring.”
- **Constructive:** Here it would be best to say nothing.

The decision not to complain does not mean you deny reality. It does not mean you force yourself to be happy in every situation. The decision not to complain means you say only those things that help solve problems. You intentionally use words that build up. You refuse to spread useless, negative words to get attention or start conversations.

God has given us so many wonderful things. Many of us have been blessed with Christian spouses, healthy children, meaningful jobs, encouraging congregations of fellow Christians, and countless other exciting blessings. Add to that the fact that we are in Christ, forgiven of our sins, and on our way to live with our Creator forever, and it becomes impossible to justify any complaining. If we would choose to fill our relationships, and our homes, with positive communication devoid of harmful complaints, we could begin to experience the joy of the Lord that God has always planned for us to have. ■



marriage.

Keeping Love in the Marriage

by Mainor Pérez Part 1: For Husbands

We all know that, in most cases, the first years of marriage are golden; that is, a strong attraction still remains that makes a couple's encounter the most desirable. Despite some conflicts that are always present, even from the beginning of marriage, the spouses share deep feelings that help them navigate marital life.

But everything tends to deteriorate—especially when one or both spouses do not make an effort to preserve the flame of love in marriage. As a proverb says, “love makes people forget about time, while time makes people forget about love.” The inspired apostle Paul dealt with this sensitive issue when he told the men in Colossians 3:19: “Husbands, love your wives.” “Love” is an imperative verb indicating that the husband ought to continuously express his feelings for his wife.

As Christian husbands who want to please the Lord, we must stop and seriously consider the way we are treating our wives.

How can we continuously show love to our wives in keeping God's will?

We are to love them with sacrificial love.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” Christ's love for the church was not a mere emotional and temporary feeling, but it was in deed and in truth (cf. 1 John 3:18). His love was real and palpable; it was expressed as a bloody and painful sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. We are to determine to sacrifice everything to preserve and cultivate love for our wives.

Deep devotion must promote sacrificial love for our wives. We are to love them sacrificially, having a fervent desire to do all necessary things for the wellbeing and happiness of our wives.

We are to love them with sanctifying love.

Paul continued: “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27). Jesus' love

is also a sanctifying love. The Lord gave His life for the church to **sanctify** her. This verb means “to make holy due to the presence or contact with what is holy.”¹ It is wonderful to know that Christ forgives us, cleanses us, and makes us holy with His redeeming blood when we obey His **holy** Gospel (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 1:9)!

The mission of the Lord was and continues to be multifaceted. He is Prophet, Shepherd, Priest, Teacher and Guide to the church to show her the way and take her to spiritual maturity through His Word. Similarly, a Christian husband must be a prophet, shepherd, priest, teacher, and guide to his wife. We are called to intercede for our beloved wives before God, teach them, guide them, and protect them spiritually. We are to enroll in Joshua's army and declare with him: “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Sometimes our wives may lack the spiritual values to become mature; and when lacking sanctifying leadership from their husbands, they may devote time to activities that undermine their spirituality and finally destroy harmony in marriage. Other women are forced to assume this leadership role that their husbands have neglected; this robs the husband of the blessing to do God's will in this area. Brethren, let's not neglect our leadership to sanctify and edify our wives as Christ continuously sanctifies His church.

We are to love them with providing love.

The apostle continued: “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ephesians 5:28-29). We can easily understand this illustration. We do not harm nor destroy our bodies, but we supply everything we need. It is our duty to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our wives. This is love in action.

Many of us are quick to supply for the flesh. We feed our body and take care of it as well as we can; but what about our wives, our children, our families? The selfishness of many men has caused ruin in their marriages.

God considers marriage as a permanent and unifying relationship. Remember what He told the first couple in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and

mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Man is so united to his wife that God sees both of them as one body. He says that a husband is to love his wife as his own body—since he is one body with her; she is part of him! If we want to please the Lord, we are to do what we can to take care of our wives. When we do this, we are also taking care of our unity and ourselves (cf. Matthew 7:12).

There are several areas of the marital life in which we are to provide, but a basic one in which we usually fail is the emotional part. Some good advice I read on the Internet says: “A man is he who loves, admires, respects, and falls in love everyday with the same woman.”² We should never lack admiration for our beloved wives!

Acknowledgment is fundamental to provoke emotional value in people. It is important to constantly praise our wives. Do not forget to thank her for the things she oversees and administers at home. Pray with her for fervent and sanctifying love in marriage. God has given us a sister in Christ and wife for this reason.

Lastly, we are to provide emotionally a healthy atmosphere for intimacy. Our wives are not objects without feelings, but they are our source of intimate satisfaction and joy. We are to treat them with much affection, for

they usually care about romance. Our good manners, our affection, and even our hygiene are important to them. Women enjoy the long road that travels to intimacy. They take note of the details before and after intimacy. Unlike the man, a woman cares deeply about our words. Every loving phrase adds to healthy intimacy.

Let us thank God that, although we are different, when we are in Christ and follow His advice, we can successfully plow together in the field of marriage. Let us always give ourselves unconditionally to this beautiful institution, with fervent love, sacrificing everything, and providing all vital elements to expand our love bond. This way we will do God’s will. May the Lord our God guide us in our marriages. ■

1. “Sanctify” (no date), *DLE*, <http://dle.rae.es/srv/search?m=30&w=santificar>.

2. From Facebook.



by Olga Pahom, Ph.D.

It only takes a few minutes of watching the news, reading our social media feed, or sitting at a competitive sporting event to be reminded that we live in a divided world. Sadly, sometimes these divisions manifest themselves in disrespectful attitudes towards those who come from different backgrounds and cultures. As Christian parents, our goal should be to raise children who love God and others, which includes teaching our children to respect people who might be different from us.

Here are some practical things you can do to teach children of all ages to respect other cultures:

1. STUDY the Bible with your children and highlight God's love and redemptive purpose for people from all cultures, languages, and backgrounds.

God is the Creator of a wonderful world in which different skin tones, body shapes, languages, customs, foods, and songs add to its vibrant beauty. This diversity is not to be feared because it was made by God, and it reflects His creativity and wisdom.

As we read the Bible with our children, we can highlight how, from the very beginning, God made many different types of plants, sea creatures, birds, animals, and people, and God delighted in their differences and called them "very good" (Genesis 1).

Later, when God chose Abraham for a special purpose and blessed him, He revealed that His intention was to bless **all the families of the earth** through his seed (Genesis 12:3).

Even though God continued to work in a unique way among the people of Israel, the Bible shows how God's goal was to provide an opportunity for people of all nations to be redeemed.

As we study the Bible with our children, we can point out how God's plan to bless people of all languages and cultures came to fruition in the lives of the church in the

New Testament. For example, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on the apostles, and the crowds from various cultures and languages were able to hear the Gospel preached in their own languages (Acts 2:6-12). The

church continued to grow exponentially because the Gospel was proclaimed and accepted by people of many cultures, a work that we are also called to participate in today.

The ultimate vision of God's dream for humanity is beautifully portrayed in Revelation 7:9-10, where people of all cultures are gathered together worshipping God: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

As we study the Bible with our children, we can teach them about God's love and redemptive purpose for people of all cultures and help them find age-appropriate ways of joining God in His work among all nations.

2. INCLUDE your children in fun activities that promote learning and appreciation of other cultures.

Besides grounding our children in the biblical worldview, which sees all people as bearing God's image and being invited into God's kingdom, we can also engage our children in fun and educational activities that promote learning and appreciation of other cultures. For example, one of my friends has a monthly "culture night" with her children. They choose a different country each month, and after learning some interesting facts about it, they bake a dessert from that country and make a traditional craft or art project. Even though this family has never traveled outside of the U.S., the children have already learned about many countries and have a deep appreciation for other cultures.

Some other ideas include the following:

- Reading books or watching films with multicultural elements and pointing out positive aspects about other cultures.
- Eating traditional foods from other countries and appreciating new flavors and ways of preparing meals.
- Encouraging our children to learn other languages.
- Praying for and encouraging missionaries and other cross-cultural service workers (including sending encouragement notes, care packages, or financial support).
- Participating in mission trips and other service projects.
- Building friendships with people from other cultures.
- Hosting international exchange students.

God is the Creator of a wonderful world in which different skin tones, body shapes, languages, customs, foods, and songs add to its vibrant beauty.

The purpose of engaging our children in such activities is to teach them that differences between cultures can be positive and fun and that we can learn from others. In the end, learning from different cultures also gives us a glimpse into God's image reflected in many people around the world.

3. MODEL respect for others in your everyday interactions.

A crucial aspect of shaping a child's character and behavior is the model provided by their parents' actions, not just their words. If children do not see respect for other cultures reflected in their parents' lives, the lessons they learn during Bible studies or fun cultural activities might not be easily assimilated. As James cautions us, "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (1:22).

Working and interacting with others can be challenging in both face-to-face and online environments, especially when more than one culture and language are involved. As we encounter difficulties in our own interactions with others, we need to avoid making disrespectful comments and perpetuating negative stereotypes about people who might be politically, religiously, or culturally different from us. We would do well to heed Paul's advice: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

We can teach our children that cross-cultural interactions involve hard work, but the more we learn about other cultures, the more we discover how similar people's needs and dreams are across the world: the desire to live a peaceful and a meaningful life, a deep love for our children, and the hope of leaving a positive legacy at the end of our lives.

I have been personally blessed by Bible studies that highlight God's love and redemptive purpose for all people, by fun activities that promote appreciation of other cultures, and by strong Christian models of respectful interactions with others. Seeing Christian families engaged in these practices has not only helped me respect other cultures; it also compelled me to become a Christian. Today, I pray that I can impart the same lessons to my children as I raise them to be ambassadors of Christ in God's world until we join that great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language in grateful worship to the Lord of all.



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featured.

From Our Children Around the World:

"Love: because when parents love their children, they will have faith and relief, knowing that their parents trust them and love them."

**KIAS DAVIS (11),
TENNESSEE, U.S.**

"Lovin."

**PEYTON JORDAN
(5), TENNESSEE,
U.S.**

"I need my parents to be good teachers, guiding me in the good way and in the truth. I need them to teach me the true love that comes from God."

**JEAN YERIEL (8),
GURABO, PUERTO
RICO**

"I need God because I love Him best. I need my dad to take me and my mom to work with him, so all three can be together. I need my mom to play with me and keep me company at night."

**TIMOTHY BENITES (5),
LIMA, PERU**

What Do You Need MOST from Your Parents?

"Wisdom to know what is good and what is evil for when I grow up."

**DYLAN JARAMILLO
(8), TEXAS, U.S.**

"I believe one of the most important things is their support and approval. As children, we usually seek for them to be proud of us. Without their help and approval, we would not be the people we need to be."

**LUZMILA SANDOVAL (18),
CAYAMBE, ECUADOR**

"Love and dedication. I need them to teach me God's love for me. I need them to teach me to know Him through His Word and daily prayer."

**IAN ESPITIA (7),
YUMBO, COLOMBIA**

"I need time, love, and good lessons. I need my parents to become like children to understand me like a child, not as an adult. I want them to treat me, take care of me, guide me, love me, and instruct me as a child."

**JUANITA LARA (9),
IBAGUÉ, COLOMBIA**

youth.

by Megan LeBlanc

MY DO'S AND DO NOT'S OF DATING

✓ DO'S

1. GET TO KNOW HIM BEFOREHAND.

Is he a Christian? Does he respect others and God? Is he loyal? Kind? Entertaining the idea of dating a non-Christian leads to dating and marrying a non-Christian, and that's real hardship. You must find something solid, deeper to build relationships on. Love must surpass numerous boundaries. You won't always be happy, good-looking, or healthy. What better foundation to build your relationship upon than God? If your heart is full of God but his isn't, that's a **huge**, unshared part of yourself and an unnecessary barrier in your relationship.

2. GET TO KNOW HIS STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS.

With God as your foundation, so many things are understood like the definition of marriage, your priorities in life, and what you both should strive for. Talk things over beforehand, even with a Christian. "No" is always tougher in the heat of the moment. Don't wait to set boundaries.

3. DATE WITH A PURPOSE.

Dating is a precursor to marriage. Too young to think about marriage? Hold off on dating. It's a time of learning. How does he respond in a tough situation? Would he make a good spouse? Parent?

4. REALIZE GOD'S PLAN FOR DATING/MARRIAGE; CHOOSE GOD'S TIMING!

Let your personality be known instead of your body. Allowing your inner beauty to shine deepens his affection for you, making you someone worthy of love and pursuit, not a body to conquer and use. Are you a loveable person? **Absolutely!** Do you need everyone's validation and adoration? No. You only need God's love and affection, and you already have that. Doubting that? Read Ephesians 2:4-5.

5. HOLD HIM AND YOURSELF TO GOD'S STANDARDS.

Know God's definition of "love" (1 Corinthians 13) and embody it! Don't allow unrealistic expectations and examples in the media to cloud your dating and hopefully future marriage.

6. WAIT FOR YOUR "JACOB".

Genesis 29:20 says, "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her." Would your date have this attitude? If he would laugh at the thought, maybe he doesn't have the forethought, appreciation, or maturity yet to date.



X DO NOT'S

1. DON'T DATE TO CONVERT.

Matthew 7:24-25 says, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." Becoming his foundation instead of Christ is not part of God's plan. Christ is perfect, sinless, the One Who died for our sins. We're shaky and imperfect. Christ is the solid foundation we all need.

2. DON'T DATE TO "GET TO KNOW HIM BETTER".

You don't feel the need to "date" all your other friends to get to know them better, do you? You can get to know others without the pressures and complications of dating.

3. DON'T START DATING TOO YOUNG.

Allow yourselves to mature. With dating comes responsibilities. You make your own decisions, dealing with any consequences that may arise. Have patience; give it time! Maturity isn't gained overnight.

4. DON'T DATE THINKING "HE'LL CHANGE".

While dating, people are on their "best behavior." Also, love shouldn't come with contingencies, like, "I'll love you if you..."

5. DON'T SETTLE.

Don't allow the fear of missing out, of being left behind, or of never finding "the one" to compromise your godly standards.

6. DON'T SEE DATING AS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION.

Nothing is "earned," "deserved," or "owed" physically when you go on a date, but there can be costs of other sorts. Count the cost beforehand—always! ■

A FEW MORE DO'S *by Moisés Pinedo*

Of course, as a young man, you can (and should!) use the previous list and apply it to you. Additionally, here are a few more points to consider:

- **Be a spiritual leader.** No man should wait until marriage to be a spiritual leader. You should take the lead by engaging your date into spiritual conversations, praying when you go out to eat, and helping her grow spiritually.
- **Cultivate purity and right desires.** You should protect your date's purity and yours. Avoid places and circumstances that will put both of you in the way of temptation.
- **Be serious.** You can have a good sense of humor, but you should not play with the other's feelings, flirt with other girls, or date "just for fun."
- **Listen to good advice.** Ask people you trust (an elder in the church, a preacher, your parents) about doubts you may have concerning dating. Wise people listen to godly advice.

Are you being the Christian young man that a godly young lady would want to date and hopefully marry one day? If not, start committing these lists to heart! ■



children.

The Fruit of the Spirit—Part 1: Love, Joy, Peace

by Stephanie Welch

God created plants that produce fruit on day three of creation. “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so” (Genesis 1:11). The trees God made were good. Like Adam and Eve, God gave the trees “jobs” to do: to make good fruit. Do you like to eat apples with black spots on them? It means they have insects or a disease in them. What would a farmer do with a tree that does not produce good fruit? He would probably cut it down and use it for fire-wood! That tree is not

doing the job God created it to do. Did you know that people “produce fruit,” too? People who use bad words, are selfish, lie, etc. are like sick trees full of bugs that produce rotten fruit. God created us to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). When we love and obey God, we are like strong, beautiful trees that produce delicious fruit for everyone to enjoy.

In Galatians 5:16,22-23, Paul encouraged Christians to “walk in the Spirit,”

that is, to make good choices that please the Spirit of God. Paul wanted us to be like strong trees that produce good fruit. He calls these good life choices “the fruit of the Spirit.” Paul listed nine virtues in all, and we will look at three in this article.

Love

The first virtue of the fruit of the Spirit is love. A person who pleases God will produce love. This kind of love is not like the love we have for toys, pizza, or candy. This kind of love means that we want what is best for oth-



ers—yes, even for people who are hard to love, you know, like bullies. God is our example of this kind of love. God loves people when they don't love Him back or even when they hate Him. He gives them sunshine, rain and food (Matthew 5:44-45). He wants us to love others that way. How did God show us love? That's right! He gave His only Son to die for us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9). If we love others like God loves us, we will treat everyone, even our enemies, with kindness and respect (Matthew 5:43-48).

Joy

The second virtue is joy. "Joy" can simply mean "happiness," but for someone who loves God, joy has a special meaning. We cannot be happy all the time. Sometimes we feel sad, mad, afraid, etc. Joy is unique because it can be a feeling of gladness and rejoicing even when we are sad, afraid, or discouraged. When we follow the Lord, we have joy because we have many things to be glad about. We can even feel joy when we face tempta-

tions or troubles (James 1:2). We have joy because God loves us. He listens to our prayers. We have a wonderful church family, and we have the hope of enjoying God forever in heaven.

Peace

A third virtue is peace. "Peace" is a feeling of quietness and calm. Like joy, we can have it no matter what is going on around us—even when we feel bad. The apostles Paul and Peter wanted Christians to have the peace of God, even when they were being threatened, persecuted, and taken to be killed (2 Peter 3:14; Philippians 4:7). If our faith is strong, we will produce peace and learn to feel calm and safe no matter what is happening in the world. ■



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Learning the Fruit of the Spirit

The nine virtues of the fruit of the Spirit are found in Galatians 5:22-23. Use the fruit code on the right to find out the names of the other six virtues (three have already been given in the previous article.) Place the names in the blanks.



questions.

Q&A

Q: What am I to do for my husband to feel respected?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

We show our respect to others in various ways. We listen attentively to what they say. We respect their decision even if we might not agree with it. We pray that God will guide them with wisdom to make the right choices in their life. In the husband and wife relationship, respect means that you help him be the best leader in the home he can be. You help him make decisions that impact the home in a positive way. If you disagree with him on a decision, you might let him know, with humility, love, and kindness, but you support him in the decisions that he makes. —PH

Q: How does strengthening the family contribute to church organization—with elders and deacons?

—BOCAS DEL TORO, PANAMA

Elders and deacons, obviously, must be family men (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 3:12). The family is the laboratory in which strong, faithful, dedicated Christians are developed. Bible classes are important, but those three or four hours of biblical instruction a week are not enough to offset the negative influence of Satan that hits us on a daily basis. That is why it is important for moms and dads, both Christians, to teach and train their children at home, every opportunity they have. The stronger the

families in a church, the stronger the church itself will be. —PH

Q: Proverbs 22:6 says that, if we train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it; but some children become unfaithful despite this training. Why?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

The book of Proverbs has many practical principles for life and godliness. Parents would do well in taking Proverbs 22:6 to heart and instill spiritual training for their children at an early age. However, the proverbs are to be taken as they are: short statements of general truth. These general truths have obvious possible exceptions. For example, Proverbs 28:19 says, "He who tills his land will have plenty of bread." Of course, we understand this to be a general rule—not an absolute one. Those who work usually have plenty to eat. But, due to drought, natural disaster, etc., someone who tills his land may lose his crop and not have "plenty of bread."

Proverbs 22:6, then, is the general rule for children who are spiritually nurtured by their parents, but, as the same way that there is the possibility of someone who lacks that instruction to find the right way later in life, there is also the possibility that a child can depart from his early instruction. Parents should analyze if they have made a conscious effort to educate their child in the way of the Lord. If they

did, and their child departs from the faith later in life, this knowledge can be a source of comfort while they try to bring him back to the Lord. —MP

Q: Must children leave the house when they become adults (18 years old)?

—TEXAS, U.S.

The Bible says nothing about when, or if, a child must **physically** leave his parents' house. There are some cases when a child may never leave home—for example, a child with down syndrome who re-

mains in a childhood state of mind, a handicapped child who may not be able to take care of his needs, or a child who never marries.

On the other hand, we desire for our children to be independent, and part of that is leaving home. Especially when a child gets married, it is wise advice for him to leave his parent's home to allow time, opportunity, and space for his new family to grow without the added conflict that may arise due to another family that shares the same roof. —MP

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