

ESPAÑOL
A LA ESPAÑOLA

Christian *family*

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from the editors



Family is not just a unit that works together, but it is a unit that can and should work together for God. The Jaramillo family has been doing this for 14 years, helping Hispanic works in Colombia, Argentina, and now in the U.S. As a family, they spend time helping the church and reaching the lost. As a Christian family, we should understand that our goal is not the honor of the family, but the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the aim of glorifying God as a family, this issue also offers great advice to young people to prepare for marriage, to parents to raise their children in the admonition of the Lord, to spouses to keep love in the marriage, and to every servant of God to develop godly virtues. May the Lord help us to use our families for His glory.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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What is **MOST** important? *family.*

by **Moisés Pinedo**

A day before my daughter Ella's third birthday, my wife was trying to "prepare her" for the occasion. "Ella, what is more important, presents or people?" asked my wife. With a serious look, Ella quickly answered: "Presents!" My wife decided to give it a second try. This time she thought about making Ella think a little bit more by using a person she loves a lot: "Ella, what is more important, presents or your papaw?" Ella thought for a moment and then answered: "Presents!" "Presents?!" asked my wife with surprise. Ella then said: "Yes, but Papaw can help open presents!"

When we are young, it can be difficult to assess real value, but it is sad when we become adults who still concentrate our focus on what is less important (cf. Luke 10:41-42). In relation to our families, how can we be missing the most important by focusing on the less important things of life? Here are five ways:

- 1. We focus on building a house more than building a home.** Having a house is a great blessing to our family; but the house is only the physical structure that one day will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). Instead, focus on your home—the people who are part of your family, whose souls will live forever in one of two places (Matthew 25:46).
- 2. We focus on giving wealth more than giving love, time, and communication.** If riches are uncertain (1 Timothy 6:17) and the love of it "is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10), then we should spend more time and effort on a pursuit better than wealth. Although providing the material for our family is

good and necessary (1 Timothy 5:8), it should not be a replacement for love, time, and communication.

- 3. We focus on the exterior appearance more than the interior.** Are we in competition to have the most well-dressed children? Are we constantly concerned about the latest fashion for ourselves and for our children? Are we more concerned with what is cool than what is modest (1 Timothy 2:9-10)? Are we helping our children to be dressed in white garments of holiness to walk with the Lord (cf. Revelation 3:4)?
- 4. We focus on the wisdom of man more than the wisdom of God.** How do we train our children? Have we rejected the rod of Solomon (Proverbs 13:24) and welcomed the wishy-washy advice of modern psychologists who abhor adequate corporal discipline? Do we read more books based on the wisdom of this world than the Bible for the building of our home (Psalm 127:1)?
- 5. We focus on intellect and skill more than spirituality and character.** It seems that all of us want our kids to excel at something—whether academics, sports, or music. They have to be "good at something," but spirituality is usually overlooked in this desire. We even confirm this unfortunate priority when we willingly miss a church service for an academic event, a sports game, or a music recital (cf. Matthew 6:33).

What is most important for you, for your family, and for eternity?
Answer correctly; your family is watching. ■



parenting.

by Paul Holland

The Targeted Generation: Psalm 127

Young parents or young couples who have not yet had children often ask, “How far apart should children be spaced?” At one time, my parents would have said, “About a mile and a half!” My sister and I are 13 months apart—one year, one month, two weeks, and one day to be precise. When we were little, we fought like cats and dogs. Thankfully, we grew out of that.

There is no “cookie cutter” approach to raising children. Children are so unique, so different from one another that what you do at home to raise your children and what I do at home to raise my children can be, and probably will be, very different. But there are principles in the Bible, the only real “user’s manual” for children there is, that will help us create a Christ-centered home and have a family that honors God.

First, let us take a moment to read Psalm 127. Verse 1 begins with the idea that the Lord, Jehovah God, must build the house; otherwise, it is vain to labor in building it. Verse 3 begins with the word “behold,” a word the Old Testament writers used to draw attention to something **extra** special. The psalmist said children are a “gift,” a “heritage,” of the Lord.

In a parallel thought, he said the “fruit of the womb” is a reward. Children came **from** God, and we, as parents, have the obligation to send our children **back to God**. That is the idea behind verse 4. You send them out into the world, ultimately having prepared to send them back to Jehovah God Who gave them.

Verse 5 summarizes the psalmist’s thoughts. Every child is a blessing. A man who has the proper view of children will not be ashamed when he speaks with his enemies, his adversaries, in the gate. His children have been raised properly, and they will be a blessing to their parents. If we have children simply to please ourselves, whether physically or emotionally, then we would not care much about their eternal destiny. But if we have children in order to help populate heaven, around the throne of God one day, then we will want to have a home that is built on Jesus Christ and His teachings.

How can we have a God-built home? Let me offer some suggestions that will start with those who are dating.

1. Make sure you are a strong and faithful Christian.

Make sure you are doing what you can to walk with Christ in all aspects of your life.

2. Date and marry someone who is also a strong, faithful Christian.

Look for someone who is at least as strong as you are in the faith, if not stronger. If you want God to build your home, you need to use a stone that God has placed in His spiritual temple. That temple is the church, so look for someone who is a strong member of the church of Jesus Christ.

3. Make sure, before you get married, that you share the same ideas about church, church work, how you treat children, how you discipline children, and how you will raise children.

4. When you have a baby, start raising him/her to serve Jesus Christ.

Pray at every meal and help your children pray at every meal. When they are little, their prayers will be very short and disjointed. But, help them continue growing and praying, not just at meals, but at other times in their lives as well.

5. Read to your children.

Aside from having them in church **all the time**, the one thing we did right with our girls when they were little was read to them all the time. Not only does it help develop a facility with reading and increases their vocabulary and broadens their minds as it broadens their imaginations, but reading also helps your children to learn self-control. Reading helps your children learn how to sit still and to listen. As you teach your children how to read, read the Bible with them. Make it a part of your night time ritual.

I am thankful that our brotherhood has great writers who have written lots of Bible study material that can be used at every age level to teach nearly everything that ought to be taught to children. Provide those books for your children, from early reading levels all the way up to teenage years.

6. Discipline your children.

The way you discipline your children will evolve over the years as they mature. Be patient with them and set all discipline within the context of helping them learn self-control, helping them learn how to honor Christ in their lives. When you sin against your children, apologize to them. When your children sin, forgive them. As your children get older, your relationship will slowly evolve from a parent-child relationship to a friend-friend relationship. But you cannot rush that. Too many parents today do not discipline their children because they want to be **friends** before they are their **parents**. You cannot get the cart before the horse.

7. Teach your children the basic facts about the Bible.

Teach them the divisions of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. Teach them what sin does between man and God. Teach them that Jesus came into this world to pay the penalty for sin. Teach them what they need to do to be forgiven of sins. Teach them what the church is, why it exists, and what we are to do as members of the church. One day, your heart will be filled with pride and joy when your children are baptized into Christ.

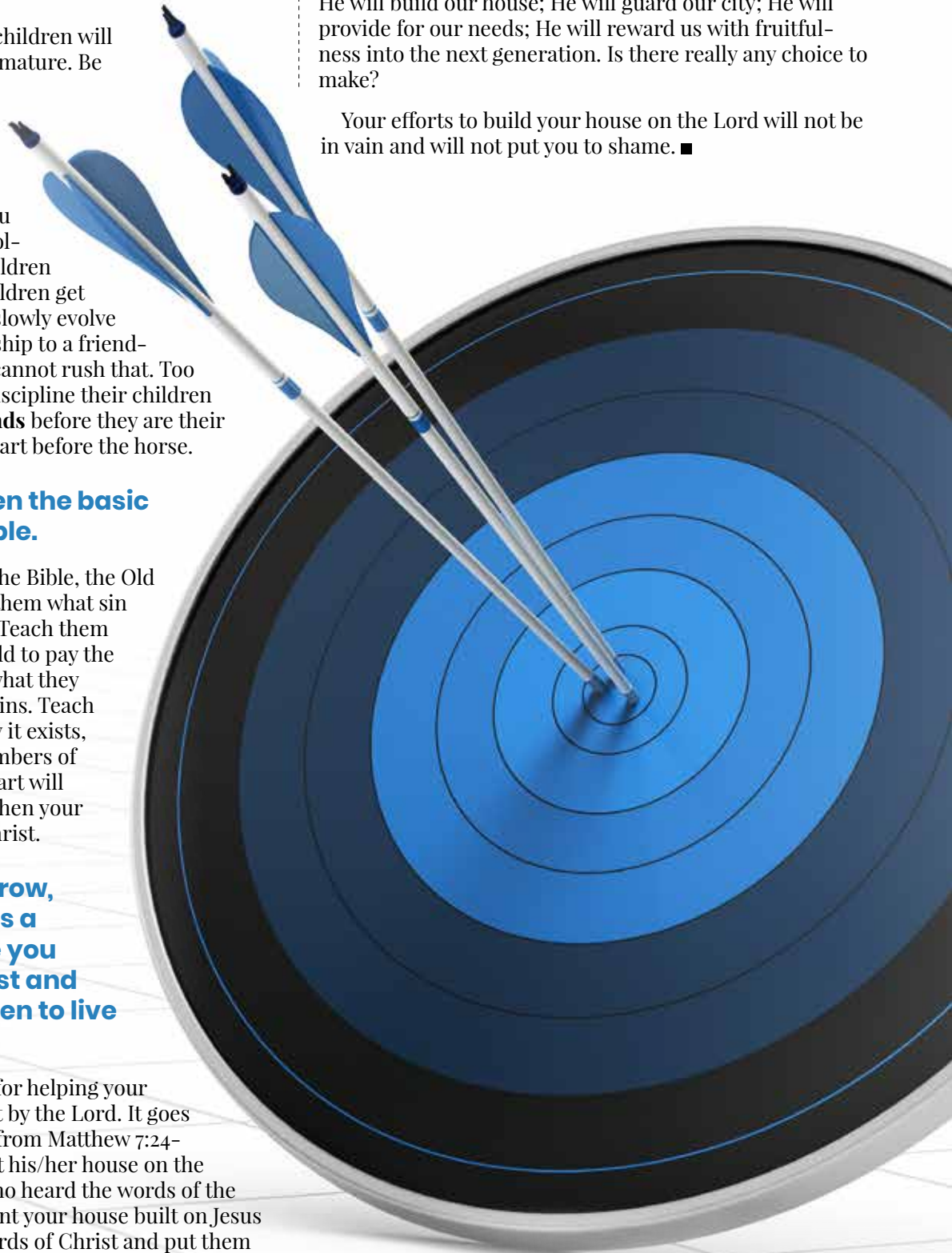
8. As your children grow, and as you grow as a parent, make sure you are living like Christ and expect your children to live like Christ.

These are some suggestions for helping your home, your family, to be built by the Lord. It goes back to that famous passage from Matthew 7:24-27. The dad or mom who built his/her house on the rock is the man or woman who heard the words of the Lord and **did them**. If you want your house built on Jesus Christ, you must hear the words of Christ and put them

into practice. The laboratory in which we all first learn how to live as Christians is in the home, whether we are children, siblings, or parents.

We can either rely on our vanity or upon God's Word. We can either fool ourselves into believing that we can control things, or we can surrender our false sense of control to the living God. If we surrender, God promises He will build our house; He will guard our city; He will provide for our needs; He will reward us with fruitfulness into the next generation. Is there really any choice to make?

Your efforts to build your house on the Lord will not be in vain and will not put you to shame. ■



marriage.

Once I heard the following phrase that caught my attention: “The flavor of love is as great as the effort to find it.” Effort is certainly needed to arrive to the peak of love. Marriage is a beautiful relationship, especially when both spouses make an effort to reach God’s ideal.

The Scriptures say: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). Let’s thank God for His great and incomparable love for humankind, for letting us come to Him through the redemptive work of His Son, and for giving us the opportunity to find salvation! Just like God demands sacrificial, sanctifying, and providing love from our husbands, He also demands us to strive to love our husbands with the same intensity and disposition.

In our roles as wives, let’s consider two aspects in the marriage.

The Concept of Love

A while back, my husband and I were counseling a young married couple. In one point of the conversation, I respectfully asked the husband, “Do you love your wife?” He answered, “I like my wife.” Then I said: “You are to love her; love implies much more than liking her.”

Many people, even in a marriage relationship, do not have a clear understanding of love. Love is more than a mere feeling. As the lyrics of a Mexican song say, “[a]ll of us know how to like someone, but few know how to love someone.”

Many marriages are based only on physical or sensual love (*eros*). This love is important but is not everything. Others get hung up on fraternal love (*philia*), but this love is not enough either. A healthy mix of the previous elements are required, balanced with spiritual or *agape* love, which strives for the wellbeing of the spouse without conditions and despite any obstacles or adversities.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul gave a summary of love. Love is sacrificial, unconditional, and selfless. We do not practice love by accident, but it requires commitment and discipline. Love is an **attitude** more than a **feeling**. Love is an **action** verb, involving the exercise of energy.

Dear sister and friend, welcome this kind of love always in your heart, so you may be able to withstand the attacks of the devil and keep the spark of marriage alive.

Keeping Love in the Marriage

by Anielka Pérez *Part 2: For Wives*

The Concept of Submission

Ephesians 5:22-24 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

The concept of submission does not have its source in human thinking; it comes from God. The Architect of marriage gave us instructions to have success in our homes. When a woman disobeys the principles in Scriptures, following her own thinking, feminist culture, or human traditions, she ignores the model and order God has established for the home.

Submission is not only a command for women, but also for all Christians. The Holy Spirit reveals the foundation of our submission in the previous verse: “submitting to one another in **the fear of God**” (Ephesians 5:21). Note that, in the same way we are to submit to our husbands according to the divine order, all of us must submit to one another—all Christians to civil government (Romans 13:1-7), the young to the elders (1 Peter 5:5), children to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3), etc. Our husbands must also submit to Christ as we read in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Submission is **not** a synonym of inferiority or dishonor. There is nothing humiliating in submitting to our husbands. In the plan of redemption, Christ Himself submitted to the Father. Likewise, the man is to submit to Christ, and the woman is to submit to the man. Each one has his/her own function and role. God, Christ, the husband, the wife—that is the divine order we are to respect.

Additionally, this passage indicates that submission to our husbands is “as to the Lord;” that is the pattern for our submission. The Lord demands and expects obedience. Of course, if our husbands ask us to do something against God’s principles, then we are to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29).

The word in the Greek text for “submit” is *hupotasso*, from *hupo* (under) and *tasso* (to arrange).¹ It describes

the attitude of someone who accepts his/her role given by God. If we want to please God, we must accept that authority in marriage has been delegated to our husbands, “[f]or the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The word “head” means “authority,” and it implies that our husbands have the authority to be leaders and overseers of the home. They are responsible before God for their families.

Lastly, consider the example of the church’s submission to the Lord: “Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:24). If the church wants to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, she must persevere in submission and obedience. There is no room for rebellion! The church joyfully follows, obeys, respects, and honors the voice of the Lord. Similarly, we are to take heed to the voice of our husbands and honor their decisions.

If our husbands have yet to learn to take on their role of leadership in marriage, we are to help them with love and patience to do so. We are to pray for them and advise them to look for help from the elders, the preacher, or a mature faithful Christian. We are not to usurp the role God has entrusted to our husbands. May the Lord guide and bless our homes. ■

1. “*Hupotasso*” (1940), *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, StudyLight, <https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/ved/s/subject-subjection.html>.



women.

I hope my children see by the way I live and where I invest my time and energy that the focus of my life is serving God.



Family First?

by Shelley Hazel

When it comes to winning souls for Christ, my family has to come first. That sounds good, doesn't it? I've heard it said many times; I've probably said something similar myself. The thought is that our children are our primary spiritual responsibility (Deuteronomy 6:7), and any other souls we win for Christ are just gravy, I guess. I understand the sentiment. Really, I do. I would be devastated if either one of my children was lost, but can we just pause for a minute and think about what we are saying? I've heard so many preacher's wives, again including myself, express something to the effect that the worst thing they can imagine is spending their whole lives teaching others about Christ yet lose their own children to the world. Is that truly the worst? What about losing your own soul as well? What about never reaching any souls for Him? Are we saying we're fine with anyone else spending eternity in hell as long as it's not our babies? Sadly, sometimes we as preachers' families can use the fear of losing our children as an excuse not to evangelize to others.

The inconvenient truth is that Christ came to "separate" us. In Matthew 10:35, Jesus says, "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'" He goes on in verse 37 to say that "[h]e who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of me." I'm not saying that He wants our children to be lost or for us to be eternally separated, but the very nature of His teaching forces us all to make a choice—to follow Him or follow the world (Matthew 6:24). What a frightening thought when it comes to our children making choices for themselves! This world is scary, and often times I am tempted to circle up the wagons and protect my own. In the long run, I know that will never work. A faith that doesn't act is dead (James 2:14-26). That's not the kind of faith I hope to impart to my children. I don't want to be like Pam!

Pam is a character in C.S. Lewis's novel, *The Great Divorce*, who loved her son too much. He became her idol. In truth, her love was selfishness in disguise because she said she would rather have him lost with her than be separated at all. May it never be for me! I want to teach my children an active faith, so I encourage them to study, challenge them to grow spiritually, and give them every opportunity I possibly can while they are in my home to

strengthen their faith in God. Along the way, I try to be an example by living my faith daily. In so doing, I spend much time not **on** them but **with** them serving God, serving others, and studying God's Word with the lost. Often times, they watch from the distance. They have to busy themselves quietly with other activities while my focus is on someone else. Through this, I hope they are learning that they are **not** the focus of my life. Hear me: their souls are **not** the focus of my life, although they are **very** important to me. No, I hope my children see by the way I live and where I invest my time and energy that the focus of my life is **serving God**. I hope and pray that, somehow, they can learn from my small, pitiful reflection of Christ that a life spent in His service is the best life a parent can give to their children. I pray that they might carry that on in their homes when they leave my authority. But if they don't, I know that it will be in spite of my best effort and greatest desire.

On Judgement Day, each of us will answer for our own lives (2 Corinthians 5:10). Our children will not be credited with our sins nor our righteousness (Ezekiel 18:19-20). I cannot change the eternal destiny of my children one bit no matter the number of hours and amount of energy I pour into them. I can influence them through my teaching and my example. I can use my time and energy wisely on every willing soul with whom I come in contact. I can show my children that my goal is to go to heaven and take as many people with me as I can. I can exhort them to join me and teach them how to put people first daily, even when that means putting family second sometimes. I can show them something better and pray that they will accept it, but I cannot choose God for them. Maybe I'm idealistic, but I want it all. I want to help save all the lost of the world, and that includes my family whether they obey first, last, or somewhere in between.

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featured.

the Jaramillos

...are a family of five: Daniel and Tatiana, and their three children, Juan (14), Lucy (11), and Dylan (9). Daniel and Tatiana are Colombians, but all of their children are Argentineans (due to their ministry in that country.) Daniel and Tatiana grew up and met in Colombia, where they got married and worked with the church for several years. Then the ministry took them to Argentina. Currently, they work with their family in a Hispanic ministry in Galena Park, Texas.

How would you briefly describe each member of your family?

Daniel is humble, affectionate, pleasant, responsible, and uncompromising. **Tatiana** is loving, sweet, tender, attentive, patient, and a hard worker. **Juan** is intelligent, serious, responsible, a protector, and humble. **Lucy** is creative, confident, intelligent, sociable, and affectionate. **Dylan** is happy, active, sensitive, pleasant, and helpful.

How long have you been working in a Hispanic ministry, and where do you currently work?

Daniel has been involved in the Hispanic ministry for 22 years. We have been working together for 14 years. For the last six years we have been working with the Hispanic church of Christ in Galena Park, Texas.

How is it different working in a Hispanic ministry in the U.S. than overseas?

In general, we have seen over the years that the Hispanics who live in this great country are very busy with their jobs and travel long distances to go from place to place, including to attend church services. Another difference is that many of them have come with the purpose of having financial stability, and then it becomes harder to propose spiritual stability to them as their main pursuit. Our opinion is that the great difference is the adaptation of the Hispanics to the American culture, with all its conveniences, possessions, hustle, and language. On the other hand, we have also seen that they greatly contribute financially to Hispanic works in other countries.

What are some of the challenges you face as a family in this work?

Hispanic ministries in the U.S. are relatively young, so one challenge relates to the lack of Christian friends in school or the brotherhood. Saying “no” to the many social and sports



activities on Sundays, and sometimes on Saturdays due to the church's activities, can be disappointing to the children as they learn to develop their character.

Additionally, since we are one of the few families in the front lines of this ministry, we are always under the spotlight. Our children can feel the weight of our responsibility in this regard, and sometimes it can be difficult to have a balance on what to do or not to do, especially in relation to our children.

How do you involve all the family members in this work?

We all go together to Bible studies and visiting at homes and hospitals, as well as evangelistic efforts. We support and help all church activities. We use our Bible family times during the week to teach our children to behave properly in each activity, as well as to learn how to share the Gospel in school, always being good examples.

What is some advice you would give American congregations wanting to start a Hispanic ministry?

When the Jewish church at Jerusalem learned about the birth and growth of the Gentile church in Antioch (Acts 11:22-26), they sent Barnabas, a competent person, to encourage the brethren. Then Barnabas found Paul, and they helped the church in that place, and the group of believers were called Christians for the very first time in Antioch.

As our brethren did in the first century, we are to pray for the Lord's work in every place, and this includes the Hispanic work in this country of more than 50 million Hispanics. We are to help Hispanic ministries with evangelistic efforts, personally, and through the internet. We are to be patient with Hispanic ministries since the way Hispanics think and grow is different. We are not to grow weary when we do not see the expected fruit, "knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). God will reward every effort in His work. ■

Blessings of working as a FAMILY in a Hispanic ministry

There are many blessings in the Hispanic work. Among them:



Our children have been blessed with a home greatly involved in the knowledge and teaching of Jesus and His Gospel.



Our family has been blessed by witnessing the conversion of many people to the Gospel of Christ.



Our family has been blessed with the opportunity to help in the physical and spiritual needs of many people.



Girls, prepare today for **TOMORROW** by Madison Darby

Who is your favorite author? Jane Austen has always been high on my list, but this tends to be a tough question for me, and it gets harder every day. I'm a book editor, so I get the privilege of exploring fantastic stories of adventure, love, glory, and drama and meeting the authors responsible.

Every morning, I sit down and prepare for the new world I'll enter that day; there's no adventure quite as breathtaking as the one we're in right now: life. It holds so many twists and turns, more events than any author could ever pen. Yet, despite all that is in store for us, the future can still be intimidating. The only way we can lessen our fears is by **preparing** today for what tomorrow may hold.

Let's use Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* to consider how we can better prepare for tomorrow.

"Know your own happiness. You want nothing but patience—or give it a more fascinating name, call it hope."

What is it that you want to **be**, that you want to **do**? Where do you see yourself in five years? These are questions we constantly ask ourselves, and we should spend a lot of time making sure we fully contemplate the answers. Right now, I want you to grab a piece of paper and answer these questions. Scribble down every desire of your heart, every goal, and every hope. Spare nothing.

How can you prepare for the future unless you first have a goal in mind? Jesus mentioned this in Luke 14:28, when He reminded us how foolish it was to undergo a task without "counting the cost." Have an end game in mind, and present that to God. Let Him know of your goals so you can work together to make those dreams come true.

"I will be calm. I will be mistress of myself."

Once we have goals in mind, we must make sure we're not derailed by stress and worry. It's so easy to survey the landscape of your life and get lost in the fear of all that could go wrong. God spends a lot of time discussing worry in the Bible because He knows we'll struggle with it. Jesus commanded us, "do not worry about your life" and "do not worry about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:25,34). This may seem difficult, but the reality is that God is going to be there tomorrow. No matter what happens, we can rest assured that God will be waiting for us when the sun rises and sets.

"I come here with no expectations, only to profess, now that I am at liberty to do so, that my heart is and always will be...yours."

Once we've set a vision and banished our anxiety, it's important we put one person first: God. Whatever else may come, He is our one and only, and our whole view of tomorrow must be built on our fervent desire to love Him more. Some of us will be wives, mothers, business women, CEOs—but the most important role we'll ever play is as servants of God. Throughout the Bible, we see powerful women who had important roles in the kingdom of God. Mary Magdalene was the first to report the resurrection (John 20:18), Junia had the respect of the apostles (Romans 16:7), and Priscilla had the church meet in her home (1 Corinthians 16:19). What is it that **you** will bring Him in your service?

If we root ourselves in the love we have for God, prepare for what the future may hold, and focus our lives on the service of His kingdom, the future becomes full of joy, not fear. With this mindset, we'll use our jobs to glorify God, find men who strengthen us spiritually, raise children who love God, and accomplish much for the kingdom.

Are you ready for all that God will do in you? ■

Guys, what are your

by Bishop Darby

PLANS?

There is something vaguely eerie about the future. I think it's because the future combines many fears into one. We fear it like we fear the dark because we don't know what moves in it. We fear it like we fear a fierce animal because of the harm it could cause us. We fear it like we fear a thunderstorm because of how it makes us feel powerless. But what if I told you this isn't what God intends for His people?

As guys, there are many things that weigh on us as we consider all that may come to pass. We want to have wives, kids, families, but that leaves us with lots to think about! How can we ever be ready? Thankfully, there are some simple things God tells us that can help us look to the future with excitement!

First, we must start with humility.

Guys, let's be honest, we all struggle with pride. It's the part of us that desires to feel in control of things. But when it comes to the future, we need to trust in God to shape it best. Whenever we start planning for the future, we should start by giving our wills to God. Even Jesus Christ did this in Matthew 26:39, as He was willing to hand over the unknown to God and let Him control it.

Second, we need to realize the power prayer has to shape our futures.

God isn't some tyrant who holds you pinned to some prewritten story of your life; rather, He's a God Who is writing the story with you now. He gives you a voice in the things that will come to pass and wants you to have a voice in what your future may hold. Spend time every day praying to God and giving Him your requests, vision, and hopes. Talk to Him, and He will listen.

It was through prayer that Moses was able to accomplish incredible feats (Exodus 32; Numbers 11), Samuel saved a nation (1 Samuel 12,15), and Amos helped design the future of Israel (Amos 7). What can your prayers do? They all prayed with a vision in mind, and God used it to help shape the events. Take time today, even right now, and write down all you want to accomplish, all that you dream. Let God be a part of your vision and aspirations.

Third, we shouldn't stress over what we can't control but focus on what we can.

Preparation is key for what comes tomorrow. Consider the story of Jesus and the five thousand. In this story, Jesus and His apostles were faced with a seemingly impossible situation—thousands of starving people and no food. You can only imagine the ridiculous looks that were given when Andrew walked up to Jesus and handed Him a couple of pieces of bread and a fish relish (John 6:9). But that was what Jesus needed to satisfy everyone there.

Make choices like Andrew. Bring all you can to God and let Him work wonders through it. Save your money, acquire knowledge, and prepare all you can. Someday, you might find yourself in a similar situation as Andrew... What will you give Jesus?

As we prepare for the future, let's be sure we're willing to follow God **His** way. Let's create a vision and goal and bring them to our ever-listening Father. Let's bring Him everything we can and stand back to let Him work. And above all else, let's keep our eyes and dreams fixated on Jesus. ■



children.

The Fruit of the Spirit—Part 2: Patience, Kindness, Goodness

by Stephanie Welch

Some fruits, like apples and pears, build strong, healthy bodies. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” (Galatians 5:22-23). These “spiritual fruits” don’t have peels, seeds, or juicy centers, but they’re like “gifts” God gives us that help us serve Him and serve others. Natural fruits grow from plants that are healthy and strong. When we read our Bibles, worship with our families, talk with friends about Jesus, etc., we are like tall, strong spiritual trees that grow good fruit for the Lord.

Longsuffering

Let’s begin with the fourth virtue of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22: longsuffering. Another word for longsuffering is patience. When we love God, we will learn to be patient. Being patient is hard! We don’t like to wait, do we? Patience is learning to wait quietly, calmly without complaining or becoming upset. God wants us to be patient when we are having troubles like sickness or tempta-

tion. He wants us to be patient with our friends and families and even with people who don’t like us. God is patient with us. He knows we make mistakes, but He loves and forgives us anyway. Let’s learn to quietly and calmly wait for the Lord’s help and to be patient with others when they make mistakes.

Kindness and Goodness

The next two virtues in Galatians 5:22 are kindness and goodness. These two have meanings that are almost



the same. We can think of kindness as an attitude, a way of thinking and feeling about others in a caring way. A kind person is gentle, real, not fake, helpful, encouraging, and always looking for ways to help someone. When we're kind, we'll try not to grumble or complain; we'll smile more often. We won't brag about things we have or things we do, but we'll be willing to share with others. When we're kind, we'll want to cry with those who are sad and laugh with those who are happy.

We'll be glad when good things happen to others instead of feeling angry or jealous, and we'll want to treat everyone as a friend. God is so kind-hearted, and we can be more like Him when we learn to be kind, too.

The virtue of kindness (that feeling of love and care for others) can help us learn about the virtue of goodness. Goodness simply means doing what is right, doing what is good. Psalms 34:8 says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Our God is so good to us! We can be like Him when we simply do what is right, when we do good. We show goodness when we tell the truth, visit the sick, help widows and orphans, read our Bibles, have family devotionals, pray for missionaries, and do chores without

being asked; the list of good deeds goes on and on.

Let's see if we can understand these "spiritual fruits" another way. Imagine you're hungry; no, you're starving! You rush to the kitchen to grab the first thing you can find. Your mother stops you, and with a smile says, "Be patient. Wait just a minute. I'm making something for you." You can't wait. You're hungry now! However, you want to obey your mother, so you wait patiently. Soon she pulls a tray of cookies out of the oven. They're homemade, warm, gooey, and oh-so good! You can't wait to grab one, but you remember to be kind-hearted, and thinking about someone else, you do a good deed as you tell your little brother you have cookies to share with him. That is patience, kindness, and goodness! ■

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Fruits in the Bible

The Bible speaks about several kinds of fruits. Use the fruit code on the right to find out the names of those fruits. Place the names in the blanks. (Below are the Bible references where these fruits are found.)



Answers: Song of Solomon 2:5; Jeremiah 24:3; Numbers 17:8; Exodus 27:20; Isaiah 5:2.

questions.

Q&A

Q: Is the wife to submit to her husband or to her mother? —ZARAGOZA, SPAIN

It can be difficult for parents to allow their grown children to make their own decisions. It can be especially challenging for moms to allow their daughters to put their husbands before the parents. But, we should gently remind parents that married children are to put their spouse first (Genesis 2:24). If someone has a mom who is finding it hard to “let go,” you might acknowledge the ideas your mom shares, even thanking her for showing interest, and then gently respond that you and your husband will make the decision together in the best interest of your relationship and family. —PH

Q: How can we deal with our children when they are teens?

—LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Teenage years are challenging years. Children are moving from dependency and child-like tendencies to finding their own identity and having freedom to make their own decisions. If you have raised them in a Christian home, it will be much easier. Be patient as they learn the importance of freedom. Establish rules and enforce the rules but make sure the rules are appropriate for teenagers. Keep your communication open, honest, respectful, and Christian. When your teen proves responsible in minor decisions, give them

increasingly greater responsibilities as well as freedoms to make their own decisions. Finally, pray daily and often for yourself and for them. —PH

Q: How can I deal with the fact of being a single mother?

—CARABOBO, VENEZUELA

To adequately deal with your situation, you may need to ask yourself a few questions. Is what you are going through due to past sin and present guilt? God’s ideal is to bring children in a home where a man and a woman have committed their lives together in holy matrimony (cf. Hebrews 13:4). If wrong choices have caused you to have a child or children out of wedlock but you have repented and left any illicit relationships in the past and are striving to be faithful to God, then believe that God has forgiven you and that, whatever happened in the past, does not mean your family is doomed to failure.

Are you a single mother because your husband has passed away and you have given in to depression? It is okay to mourn our loved ones (cf. Genesis 23:2), but life has to go on because we live for Christ (Romans 14:8). Your children need you, your church family needs you, and the Lord’s help is still available as much as it was when your husband was with you.

Is what you are going through due to discipline and training

difficulties with your children? Consider that the same manual for the family (the Bible) is available to every Christian parent. Open the Bible daily to learn its wisdom for raising your children; read it, memorize it, live it, and teach it (Deuteronomy 6)! You will have to muster a strong character so your children will obey and respect you. You will have to be open to look and receive help from others (family and church members) since you will also have to provide for your own family. You may need to

look for sound and spiritual advice from an elder in the congregation to help you with discipline issues.

Finally, being a single mother can make you feel pressured to rush into a new relationship to find the support you need in raising your children. Do not succumb to a relationship that is not healthy and holy; consider marriage with the reverence it deserves. Whether you get married in the future or decide to remain single, determine to always glorify God with your life and family (1 Corinthians 7). —MP

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