

A bilingual magazine for Christian families | Vol 4, No 2 • Summer 2019

# Christian *family*

ESPAÑOL  
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*Special  
Issue*

why GOD hates

Di   rce

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## from the editors



Divorce is a temptation for many couples when life pulls them apart, but it is important to understand how God feels about divorce. He says through Malachi, "I hate divorce" (cf. 2:16). But why would a loving God hate anything? Take a few minutes to read some of the reasons in the featured article of this issue.

The relationship between women and their daughters-in-law can be challenging and we offer an article in that area. Fathers carry a tremendous load of responsibility and opportunity to guide their daughters' future in making wise decisions. Finally, on the lighter side, we offer a challenge to all family members to accept the weight of responsibility in using their talents for the glory of God as we serve in and through His church.

May God bless you and your family.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

## Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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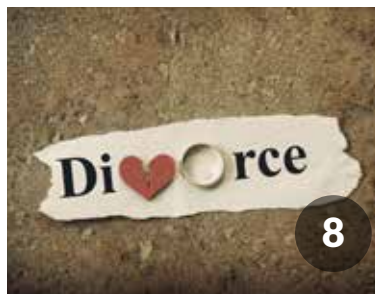
Editors: Paul Holland • Moisés Pinedo

Design and Presentation: Moisés Pinedo

Contact: editorial@ebglobal.org

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# Daughters-in-law: a relationship like no other

# family.

by Kevin & Lyn Williams

*In* Ruth 1:13-15, Naomi's husband and both of her sons died while they were in Moab. Naomi decided to go back home to the land of Judah. She encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their families and be provided for. Orpah kissed her and returned home, but Ruth clung to her in determination to go with her to Judah. Naomi and Ruth must have had a wonderful relationship for Ruth to give up her family in Moab to follow her!

Later in the events that followed, both Naomi and Ruth were provided for by a close kinsman, Boaz. Following the birth of Boaz's and Ruth's son, the women of Judah described Naomi's daughter-in-law (Ruth) as being one "who is better to you than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15). Has there ever been a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship described any better? That being said, let us consider "daughters-in-law" and note some things that we can do to help us have good relationships with these wonderful additions to our families.

As the title of this article suggests, daughters-in-law provide us with a relationship that truly is like no other

relationship that we will have in this world. They are not born into our families, nor did we raise them, yet they are still just as much a part of our families as our sons. They will be present in our homes for family meals, gather with us during holidays throughout the year, and be a part of the happiness and heartaches that we experience as a family. How can we truly have tremendously good relationships with those special women who become our relatives through marriage to our sons?

Some people may see their daughters-in-law as special friends that have become an integral part of their families and their lives. While that can certainly be true, we need to remember that these special additions to our families are exactly that: they are family, and not anything less than that! As such, we should treat them with the same love and respect with which we treat our sons who married them. Whether we are the father-in-law or the mother-in-law, we must remember that we are **not** her parents and we should not try to take the place of her parents.

Consider some other thoughts about our relationships with our daughters-in-law. While we do not want to avoid giving advice at times in life when they might need it, we must **not** give unwelcome advice. And, then, give the advice simply as a suggestion and not as a demand. Also, when listening to them, it would be helpful to make sure that we do not overreact. Furthermore, it is imperative that we do not criticize them. That could be taken personally and may only establish a pattern of rivalry.

In all our interactions with them, we need to be patient with any immaturity that they might show. That will go a long way in their establishing confidence in us. In conclusion, we should always pray for us to have the wisdom we need to maintain a correct relationship with them. There really is nothing difficult about it—if we remember the Golden Rule and treat them the way that we would want to be treated if we were in their shoes. ■



# parenting.

## DAD—Filling a daughter's need

by Dennis Pierce

**D**addy's girl has never been more in need of guidance than she is today. From the centuries-old temptation toward vanity to the modern access of information on the internet, she will need a father's perspective, love and discipline. No two girls are the same, and no one glove fits all in the nurturing business. However, there are fundamental principles that are necessary, not only for the positive future of your daughter, but also for a healthy father and daughter relationship.

My background does not include the training of a son, but I can speak from the position of a father with two Christian daughters now parenting their own children. Yet, looking back on years gone by often reveals as many mistakes made as it does good actions taken. Therefore, the best course to follow is found in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." It is a long journey from "Daddy" to "Granddaddy." It will not be easy, but when you are older in years and see your daughters training your grandchildren in the "admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) and you still hear, "I love you, Daddy," it will be worth every tear and sacrifice.

The endeavor starts with you, the father. Let that sink in! Being a father to a son or daughter means responsibility, accountability, maturity, stability, and a moral obligation because children are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). A father cannot pass the training of a daughter to someone else. This is not an option. You are the **one**. Unless responsibility is fully accepted, you will do a poor job. We are not overlooking mothers here. How could we, when talking about raising daughters? But these thoughts are for you, Dad.

How do you see your daughter when she is a grown woman? Her little hand is in yours now, but someday it will be in another man's hand. Surely you want that to be someone who will love her as much as you do. Someone has said, "Fathers, be your daughter's first love and she will never settle for anything less." Another has said, "A daughter needs a dad to be the standard against which she will judge all men." Telling her you love her is very important but not nearly enough. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Show your daughter you love her, and she will be able to identify love when she sees it.

Show her your faith. If you are someone who loves God, this goes without saying. Some parents think they can point their children in a direction for their lives that they themselves do not follow. Your daughter is smart and will soon see if you have a strong faith in God or not. You worship God because you love God first, and she will

know and respect that about you. James 2:18 says, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Paul wrote about the responsibility of older men, older women, young women, and young men in Titus 2 and emphasized in verses 7-8, "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you." Sitting beside you in worship services, hearing you singing and praying to God, and watching your kindness and good works toward others will be forever embedded in your daughter's mind.

Discipline is one of the most difficult responsibilities a father will face with his daughter but also one that will bring great rewards. "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). It will certainly be more painful for you than her; just stay focused on the fruit of righteousness. Her future path in life may be determined by how you administer discipline. Always be sure love is your motivation. The instruction for elders found in 1 Peter 5:3 would be good to remember, "nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." A firm but gentle hand will serve you well. Colossians 3:21 puts it this way, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." The words and tone of voice you choose can go a long way in helping her understand the reason for your decisions. "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). Always pray for God's help when exercising discipline.

Any and all instructions you can apply from God's Word will always be the best course of action. However, there are things that might not be specifically addressed by a Bible verse that you should consider. The Bible says in Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." Be devoted to show your daughter the joyful things in life. There are so many things you can do to make this happen, but it will require your time. There are no shortcuts to take and no excuses can be accepted. These are the memory making activities that will help her see the Christian life as one of joy.

Reading at a very young age is one of the best ways to spend time together and also have fun doing it. Definitely read Bible stories but also other stories as well and be enthusiastic about it! She may laugh at the way you say or emphasize things, but she will also love you for it. Do not miss this opportunity, not even for your favorite

ballgame on television. Cook a meal together and wash the dishes without the dishwasher. If she breaks something, it will be okay.

Take trips to the park, sing songs on the way, and ride the swings together. Make a day to just go bike riding all over town and then enjoy ice cream; and one other thing, girls can fish, too! It is not about what you do but about time together. It really is that simple.

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Let her see joy in your life. This life can be filled with heartache, and she may even experience it at a young age, but help her see that true joy and happiness comes from Christ.


Your daughter will need your support throughout her life. Always be there for her, listen to her and remember that, as she grows older, you will be required to let her make her own decisions. Trust in God that her faith will guide her, and know that you did your best. You only get one chance at this. ■



# women.

## THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY

by Megan LeBlanc



**ON** my 28<sup>th</sup> birthday I decided to complete 28 acts of kindness, and I am ecstatic that I surpassed my goal! With the help of my family and friends, I organized, planned, made phone calls, sent e-mails, researched, scheduled, and gathered supplies as well as donations for the big day. Some things were small and simple like signing up to be an organ donor while others took some organizing like collecting children's books for a local library.

I had completed these deeds with a goal of just general kindness in mind, but then a realization dawned. Here I was patting myself on the back when I witnessed my hypocrisy; if I can get out, speak to people, and serve them as I did on my birthday, why couldn't I do that year round?

This rewarding day of kindness proved that I had some God-given talents. So how could I use these abilities for God? Jesus set the example in John 13 when He washed His disciples' feet. I took stock of myself. I am physically, mentally, emotionally capable of working for God. What is the hold up?

I have the ability to prepare for and plan out events like how I had planned for my birthday. That means no more sitting on my hands when volunteers and organizers are needed for prayer breakfasts and Vacation Bible School. We can take the example from Samuel's eager spirit in 1 Samuel 3, "Here I am!"

I have the courage to get up and talk to strangers. Goodbye to the days that I would hide from visitors or new faces. I should be getting out and meeting others, not racing out after worship service lets out (Hebrews 10:24-25).

I had sent postcards to old friends, the sick, and those in need of some encouragement. Why couldn't I make and carry a few cards with me to write during unexpected moments of opportunity, encouraging those in need of some uplifting?

After collecting donations for various charities, what is stopping me from being in charge of donation collection for the numerous different events at church? What keeps me from channeling these amazing blessings in order to further the kingdom of God?

*So here I am calling myself out.  
I feel the weight of responsibility  
upon me. I have been brought face  
to face with the abilities I have been  
blessed with and the numerous  
opportunities to use them for God.  
So, what is stopping me?*

From my birthday I saw I had a knack for smart shopping, collecting coupons and stretching my money to make sure my goal was met. Why couldn't I harvest that savvy to buy some extra food each week with my groceries to donate to the church's food bank?

I had crocheted scarves to donate to homeless shelters. Couldn't I use that skill to make blankets with our quilting group at church that are donated to people in need?

I absolutely enjoyed baking for my local police department; why couldn't I volunteer to bake cookies for VBS or to make food for a potluck? I could prepare a meal or even offer child care or home cleaning for those dealing with something particularly debilitating or life-changing like a death in the family or sickness.

I showed courage and leadership when I brought together a small group of brothers and sisters in Christ to an assisted living home, singing hymns and visiting with them. What excuse do I have now for not stepping up when someone is needed to lead singing for a ladies' retreat? Couldn't I use my ability to motivate people to work together for the Lord?

I am extremely blessed to attend a congregation that has many resources and programs available. If there are not programs like that in your area, perhaps you can look into charities nearby and see how you could assist them reach their goals, recruiting help, and spreading the light and the Word of Christ to others. The simplest way to figure out a way to help would be to take a look and see the needs of those around you. Identify who needs help, in what ways they need help, and finally how you can help. See the need around you and fill it as you are able. It does not have to be big or extravagant or even public! You do not have to be in the spotlight for every activity and in every way possible. First Corinthians 12:15-26 says that not everyone is going to have the same function in the church, just as a body is not all made up of eyes or hands, but we

are all necessary. Verse 27 summarizes by saying, "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." Do not think that because you do not do the more obvious tasks in a church, like preach or lead prayer or song, that you cannot do anything at all. You are still loved and useful to God. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that God has a plan for us, one of hope!

So why don't we get out and follow the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, which tells us, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"? One simple reason: FEAR. Fear is nothing but False Evidence Appearing Real. We fear condemnation, being laughed at, not being good enough, failure, being an outcast, and more. Remember that fear is just lies that Satan feeds us. When doubting your abilities, remember that you serve an omnipotent God Who reigns over all. God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called! Do not let Satan convince you of lies. He may say things like, "You are not good enough," or "You have nothing to give," or "Nobody needs or wants anything from you," or the ever popular, "You do not have time for it. Just put it off till later!" We cannot allow Satan to extinguish our fire for God or to lull us into complacency. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The greatest gift of all is bringing a lost soul to Christ, and our eyes must be set on the eternal outcome in order to cross our boundaries of fear. Do we have excuses like Moses did when he was scared to go before Pharaoh in Exodus 3-4? Moses struggled with many of the same doubts and insecurities we have today, but he still went on to accomplish great things for God, and so can we.

Lastly, but definitely not least, pray. Praying does not cost a thing, and is something everyone can do, regardless of talent or ability. James 5:16 tells us that the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Do not underestimate the power of talking to God and giving up our worries to Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

So here I am calling myself out. I feel the weight of responsibility upon me. I have been brought face to face with the abilities I have been blessed with and the numerous opportunities to use them for God. So, what is stopping me? And what is stopping you? Take some time to count your blessings and see how God can use you and your talents. Look forward to hearing those words from Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."

# featured.

## Why God HATES Divorce

by Josh Allen

God's plan for the home is not being upheld in America. Divorce has permeated our society. It has been aptly observed that it used to be the case in America where parents had many children but now it is the case where children have many parents.<sup>1</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if this is an average year, there will be somewhere between 800,000 to 900,000 divorces that take place.<sup>2</sup> How does God feel about this view of divorce? To answer this question, let us look to the book of Malachi.

Malachi prophesied during a difficult time. One does not have to go far into the book to discover that there were some abominable practices happening in Israel at this time. Malachi 1:6-14 reveals that their worship was corrupt. They profaned their worship by offering the lame, sick, and blind as sacrifices while keeping the best for themselves. They gave God their leftovers. As one preacher put it, "[l]ike a dog, they gave God their scraps,"<sup>3</sup> and it was abominable in God's eyes. Five times He referred to what they were doing as treacherous acts.

It was not only their worship that was corrupt, but also their marriages. There are two charges He brings before them:

First, they had married foreign wives, which the Law expressly forbid (Malachi

2:11-12, cf. Deuteronomy 7:3). Second, they were divorcing their wives for no cause—possibly even divorcing their Jewish wives in order to marry pagan women (2:13-16).

Malachi plainly tells the people how God felt about divorce. He declared, "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce" (2:16). Notice the strong language. It does not say that He is uncomfortable with divorce or simply dislikes divorce. No, God **hates** divorce.

It might sound odd thinking of God hating anything; after all, the Bible teaches that God is love (1 John 4:8). But the Bible also teaches that there are things He despises. The wise man made a list of things that are an abomination to Him:

*These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19).*

A woman who had recently been divorced once read this passage and proclaimed, "That described my marriage!" As one studies Malachi to discover why God hates divorce, a parallel to the thoughts of Proverbs six can be seen. Divorce often touches upon the themes in this list. **So, why does God hate divorce?**

**Malachi reveals that God hates divorce because it is contrary to His original plan.**

Ten times in the book of Malachi, God makes the comment, "You say." This phrase should be seen as in contrast to the phrase "Thus says the Lord." This reveals the root of their problems. In worship and in their homes, they thought only of themselves.



In the wise man's list of the things God hates, "a proud look" is mentioned first (Proverbs 6:17). Divorce comes about by selfishness. Many marriages fail because both parties have acted selfishly. In other marriages, one spouse has given his/her all in order to save the marriage only to see his/her work ultimately fail because of the selfishness of the other spouse. In Malachi, the homes of Israel had been broken apart because of selfish actions.

This was not according to God's plans but man's wicked imaginations. Proverbs 6:18 reveals that the Lord hates "a heart that devises wicked plans." The phrase "wife of your youth" (2:14) may hold the clue as to the motive behind these divorces. It seems many were trading in their older wives for younger ones. Certainly, this was not part of God's plan!

God's original blueprint for the home never included divorce. This is what Jesus stressed when the Pharisees came asking Him about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:4-9. Note the brevity of Jesus' answer. He bypassed the Law of Moses and went straight back to God's original intent for all marriages. Divorce is permitted for one reason: sexual immorality. In Malachi's day (and today), divorce for any reasons was common practice, "but from the beginning it was not so" (vs. 8). God hates divorce because it is contrary to His plan.

### Malachi reveals that God hates divorce because it violates the marriage covenant.

Malachi said "...she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (2:14). It should be noted that, even though these men had divorced these women, God still considered them to be their wives. Divorce had not changed that fact.

Marriage is much more than just an agreement between two people. It is a covenant made not only with one another but with God. When these men decided to break their vows, "not only was the innocent person a victim of this breach of faith, but God also [was] a victim."

Malachi 2:15 begins by asking a question, "But did He not make them one...?" Marriage is more than signing names to a legal document. The husband and wife enter into a covenant which is to be dissolved only by death (Ro-

mans 7:1-3). This used to be acknowledged by all. Wedding vows once read, "till death do us part," but many have changed these vows to, "for as long as our love shall last." People can change the words, but it does not change God's design and intent for marriage.

Malachi 2:14 declares that "the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth." This reminds us that God sees all. He hears the promises made to one another. He hears our vows, especially the marriage vow. One author has said, "God does not consider marriage vows to simply be heartfelt sentiments. He sees them as sober-minded commitments."<sup>5</sup>

The vows and promises that we make are taken seriously by God (Ecclesiastes 5:2,4-5; Matthew 5:37). This is especially true concerning the marriage vow. One of the reasons that the Lord hates divorce is because He hates "a false witness who speaks lies" (Proverbs 6:19). If divorce takes place, then one or both have broken their vow. Divorce involves broken promises, covenants, and vows before God.

### Malachi reveals that God hates divorce because it is a violent and destructive act.

Malachi upholds the idea that, in marriage, God takes two and makes them one (Malachi 2:15). This oneness is illustrated throughout the Bible with the description of "one flesh" (e.g., Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31). Sometimes people limit this to a merely physical explanation. I remember hearing a teacher say that this was a reference to the sexual relationship. However, Malachi affirms that it is something more. He shows it is a work of God ("He" makes them one, vs. 15). That is significant. In marriage, man and woman are brought together/united/joined by God.

To separate this one flesh by divorce is to do violence. Sometimes people like to think of divorce as quick and painless, but make no mistake, divorce is destruction by violence. That is why Malachi 2:16 says,

*"For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."*

To tear apart that "one flesh" leaves no less carnage than the destruction of its physical counterpart (Ephesians 5:29-30). The only difference is that you do not see it as easily. It leaves wounds unseen yet profound.

Divorce has been described as "a death that is never complete."<sup>6</sup> One woman who was going through a divorce, said, "I feel as though someone has died, but I am not sure



who it was.” Many papers have been written testifying to the fact that divorced people often go through stages similar to those experienced by individuals who have lost loved ones to death.

Charles Hodge observed,

*God hates divorce. Terse language is in Malachi 2:16. Men hate remarriage; God hates divorce. Divorce is worse than death... Divorce destroys persons, children, and families. Divorce traumatizes. The two who became one are now divided. The male/female bond is cut asunder. Divorce is suicide.<sup>7</sup>*

Think about that in regard to Proverbs 6. What else does God hate? He hates “hands that shed innocent blood” (vs. 17). It may not be a physical death, but divorce involves violent destruction of the one flesh God has created.

### **Malachi reveals that God hates divorce because it is a painful act.**

Neither Malachi nor any other Bible writer pictures divorce as a blessed event. Malachi 2:13 stands out. It says, “And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying...” He was speaking of the tears of the women and their children who had been cast aside by the thoughtless selfishness of their spouses. Indeed, divorce is a painful act. Divorce hurts.

Holly Hudson, from Focus on the Family, discussed the myth of an “Easy Divorce.”

*In spite of the legal system’s best efforts to make divorce “easier,” it’s still a messy process, not just logistically but emotionally. Both spouses are often left with lasting emotional pain and regret. Some conflicts remain unresolved, allowing resentment to fester. Either spouse can experience anger, anxiety, depression and other emotions that affect them physically. The list of divorce’s negative effects on people runs long. No matter how inexpensive the proceedings are or how necessary the split seems to be, divorce always comes at an excruciating price.<sup>8</sup>*

One person who shared with me about their divorce said, “No one goes through divorce unchanged. There is nothing good about divorce—scriptural or not. Nothing. It is a living nightmare.” Another said, “Without a doubt, divorce was the worst season of my life. I wondered if I would ever heal, and in some ways I still haven’t. The trauma is massive.”

In “The Truth about Divorce,” Cheryl Scruggs talks about how she and her husband maintained a relatively good relationship throughout their divorce. She said, “We had what you might call a ‘model’ divorce. We shared the kids well, rarely fought and maintained a friendship ‘for the girls’ sake’ during our divorced years. And it was still awful! Our lives never felt settled.” Her conclusion was that, no matter what, “divorce is awful!”<sup>9</sup>

Studies have shown that, while a temporary feeling of happiness may be found, overall, people do not find what they are expecting through divorce.<sup>10</sup> One of the reasons God hates divorce is because He hates “a lying tongue” (Proverbs 6:17). Divorce involves the deception that everything will be better if you get a divorce. That is a lie. The devil is the father of these lies (John 8:44). He has been trying to destroy homes through these lies since the beginning.

### **Malachi reveals that God hates divorce because it interferes with the raising of godly children.**

In answering why God made them “one” in marriage, Malachi says, “He seeks godly offspring” (2:15). It is God’s will for children to grow up in a home with godly parents, and that faith should be perpetuated from generation to generation (Deuteronomy 6:7-9; Ephesians 6:1-4). However, divorce threatens this plan.

Faithful godly children have been raised in broken homes. However, divorce makes this extremely difficult in many ways. God hates divorce because He hates “one who sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:19), and divorce destroys the harmony of the home.

Not all children are broken by divorce, but studies consistently show they will be greatly impacted for possibly years to come. Addressing how divorce affects children, Dr. Bill Maier shared,

*The research shows that children do better on every measure of well-being if they grow up in a home with a married mother and father. Even if a marriage is less than perfect, staying together is always better for your kids than getting a divorce. Many studies on adult children from divorced homes confirm this. The one exception would be if there is physical or emotional abuse occurring in the home.”*

## Does God still hate divorce?

The world thinks that God has changed His mind on a lot of things, but God, through Malachi, revealed, “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). Admittedly, this is not talking about divorce in its immediate context; however, it does address the nature of God. He is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He hated divorce in days of old when it was ravaging the homes of Israel and He hates it today as it destroys homes in America.

### Conclusion

Of the 900,000 divorces that will take place this year, the majority of these marriages are not deeply troubled. Dr. Bill Maier states,

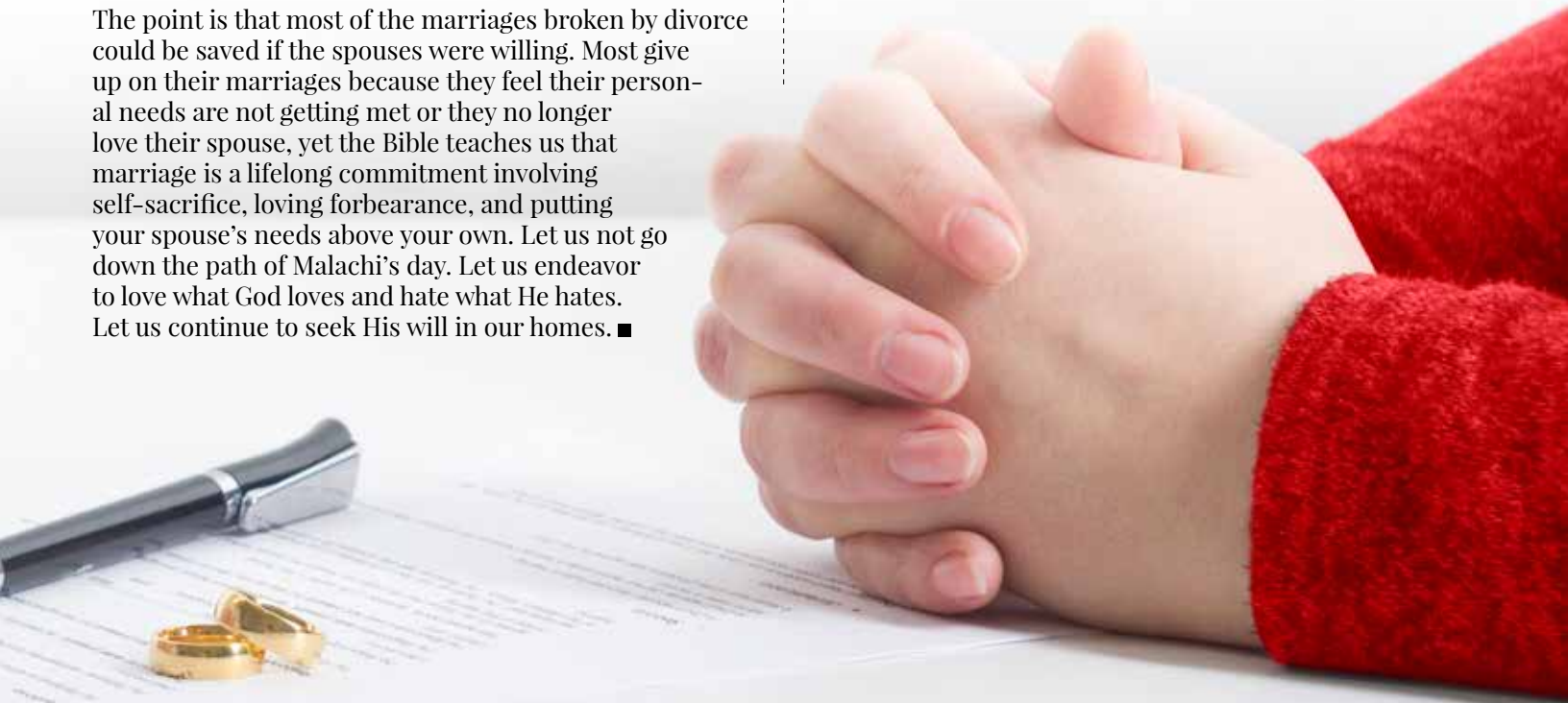
*The vast majority of divorces today are what psychologists refer to as “low-conflict” divorces. In other words, the couple isn’t involved in angry, knock-down, drag-out fights—they simply report that they “fell out of love” or that their partner was no longer “meeting their needs.”<sup>12</sup>*

According to Amy Desai,

*[r]esearch shows the majority of marriages ending in divorce have average levels of happiness and conflict. In other words, these are not deeply troubled, physically or emotionally abusive relationships... [M]ost of the marriages that end in divorce are just plain average.<sup>13</sup>*

The point is that most of the marriages broken by divorce could be saved if the spouses were willing. Most give up on their marriages because they feel their personal needs are not getting met or they no longer love their spouse, yet the Bible teaches us that marriage is a lifelong commitment involving self-sacrifice, loving forbearance, and putting your spouse’s needs above your own. Let us not go down the path of Malachi’s day. Let us endeavor to love what God loves and hate what He hates. Let us continue to seek His will in our homes. ■

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# youth.

## An OPEN letter to my young sisters by Cary Gillis

With warmer months quickly approaching, I have a plea for my Christian sisters:

Though I am weak and imperfect, I strive for a pure and holy life, mind, and heart. But it is difficult. I struggle with lust. I know of no man, single or married, who does not struggle with this. This fight is more difficult for your Christian brothers than you could ever imagine. Our minds are totally different than yours when it comes to visual stimuli.

I do not expect the world to care if my thoughts are pure, but I expect you to care. I expect you to cherish the faithfulness of your brothers. This is why it breaks my heart when I see Christian women wearing what the world deems appropriate, but what God deems immodest.

By the decision of what clothes to put on your body, you are deciding either to be my ally or my enemy in purity. Before you put on anything, ask if it would help me or hinder me in my personal struggle to keep my heart focused on holy things. I want to be very clear with you. If you wear short shorts or skirts, tight pants (yoga pants!), low-cut tops, and tops that show a lot of skin, much less swimwear that covers as much skin as underwear, you have chosen **not** to be my ally in fighting against lust and striving toward purity.

You may be oblivious to this; I do not assume the worst about you. This is not about control, or preference, or what is cute or practical, or what the (unchristian) world thinks. This is about you prioritizing our shared faithfulness. The world does not care about this. But my hope is that my Christian sisters would not knowingly run roughshod over the weaknesses of their brothers. We need your help to be the men that we are struggling to be!

There is nothing more beautiful than a woman who inspires holy and wholesome thoughts within the heart of a man. I am not calling for everyone to wear burlap sacks. But if you are confused about the type of clothing I have specified, ask a mature, faithful, wise sister her opinion. I can direct you to a few. Too many Christian parents fail to instill this value in their children. I honestly cannot understand why—other than the thought that they have just been deceived and their consciences seared by the world's standard of appropriateness. Living a faithful and holy life will often make you peculiar and unpopular, but that should be irrelevant to us.

This is not a reprimand. This is a plea for help. Be my ally in purity and faithfulness to God. Let us help each other go to heaven together. ■

# What if they DON'T listen?

by **Moisés Pinedo**

**In** a perfect brotherhood, if a male Christian made a plea to his sisters in Christ to dress in a way that will help him and his fellow brothers to keep their minds pure, all Christian women would promptly check their wardrobe and would go the extra mile to not cause God's children to stumble (Matthew 18:6) but to make sure they are pleasing God in humble modesty (1 Timothy 2:9-10). However, the Lord's church on Earth is not perfect (1 John 1:8). Therefore, some will hear and still will not get it (Matthew 13:18-19); some will hear and may change for a little while but soon will forget (Matthew 13:20-21); and some will hear but they will be too entangled with the world to really care (Matthew 13:22).

So, what do we do if they don't listen?

## *We still acknowledge our weakness.*

One main reason we are losing our battle on modesty is because we (especially men) do not want to acknowledge that we are weak in this area. We do not want to acknowledge that lust is a real threat for fear of people looking down on us. We play the game of "the strong Christian" who cannot be shaken by anything. Instead, we should remember that falling is a constant danger even for the strongest (1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12).

Years ago, I heard a Christian who boasted of being able to go to the beach and see women in bikinis and still not have problems with lust. Later on, in a mission trip, I was talking to an elder in the church and referred to him what I had heard from that Christian. The elder said: "That Christian is a liar or he is not a normal man."

Fathers and husbands should acknowledge this to advise their daughters and wives to dress modestly in deference to other Christian males; women should acknowledge this to carefully analyze their dress code; and young Christian males should acknowledge this to keep out of the "danger zone."

## *We still acknowledge our responsibility.*

The fact that some may fail does not give us a free ticket to do the same. Causing others to stumble is a serious matter with serious eternal consequences (Mark 9:42). Elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and all Christians should burn with indignation at the thought (2 Corinthians 11:29). Sadly, we have become experts at excusing immodesty.

In the middle of this disappointing reality, we should remember that Matthew 5:27-29 still holds true for men. We still have to give 100% when others may only give 10%. We will be judged for the actions we can control, and we will not be able to excuse our behavior on others' failures (2 Corinthians 5:10).

## *We still acknowledge our God.*

Every sin is an offense to our holy God, and He sees everyone everywhere at every time. God was constantly in Joseph's mind that, when he was invited to let lust run wild with a married woman, he said: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). When this lust-filled woman could not stand any more reasoning, she grabbed Joseph by his garment and demanded to be pleased. In honoring God with his mind and body, Joseph did not play the "strong" but knew it was time to run if he was to keep his purity (Genesis 39:11-12; cf. Judges 16). What a great young man for all of us—old and young men—to imitate!

May God help us as we strive to have a pure mind every single day of our lives. ■

# children.

## The Fruit of the Spirit—Part 3: Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control

by Stephanie Welch

**J**esus used simple objects to teach lessons. He talked about seeds, salt, weeds, sheep, and even fruit. Once traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus saw a fig tree. He was hungry and looking forward to eating figs! However, He did not find any fruit, so Jesus cursed the fig tree. He said, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again” (Mark 11:14). The next morning the apostles noticed that the fig tree had died just as Jesus had said it would (Mark 11:20-21).

Like Jesus, the apostle Paul used fruit to help us understand how to please God. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul listed nine “fruits”

of the Spirit. These “fruits” are not found in a grocery store! The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Strong, healthy trees make delicious fruit we can eat. In the same way, we are strong when we love and obey God doing what is right and good. God loves us. He gives joy and peace. God is patient and always kind and good. In this lesson, we will learn that God is faithful, gentle, and self-controlled.

### Faithfulness

Faithfulness means being completely loyal to someone or something. Jesus, even as a child, was faithful to God always doing what His Father wanted Him to do (Luke 2:49). Jesus always worked to please God (John 8:29). Remember His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He died? Jesus said, “...not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). We can be faithful like Jesus when we love God and His Word and do our very best to obey Him.



## Gentleness

Have you ever held a puppy or touched a baby's cheek? If so, your parents may have reminded you to be gentle. Has your mama ever bandaged your cuts, or your daddy ever removed a splinter from your finger? Your parents were probably gentle with you. They are bigger and stronger, but they help in a kind, easy way. Jesus was very gentle. He gently held children and bless-

ed them (Mark 10:16). Imagine Jesus smiling and gently, carefully, touching a blind man's eyes as He healed him (John 9:6-7). We are gentle like Jesus when we help a sibling finish a chore, comfort someone who is sick or sad, and when we listen carefully and answer calmly and politely.

## Self-Control

The last virtue of the Spirit is self-control. When Judas brought men to arrest Jesus, our Lord did not get angry and violent. Jesus even healed one of these men after the man's ear had been cut off by Peter's sword (John 18:3-11; cf. Luke 22:50-51). How did Jesus react when the people were laughing at Him, hitting Him, and spitting on Him? Jesus did not

say anything at all (Matthew 27:14). Self-control is doing what I need to do instead of what I may want to do. It may mean putting another first and myself last. Self-control may mean not eating those extra cookies even though they look tasty, going to bed an hour earlier on Saturday before worship on the Lord's Day, leaving an argument before saying something hurtful; the list is endless.

When we obey Jesus, we act like He acted and talk like He talked. We "produce fruit" that others can see and learn from. We show our friends, family, and even strangers love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Always remember that "[e]ven a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right" (Proverbs 20:11). ■

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## Remembering the Fruit of the Spirit

We have studied all nine virtues of the fruit of the Spirit in the last three issues, but can you list them in order and by memory? The blanks will help you know how many letters are in each virtue. List what you can, and then go to Galatians 5:22-23 to check your answers or to find some extra help.



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# questions.

## Q&A

**Q:** What advice would you give to keep the balance in our role as wives and mothers—since we tend to prioritize our children?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

God told the man (and by implication, the woman) to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they will be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). When a man and woman get married, if they do so following the Bible's advice to purity, then there are no children involved. This illustrates that the husband-wife relationship takes priority. When children come along, they add another dimension to the relationship. Moms of little children have to spend much time providing for their needs. But moms (and dads, to some extent) can guard their relationship by making special time for each other frequently. They should also be in agreement with what they do with the children and how they discipline them. —PH

**Q:** What should I do if my wife does not want to have sex nor any intimacy with me? —COMALCALCO, MEXICO

Sexual intimacy is a wonderful and pure gift from God for a married couple (Hebrews 13:4), but it is also a duty spouses owe to each other (1 Corinthians 7:4-5). So, if a Christian wife (or husband) is **selfishly** denying intimacy to her spouse, then she is failing to please God.

Having said that, a wife's lack of desire for intimacy with her

husband demands to ask a few questions. First, is the husband part of the problem? Is he treating his wife in a way that is hindering her desire for intimacy—being harsh with words, abusive, or obnoxious? Women need more constant affection and care to keep or arrive to a healthy level of sexual desire.

Are the husband's requests for intimacy unrealistic? Wrong expectations may be fed by our sex-driven society. A Christian husband should carefully analyze if his expectations about sex are reasonable.

Are there circumstances that are reducing the wife's desire for intimacy—illness, problems, stress, exhaustion due to lack of help with the children, etc.? If so, then it is more likely that she will be ready for bed at night instead of intimacy. Here the husband could help by taking some of the wife's load off of her shoulders or by listening to her problems.

Does the wife know that the husband is feeling sexually neglected? The husband should open up about it in a kind way. When a wife loves her husband, she will listen to his needs.

A wife should acknowledge that her needs are different from her husband's and that sex is a more pressing need for him. She should never resort to abstinence as a punishment or a tactic to get her way. If a wife ignores fulfilling her husband's sexual need, she

takes away his only God-approved option to fulfill that need—thus, causing him to be more susceptible to temptation. However, even in that case, the man of God must keep his commitment to holiness (Hebrews 12:14). —MP

**Q:** What attitudes (direct or indirect) from a wife may cause her husband not to exercise leadership in the home? —ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

An attitude of criticism hinders all of us from doing more. Be careful how you criticize and how you

word your criticisms. Compliment what you can and offer criticisms gently and mildly. Another attitude that is harmful is that of impatience. Some men take much time to decide how they want to proceed. If a wife jumps ahead of her husband, he will reason that if she is going to do what she wants anyway, there is no reason for him to be the leader. Finally, an attitude of laziness can discourage leadership. If a man believes that he is going to have to do everything, he will do very little for fear he will get overwhelmed. —PH

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