

# Christian *family*



## *Special Edition*

From Parents to Parents:  
Parenting Advice from Our Parents  
around the World

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*and more* ➤

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## from the editors



Being a parent is an enjoyable experience and one of the most challenging we ever have. But God did not create parenting to be hard! We just have to try to parent the best we can—the way God tells us to do in His Word.

For that purpose, this issue shares insights from parents around the world—what they have learned about parenting. We take a look at a new form of an old problem: cyberbullying. There is also the challenge of depression with a spouse or even children. It can steal the joy out of life, but we can conquer it when we take control of and change our thinking.

Keeping our spouse central in our lives is good for us and our family. We offer suggestions on how to do that. We also present ideas on developing a heart that “loves strangers.” Make your family a God-honoring family in every way possible!

**Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo**

## Christianfamily

*Helping families become stronger in the Lord*

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# UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH DEPRESSION IN MARRIAGE

# *family.*

by Kevin Williams

One of the most difficult issues facing couples in the marriage relationship today is depression. It can take away happiness, prevent closeness, affect everyone in the family and those connected to the family. How we approach one close to us who has depression will determine if we are helpful or hurtful.

Depression is often viewed in two types, or broad categories. "Physical depression" is a chemical imbalance in the brain which is treated with both medication and therapy. "Psychological depression" is the effect of life experiences on our minds. The intent of this article is to focus on approaches that we might use to help those who suffer with psychological depression.

There is a plethora of sources for depression—criticism, threats, loneliness, stress, setbacks, alcohol/drug dependency, overcommitment, a new job, a wedding, and having a baby, just to name a few. Anything in life can lead to depression depending on our perception of it.

Depression also shows itself in different ways. Some of these are withdrawal, despair, self-pity, inactivity, loss of appetite, weight gain or loss, sleep issues, feeling worthless, guilt, decision-making problems, and suicidal thoughts. The big question with depression is how do we approach it? What can we do to help?

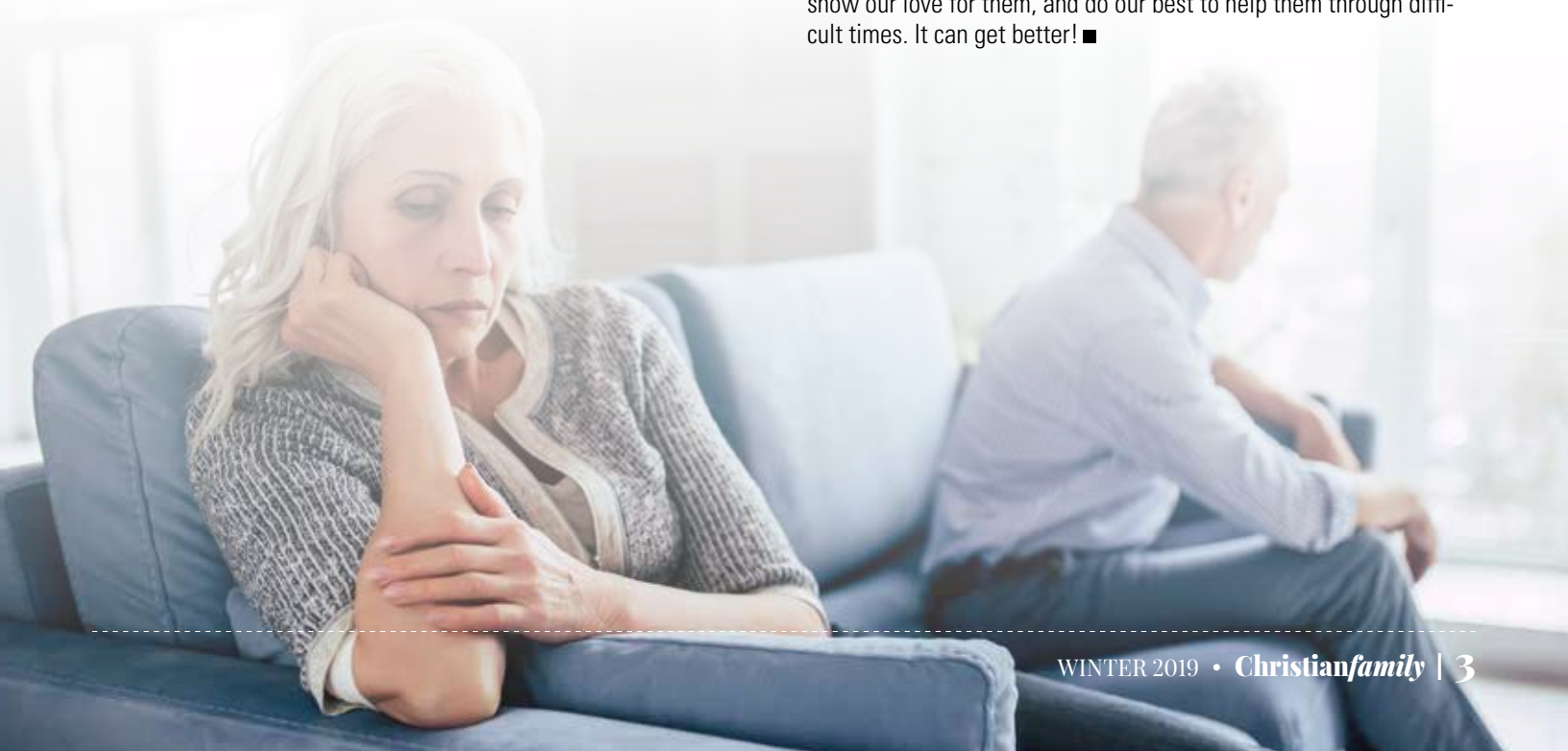
First, let us consider what we might do if we are the ones suffering from depression. One suggestion would be to eat and maintain normal activities, thereby creating a daily pattern for behavior. While that might be difficult to do, realize that you are not alone. Use your support group. Everyone has some type of support group, whether family, friends, or even a therapist. Allow them to help you and di-

rect you into a pattern of behavior that will help you function better on a daily basis. There is no way a person who has depression will improve if he/she does not actively work toward a solution. Also, talk to the Lord about your condition and listen to Him through His Word so that He can help and encourage you. It might also help to do some kind of work and focus on helping others.

One of the most difficult aspects of depression is one's thought processes. They tend to be negative and not positive, causing the condition to worsen. A source of help in this situation might be the "3Cs" approach. When one has a negative thought, they must "Catch it" (as it enters the mind), then "Challenge it" (question the validity of the thought), and then "Change it" (into something that is true and productive).

Second, let us consider the loved ones of those who are depressed. What can we do to help? By all means, do not just ignore the issue! It may be easy to do that, but it is not conducive to helping the loved one. It shows apathy toward the one burdened with it. Also, avoid harsh criticism and blame of the one depressed. That will not help such a difficult situation as depression. In fact, it will have an unwanted effect that will further complicate things. Furthermore, judging them will have an adverse effect on the relationship. And, make sure that you truly have their best interest at heart, and that you are not just "going through the motions" to relieve your own mind of your responsibility toward them. That, too, is counterproductive.

In conclusion, depression can be tremendously difficult for both, the one who is depressed and those who love and care about them. May we approach them with compassion, pray for them regularly, show our love for them, and do our best to help them through difficult times. It can get better! ■






# parenting.

## I BELIEVE IN

by Moisés Pinedo



**A** few years ago, a husband, his wife, and their children were visiting our home. We spent a lot of time in the house, talking and doing things; the children had a good time together. By the end of the day, as we all gathered together for family devotional, the wife asked me: “How do you get your children to do everything you say?” I said: “I’ll tell you.” She and her husband sat at the edge of one of our sofas, waiting to hear my “gem of parenting wisdom.” I smiled and said: “I spank them until they do!”

Of course, that was a joke, and our friends knew that as soon as they heard it. But, as it is usually the case with most of our jokes, there was some truth in it. No, I do not spank my children until they obey me, but I do believe there is a place for spanking (corporal correction) in raising children.

## I BELIEVE 100% IN SPANKING BECAUSE...

Yes, I completely believe in spanking. I was born into a family that had a special place for a leather belt with this specific purpose. Although my children have a hard time believing that their “Abue” (grandma) can ever lay a finger on a child, I am living proof that sweet little lady can master enough courage and strength to give a good whipping to a mischievous child.

I also grew up in a children-spanking society. My friends and I used to share tips on how to “survive” the dreaded discipline. One of them was to buffer the whipping by adding layers of cloth (or even a small pillow) inside the back of our pants. In fact, I can say that, growing up in the 80’s in a third world country, I did not know of any friends who enjoyed a “spanking-free home.”

However, that is not the reason why I believe in spanking. My real reasons are the following.

### ...THE FATHER BELIEVES IN “SPANKING.”

The heavenly Father is holy, loving, and perfect—a Father Whom all Christian parents would do well to imitate, and He believes in “spanking” His children:

“*And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers,*

*then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:5–10).*

According to this passage, the Father chastens us because we are His children, He loves us, and He wants us to be partakers of His holiness. Jonah (Jonah 1), David (2 Samuel 12), and Solomon (1 Kings 11) are but a few examples of the many children of God who tasted the Father’s “rod of correction.”

### ...THE SON BELIEVES IN “SPANKING.”

If the Father believes in “spanking,” then it is not surprising to learn that His Son believes the same. At least twice in His earthly ministry, the Son chastened the children of God in the temple (John 2:13–17; Matthew 21:12–13); and, at least once, He did it with “a whip of cords” (John 2:15). Since our Lord Jesus “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15), then we can know that these records of correction are holy expressions of His loving and righteous character while on Earth.

But Jesus not only spanked while on Earth. In fact, He still carries a whip of cords stretching all the way from heaven to Earth. In Revelation 2–3, the resurrected Christ gave His beloved apostle messages full of corrective warnings for the erring Christians in some churches in Asia Minor. His final words of admonition in that section of Scripture still remind us that He implements correction for the same reason the Father does: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (3:19).

### ...THE HOLY SPIRIT BELIEVES IN “SPANKING.”

Yes, the Holy Spirit also believes in “spanking.” In fact, Jesus’ warnings of correction in Revelation 2–3 are also “what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7,17,29; 3:6,22).

The Holy Spirit inspired the wise king to write in Proverbs the clearest statements of corporal correction in parenting:

“*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (13:24).*”

“*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him (22:15).*”

“*Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol (23:13–14, ESV).*”

“*The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother (29:15).*”

Notice the reference to the “rod” as an instrument of correction to build a child’s character and ensure his spiritual wellbeing. (No doubt the “rod” is literal in these verses.) According to these instructions of the Spirit, **proper physical correction** is so vital in the raising of children that the failure to implement it is viewed as a hateful action against the child (13:24) and an unconcerned attitude to deliver him from the way of foolishness (22:15), shame (29:15), and death (23:14).

## CONCLUSION

Obviously, spanking is not the totality of parenting, but it is a complementary part of instruction due to persistent disobedience and defiance. It is clear that the Divine Family sees fit for corporal correction to play a role in parenting; therefore, no Christian parent should discard God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:19) to buy into today’s “wisdom” that suggests that corporal discipline is ineffective and harmful to children.<sup>1</sup> It is true that there is child abuse going on in our society, and God has never authorized nor displayed abuse of any kind (cf. Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 6:4). But the unfortunate existence of child abuse in our society in no way negates the **legitimate** and **judicious** use of corporal correction.<sup>2</sup> Following the example of God, biblical corporal correction is **loving, reasonable, and controlled**. In fact, a home without corporal correction is in great danger—like a church that rejects correcting the erring and a nation that rejects punishing the guilty.

Yes, I believe in spanking! ■

1. Caron, Christina (2018), “Spanking Is Ineffective and Harmful to Children, Pediatricians’ Group Says,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/05/health/spanking-harmful-study-pediatricians.html>.

2. See, Miller, Dave (2003), “Children and the Rod of Correction,” Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=7&article=1255>.

# marriage.

## 4 SIMPLE WAYS to strengthen your marriage

by Brandon & Caitlin Baggett

**M**arriage can be one of the greatest blessings a person can experience, or it can be one of the most difficult trials a person could ever endure. It all depends upon how that marriage is nurtured, strengthened, and cultivated. Most marriages begin with euphoric feelings of happiness and bliss, but many marriages end with feelings of bitterness and hurt. As the “marriage bells” begin to fade, many couples “fall out of love” with one another, and the joy of marriage evolves into the chore of toleration. Many couples mistakenly rely upon their feelings to sustain them. As the feelings begin to fizzle, their love and marriage begin to unravel. A troubled and discontented marriage, however, can be avoided. Your marriage has the potential to be the extraordinary blessing God designed it to be. By making a purposed choice to unconditionally love your spouse, coupled with some simple and intentional steps to strengthen your relationship, your marriage can be wonderful, exciting, and satisfying for years on end.

In his bestselling book, *The 5 Love Languages*, Gary Chapman illustrates the act of strengthening your marriage as keeping your spouse’s “love tank” full. Just like you cannot drive a car for very long if you never put gas in it, your marriage cannot last if you never invest in it. A great and healthy marriage requires both partners to continually give contributions to their spouse’s love tank. Instead of allowing work, recreation, education, and a whole host of other things to potentially push the relationship to the backburner, take the time to buy stock in your marriage. You will be blessed more and more with each contribution you make to the overall good of your marriage. Though this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, here are few simple ways you can strengthen your marriage:

### 1 View your bedroom as a “special place.”

Quality time with one another is a major ingredient for a happy and healthy marriage. Unfortunately, many couples have very little time with one another when their children are not around. This intimate alone time is even more interrupted if the children sleep in your bedroom—or worse—in your bed with you and your spouse! On the other hand, having a set bedtime for your children, coupled with insisting that they sleep in their own bed, allows for quality downtime with one another in the evenings. This is a wonderful time to talk, reconnect with one another, study and pray together, and enjoy special time with one another. Additionally, these practices create a firm boundary, making of your bedroom a sanctuary for just

you and your spouse. You both need kid-free quality time with one another. Plus, your children will benefit from these schedules and habits as well.

### 2 Make sex a priority.

A good marriage is built on more than just sex, but one cannot deny that sex is a fundamental ingredient for a happy marriage. When God designed marriage, He intended for the husband and wife to “become one flesh” (cf. Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:4-6), involving the act of sexual intimacy. According to Hebrews 13:4, sex is something God has reserved specifically for marriage, and it is arranged to be mutually enjoyed by the husband and the wife (Proverbs 5:15-19). In fact, Paul even referred to sexual intimacy as a “right” of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. Therefore, the husband owes it to his wife to shower her with romantic affection, and the wife also owes it to her husband to fulfill his sexual desires. A sexless marriage is heading for a disaster, so it is important to make sex a priority in your marriage. Talk occasionally with your spouse about their sexual needs and desires. Schedule specific times during the week for sex and stick to your schedule no matter how hectic things may get. Stun your spouse from time to time with an unexpected romantic gesture or planned evening. Passion in the bedroom will result in emotional fulfillment and a stronger marriage.

### 3 Give your spouse the gift of your presence.

We live in such a fast-paced society, and it is easy to become so caught up in the affairs of life that you no longer have time for your spouse. Between work, recreation, entertainment, and education, there is a lot pulling for your attention, and there is often not a lot of leftover time. Still, your spouse needs you! As previously noted, husbands and wives “become one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:4-6) when they are joined in marriage. The more a couple does together, the stronger their marriage will be. Turn the TV off. Put down your iPhones for the evening. Store away the golf clubs for a while. Go on a walk together one evening. Pull out the old board games and play together. Cook dinner together one night. Sit on the couch and have a cup of coffee together. Stay up late watching movies together. Hire a babysitter and go out for a dinner date. Read together. Study together. Make quality time a priority!



#### 4 Shower your spouse with compliments.

Words are important! Solomon said, “a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Proverbs 25:11, ESV). We often joke about an apple a day helping to keep the doctor away, but what if a compliment a day helped to keep the marriage counselor away? Our words can impact us positively or negatively—even in marriage! Does your spouse know how much you love and appreciate them? Does your spouse hear you praising them for their strengths, or do they only hear you critiquing them for their weaknesses? If you want to strengthen your marriage, put forth real effort to shower your spouse with genuine praise at every opportunity. Make a commitment to compliment them at least once a day. From time to time, write your spouse a love note for them to find during the day. Send them a random encouraging text message while you are at work. In addition to praising them in private, praise them publicly in front of their parents, your friends, and your children!

Whether you have been married for 30 minutes, 30 days, or 30 years, it is important to make sure that you are actively building a strong and happy marriage. You can

never stop building and hope to just coast along on fleeting emotional feelings. Keep on filling up your spouse’s love tank. Keep making heavy deposits for your marriage. Don’t ever stop dating your spouse. Always be intentional about building one another up. Marriage requires constant work and sacrifice to be the blessing God intends for it to be. Your marriage holds the potential to be a wonderful blessing to you now and eternally if you and your spouse both make the decision to love God supremely, love one another unconditionally, and build up one another continually. God, help us to build strong marriages, and help us to be a Christian home! ■



# women.

## The blessings of HOSPITALITY

by Denise Skelton

*Our home, and all of our physical belongings, do not actually belong to us. Shouldn't we use the things that belong to God for His glory?*

In the Bible, we find that God has always made purposeful plans to provide for those in need. Throughout the Old Testament, we see examples of this as He commanded His people to leave some of their crops for gleaners or to provide a place for strangers to stay while on a journey (Leviticus 19:10,33-34; Deuteronomy 10:17-18). In 2 Kings 4, we read about the Shunammite woman who provided a room for Elisha when he was traveling. She used what she had available to help him as he did the Lord's work. In 1 Samuel 25, we see where a wife's forethought and hospitable nature saved her entire household. Abigail had very little time to prepare, but she still provided food for David and his men, which saved her family from being destroyed by his army.

In the New Testament, the word "hospitality" is found five times. The Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, and 1 Peter 4:9 is *philoxenos*, which means "fond of guests, hospitable, given to (lover of) hospitality." In Timothy and Titus, the passage is listing the qualifications of elders and deacons. In 1 Peter, the apostle is telling the Christians how to live in such a way that they can be strengthened and strengthen each other—loving one another (vs. 8) and "showing hospitality to one another without grumbling" (vs. 9). In Romans 12:13, instructions are given on living in a way that is pleasing to Christ: "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." The word here is *philonexia*, which means "love to strangers." We also see this word in Hebrews 13:2 in an admonition to not neglect showing hospitality to strangers.

In biblical times, hospitality was a necessity. Hotels were not readily available for travelers, and there was not an overabundance of restaurants as we have now. They relied on the hospitality and love of others to provide for them. As we think of God and His love for us in sending Jesus, we can certainly understand why He wants us to show love to others today.

There are many blessings to be found in showing hospitality, both by the giver and the recipient. We will discuss



five of these, though I would venture to say the blessings of hospitality are truly innumerable.

## 1. We are able to serve those in need.

Oftentimes, we think of hospitality strictly as inviting others into our home. While that is often the case, hospitality also includes using your home to provide for the needs of others. When we cook a meal for the homeless shelter, for a bereaved family or one with an illness, for a new mother, or even for a family who has just moved to the area, we are being hospitable. There is a good chance that we have all been in one of these situations where we greatly benefited from a meal provided by someone else. It is also important to take some time to think about **who** we are hospitable to. If we are honest with ourselves, we are most likely being hospitable to people who are like us—they look like us, dress like us, and believe the same things we do. As Christians, we need to ask the question, “Is that how Jesus would have shown hospitality?” In Luke 14:12-24, Jesus told the parable of the great wedding feast. In society, we think in order to be blessed, we need to be hospitable to those who can also be hospitable to us. Jesus turned this notion upside down when He told that the host invited the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind (those who could never repay).

## 2. We are using our home for God’s glory.

Our home, and all of our physical belongings, do not actually belong to us. Shouldn’t we use the things that belong to God for His glory? How wonderful would it be to add to our daily prayers that we use the things God has blessed us with for His ultimate good! I recently spoke with a family who moved to a new town. The wife told me that they were very purposeful in what type of home they chose because they took hospitality very seriously. May we all take it seriously, and purposefully make hospitable choices for our families! We most definitely want to be good stewards of what God has provided for us. A generous attitude such as this is one that pleases God.

## 3. We are sharing the love of Jesus with non-Christians.

When we consider evangelism, we often underestimate the power of bringing friends into our home to get to know them better and share the Gospel with them. Simply inviting people into our home for a meal or time of fun can help open doors and build relationships that could easily result in their obedience to the Gospel. What if every Christian made a deliberate effort to invite a non-Christian family into their home weekly or even monthly? What kind of effect would that have? Would the non-Christians see Jesus in our homes? Would they want

to know more about Him? Would we have more biblical discussions and studies with them? May we all pray for these opportunities and seek them out!

## 4. We are deepening the bonds of fellowship with other Christians.

Oftentimes in the church, we forget the importance of fellowshiping with the saints outside of worship times. God wants our closest friends to be His children; He wants us to rely on each other and spend time together. When we constantly have other Christians into our home, we are strengthening that bond of fellowship. We are encouraging one another to love and good works. We are being the family that God wants us to be.

## 5. We are teaching our children to be given to hospitality.

Our family is currently blessed with plenty of extra space in our home to lodge overnight guests. Since we have had the opportunity to have many families in our home for a night or even a week, our children are greatly accustomed to having families stay with us. We have been blessed to get to know many people much better than we ever did before simply by hosting them for a week for a gospel meeting, having them stay with us for our family seminar, or housing them when they needed to travel for a funeral or wedding. We have joked that our six-year-old son could have a whole album of pictures of him playing “Nerf War” with various gospel preachers! We have seen firsthand how this love of hospitality is being nurtured in our children. If we continue this practice, we will have children who grow into adulthood being “given to hospitality.”

Sometimes we become complacent and think of ourselves as being very hospitable and give ourselves a pat on our back for the good we are doing, but in reality, we are simply doing what is comfortable. I challenge each of us to think about how we can show hospitality to someone who cannot return the favor. Studying this topic has challenged me to consider who I am extending my hospitality to, and if my hospitality is something that is comfortable for me or if it truly reflects Christ.

God has always wanted His people to be a blessing to others. The presence of Holiday Inns and Cracker Barrels doesn’t lessen the importance of our need to be a hospitable people. While the meal or the bed may not be needed as much in today’s times, the love shown by gestures that may seem so simple is needed as much as ever.

# *featured.*

## **From parents to parents:**

*Consistency is key. If you punish your children for certain behavior sometimes but not all the time, it's confusing and your kids don't know what to expect, nor what is expected of them. Also, remember that the things that they find important matter just as much in their minds as the things that are important in your own mind, so don't neglect playtime and childlike conversation. Listen. Don't make them compete with your devices. Listen intently, for if you do not listen when they are five, they will not want to talk to you when they're fifteen.*

**GEORGIA, UNITED STATES**

*One of the things that has helped me a lot in instructing my daughters is to look in their eyes whenever I talk to them, listen to them, and even rebuke them... I want to understand every gesture in them and analyze their feelings toward me, so I can correct anything lacking from my part.*

**PANAMA CITY, PANAMA**

*We should not be content or feel safe concerning our children just because they are "growing up in the church." We are to work hard with them, from birth, so they can be faithful Christians one day. We are to take time for them, love them, and take advantage of every opportunity to teach them to love God.*

**GRECIA, COSTA RICA**

*Considering my children as souls before the Lord has helped me a lot, as well as reading the Bible every day at breakfast time.*

**MATT, SWITZERLAND**

*Besides giving our children biblical instruction, we are to help them develop, from an early age, a sense of identity that is clear, firm, and sound.*

**CANCÚN, MEXICO**

*The best thing parents can do for their children is to raise them in the fear of the Lord from an early age. Our responsibility is not to give them everything they ask, but to teach them to obey, with discipline and love.*

**GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA**

# Parenting advice from our parents around the world

*A little child's world includes everything that is at his eye level—the floor, toys, pets or furniture. When a father steps down from his couch and enters the space of his child, he becomes a friend that helps him reach higher levels!*

**LA PAZ, EL SALVADOR**

*If we want for our children to grow in the image of our Lord (Ephesians 4:13), we must consider the Bible as the most important tool for their education (Proverbs 22:6). As in the case of Jesus (Luke 2:52), we are to train them in the most important aspects of their life—mentally (wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (favor with God), and socially (favor with men).*

**TOLUCA, MEXICO**

*Being a good example of the way to live is always the best method and advice.*

**BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO**

*Give them instruction in God's Word. Teach them that it is always best to say the truth, even when doing that may bring unpleasant consequences. Pray to God always.*

**RIVERA, URUGUAY**

*One thing that has helped me with my daughters, as well as to keep a good balance between work and them, is being more organized and less worried... Another useful thing has been to apply the principle of "less is best." Being less focused on buying toys, clothes, and hoarding things has helped me feel more relieved and have more energy to concentrate on my family.*

**ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA**

*Learn to view your children more in terms of their heart than their external behavior. That way they will learn to make internal changes, not only external. Our challenge as parents is to teach our children to change in a deeper way to be prepared for life.*

**CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA**



**F**or many young people, bullying is an everyday issue that they have to deal with at school. But bullying also occurs in the online world. The digital world is constantly evolving with new social media platforms, apps, and devices; children and teens are often the first to use them. Cyberbullying or “online aggression” includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone that is intended to cause embarrassment or humiliation. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

- **Persistent.** Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to shut it off.
- **Permanent.** Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed.
- **Hard to Notice.** Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

## Statistics about cyberbullying

- Approximately 37% of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have been bullied online. 30% have had it happen more than once.<sup>1</sup>
- 23% of students report that they’ve said or done something mean or cruel to another person online. 27% report that they’ve experienced the same from someone else.<sup>2</sup>
- Girls are more likely than boys to be both victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying. 15% of teen girls have been the target of at least four different kinds of abusive online behaviors, compared with 6% of boys.<sup>3</sup>
- Young people who experience cyberbullying are at a greater risk than those who don’t for both self-harm and suicidal behaviors.<sup>4</sup>
- Only 1 in 10 teen victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.<sup>5</sup>

## Warning signs a child is being cyberbullied or is cyberbullying others

Some of the warning signs that a child may be involved in cyberbullying are:

- Noticeable increase or decrease in device use, including texting.
- A child exhibits emotional responses (laughter, anger, dismay) to what is happening on their device.
- A child hides their screen or device when others are near and avoids discussion about what they are doing on their device.
- Social media accounts are shut down or new ones appear.

- A child starts to avoid social situations, even those that were enjoyed in the past.
- A child becomes withdrawn, depressed, or loses interest in people and activities.

While you may not be able to monitor all of your child’s activities, there are things you can do to prevent cyberbullying and protect your child from harmful digital behavior:

- Monitor social media sites, apps, and browsing history if you have concerns that cyberbullying may be occurring.
- Review or re-set your child’s phone location and privacy settings.
- Follow or friend your teen on social media sites or have another trusted adult do so.
- Increase your digital awareness. Stay up to date on the latest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang used by children and teens.
- Know your child’s usernames and passwords for email and social media.

## Christian response: if you are a victim of cyberbullying

The Bible doesn’t talk directly about bullying, but that doesn’t mean that we can’t use biblical principles to address the issue. The Bible commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31) and to treat others the way we would like to be treated (Luke 6:31). There is no room in the Christian faith for belittling or abusing someone. Every person, regardless of what he or she looks or acts like, is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; James 3:9-10) and is worthy of the dignity that God gives to every person.

As Christians, we are called to honor God with our words (Ephesians 4:29) and our actions (James 1:22). We should constantly examine our actions and motives to make sure they line up with these standards, asking God whether there is anything displeasing to Him (Psalm 139:23-24).

**If you see something, say something.** As Christians, we are called to seek justice and defend the oppressed (Psalm 82:3-4; Isaiah 1:17). God, in His infinite wisdom, has established human authorities like the government (Romans 13:1-4)—or, maybe in your case, the police, school administration, or parents—to help make the situation right. You aren’t alone. Don’t be afraid to tell others what’s going on, whether you are the one being bullied or are merely the observer.

**Understand your identity.** Meditate on passages like Psalm 139:13-18, which tells you that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and that God’s thoughts toward you are too numerous to count. You need to know that you are special to God and created in

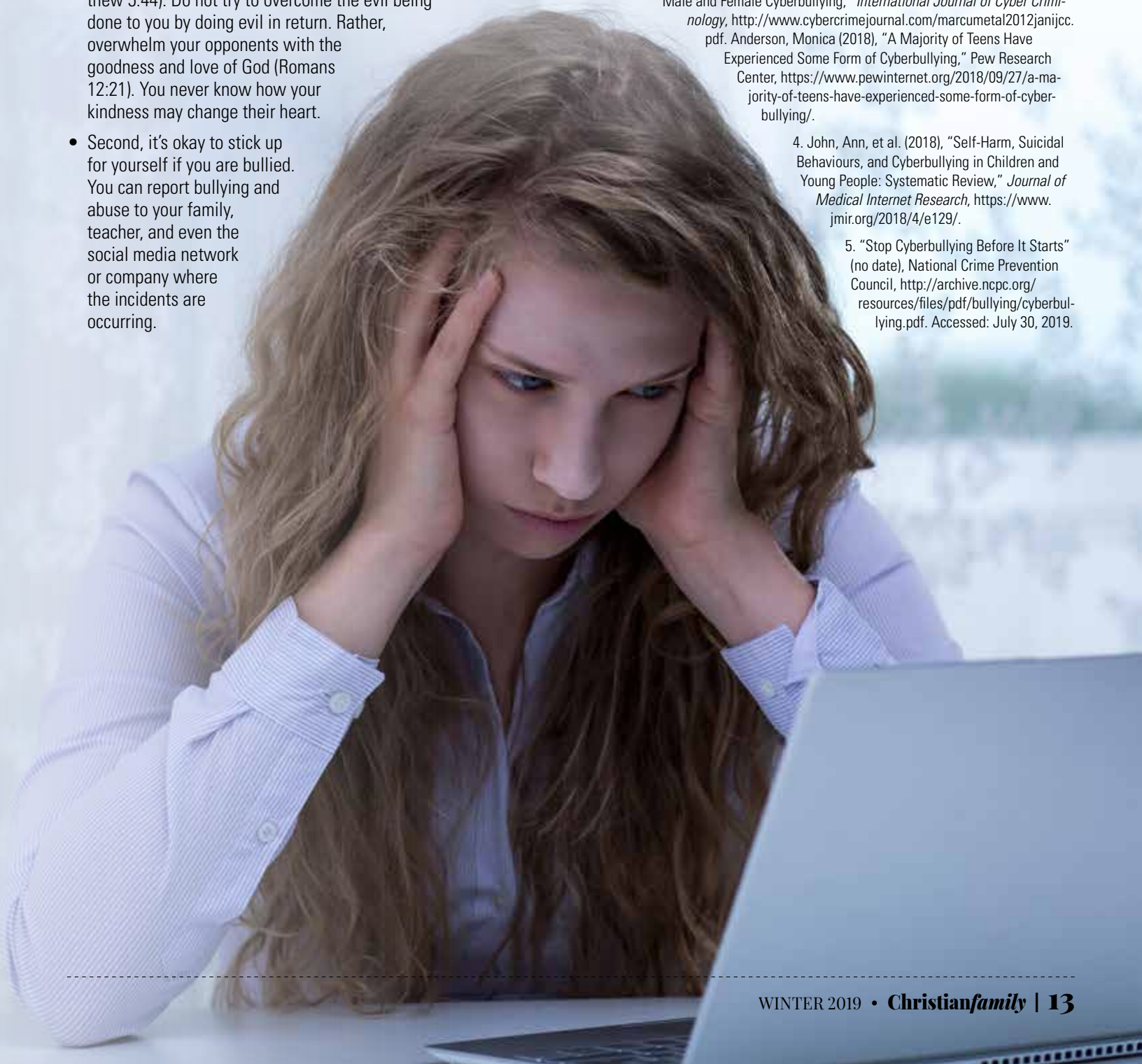
His image with immeasurable worth and value. Do not let the lies that bullies say about you influence what you think about yourself, because what God says about you is the truth. He loves you and cherishes you because you are made in His image.

**Respond in a Christ-like manner.** If you ever find yourself being bullied, there are some principles that you need to keep in mind.

- First, you should never try to get back at a bully or seek revenge (Romans 12:17-19). Remember that “a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). Respond to your bully with kindness and love. It’s easy to feel angry, upset, or defeated about your situation, bringing with those feelings a temptation to want to get back at them. But what the Scripture calls us to do is to love our enemies and pray for them (Matthew 5:44). Do not try to overcome the evil being done to you by doing evil in return. Rather, overwhelm your opponents with the goodness and love of God (Romans 12:21). You never know how your kindness may change their heart.
- Second, it’s okay to stick up for yourself if you are bullied. You can report bullying and abuse to your family, teacher, and even the social media network or company where the incidents are occurring.

Bullying is wrong, period. As Christians, we are called to act in love and kindness toward everyone, including those who wrong us. And we are called to stand up for the vulnerable and weak. We should do good in the face of mistreatment and when we see others being mistreated. Above all, we shouldn’t try to handle these situations alone. Authorities should be involved when needed. And our family, friends, and church love and care about us and are there to support us. ■

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# children.

## Read your Bible and pray every day and grow, grow, grow

by Kaitlyn Epling

**We** sing this song all of the time when we are young, but what does it actually mean? Let us dig a little deeper into this song, and hopefully we will all learn something while we do.

### Physical growth

When we are young, we are always wanting to grow for different things. Although you probably know most of these, I want to give you a few examples of things that we desire to grow for.

- One thing that was a very big wish for my brother and me was to be tall enough to get out of our booster seats.

- In our house when we were younger, each year on our birthday we got to try something new, such as chewing gum or soft drinks. So, you might want to grow to be able to do something like that.
- If you go to theme parks often, you might want to grow so that you can ride a certain ride.
- You may wish to grow so that you can be taller than a parent, grandparent, sibling, or friend.
- Lots of children may desire to be old enough to go to school.
- As you grow older, you want to be big enough to drive, date, or get a job.

We all do things such as eating healthily so that we can grow quicker. But a big question is, “Do we work as hard to grow spiritually as we do to grow physically?”

### The Bible talks about growth

Second Peter 1:5-8 says, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Second Peter 3:18 says, “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” This verse says that we need to work hard to grow spiritually, not just physically.

In Hebrews 5:12-14, the Bible states: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” These people were not growing like they should, and Paul was essentially fussing at them.





## How do we grow spiritually?

The first thing we need to do, as stated in our song, is to read our Bible. In Psalm 119:11, we read, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

The only way we can hide God's Word in our heart is for us to read it! Second Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." If the doctor instructs us to do something to help us grow, will we not do it? So, if the Bible is our instructor, we need to make sure we know what it says. We also want to make sure we are reading **every day**. If we want to grow physically, we will eat every day because we are hungry. We are told by Jesus to hunger and thirst for God's Word: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). If we are hungry for God's Word, we will partake of it every day.

Something else we learn directly from the song is to pray. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Wisdom will definitely help us to grow. We should do this daily (or more often), as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 encourages us to "pray without ceasing."

Another thing that will also help us to grow is to get encouragement from our brothers and sisters in Christ. James 5:16 tells Christians to "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." We can be healed physically and spiritually through the prayers of our Christian family.

## Conclusion

As you can see, we need to focus more on our spiritual growth than we do about our physical growth. But, before I leave you, I want to give you a warning. The song states: "Neglect your bible and forget to pray, and shrink, shrink, shrink." If we do not do these things that we have learned today, not only will we shrink,

but we may even fall away from what we have learned and been taught. Let us go back to a verse that we already looked at and get another application from it. Hebrews 5:12-14 states, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." We can see again that these people did not "read their Bibles and pray every day, and they shrunk, shrunk, shrunk." Let us try our hardest not to be like them, but to do what we have learned today. Let us always "read our Bibles and pray every day, so we can grow, grow, grow." ■

Online and printed Spanish materials for children at:

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Contact: [editorial@ebglobal.org](mailto:editorial@ebglobal.org)

## Growing even more

Rearrange the letters to find out eight things in which the children of God need to grow. If you need help, go to 2 Peter 1:5-8.

I F T A H

R I T U V E

N L E O D K G E W

E L F S - T R O L C O N

C P R E S V E R E A E N

D O L I S E N S G

T H E B R O R L Y S K E N D N I S

V O L E

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# questions.

## Q&A

**Q:** I have a son who is living with a woman without being married, and he also has two children. Is that an obstacle for my prayers on his behalf to be answered? —QUITO, ECUADOR

First, we should recognize that God is at liberty to answer or not answer as He knows is best. Yet, Proverbs 28:9 says, "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." If a person refuses to listen to God, he should not expect God to listen to him (cf. 1 Samuel 28:6; Jeremiah 7:16). Pray that your son will recognize the sin in his life and that God will preserve his life so that he will have time to repent. Pray for your grandchildren, that they will follow the path of righteousness. God will answer, according to His will (cf. James 5:15). —PH

**Q:** How can I avoid being a perfectionist with my children? —ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

One of the greatest challenges of parenting is finding the right spot between challenging our children and having low expectations. Recognize that you have your flaws and your children will have theirs. Look at your children as they are, not as how you might wish them to be. Be flexible in your expectations and be honest with what they are able to accomplish. Accept them as being unique. Don't be so judgmental; you would not want them (or God) to judge you harshly. Try to keep your heart open and humble toward God and your children. They will amaze you! —PH

**Q:** What advice would you give to a mother who yells a lot at her children? —CALIFORNIA, U.S.

I believe the main reason that will dissuade an honest Christian woman (or man) from doing something is knowing that an action or attitude displeases God. In the end, isn't our main goal in life to honor God? Therefore, my first advice for a mother (or father) who yells at her children is for her to ask: "Is my yelling the result of losing my patience, failing to control my anger, or lacking proper love for my children?" If so, then it is a sin (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:26; 6:4), and no Christian should want to have any part of it. Be extremely conscious about it; cut out the sin, and this will result in a calm attitude toward your children.

On the other hand, if a mother believes that she yells at her children because that is "the way she is," she should realize that her way is still at odds with Christ's example (cf. 1 Peter 2:21-23) and Christian growth (Romans 12:2). Here is some practical advice: (1) Shun the stressors.

Although parents yell at their kids, the culprits usually are situations that already put us at the verge of exploding. Identify those things, so you can do something about them. (2) Take a deep breath. Wait a few minutes. It is easier to yell in the heat of the moment but more difficult when you calm down. (3) Don't say anything. If you don't open your mouth, then you will not be able to yell. (4) If you must spank your children for defiance or constant disobedience, then do it in a proper way and avoid yelling. It is interesting to learn that most children do not resent proper corporal correction, but they do resent yelling. (5) Pray about it. As with every other facet of life, you need God's help with this. (6) Talk to your children so they will know what displeases you. Their help (although inexperienced) may reduce the stressors. (7) Keep yourself on track. Yelling is addictive; constantly watch yourself so you do not relapse. —MP

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