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Christian *family*

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Photo by Meg Speaks

meet our *Editor's Family*

The *Hollands* on mission work and dealing with change.

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p.8 *New for Women and Mothers: Bible Study*

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and more ➤

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from the editors



What a blessing to start the year 2020 serving the Lord with our families! Surely, this year will bring many changes. Changes can be challenging for all of us, but with God's help, and the love of our family, we can adjust to change and continue to glorify our Lord. In this issue, we invite our readers to meet the family of one of our editors: the Hollands. They share their story with us as they have moved from place to place over the years in their service to God. They give us great advice to take advantage of change for the strengthening of our homes.

In this issue we also start a new series of articles for women to help them in their personal Bible study and the instruction of their children. All members of the family can also find help in their Christian growth in the additional articles included in this issue.

May God bless you in this new year.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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DISFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES IN GENESIS... Sibling Rivalry

family.

by Eric Welch

Psalm 127:3 says that children are God's gift to parents: "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." But do siblings ever think they are a gift to one another? In many families, brothers and sisters do not get along. Thanksgiving dinners are spoiled by a toxic atmosphere. One of the last faculties to go before death is the sense of hearing. Imagine the last thing you hear is your children quarreling over their inheritance even before you are gone!

Sibling rivalry is not new. Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and committed the first murder. Cain's story ended badly. But Genesis tells two stories about sibling rivalry that actually end well.

The first story is about Isaac and Rebekah's family. Genesis 25:28 reads, "And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." This favoritism created tension between the brothers. Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright, which meant nothing to Esau. But when Jacob cheated Esau out of his blessing, Esau wanted to kill him (Genesis 27:35-36, 41-42).

Jacob did not learn from his parents' mistakes. In the second story, he, too, exhibited preferential treatment toward one son. Genesis 37:3-4 says, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also, he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."

Joseph did not help matters either. He revealed two dreams about his brothers bowing to him (vss. 5,8). Verse 11 says his brothers became jealous of him. The final straw came when Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. By this time, their hatred was so great that the brothers saw an opportunity to kill Joseph (vs. 18). Reuben objected to murder, so they threw Joseph into a pit to figure out what to do. Judah suggested they sell Joseph to passing

Ishmaelite merchants. The transaction was made; Joseph would become a slave in Egypt. The brothers brought Joseph's coat back to their father and lied about the fate of his favorite son.

One lesson to learn here is that parents often cause sibling rivalry by not treating their children as equals. But the lesson's main point to learn is hope. The children overcame their parents' imperfections by choosing forgiveness over bitterness. When Jacob was returning home, he faced his brother one last time. As he approached Esau, Jacob still feared retaliation. This time was different, though. Both were changed men. "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (Genesis 33:4). In turn, Jacob blessed him with a great gift.

Joseph forgave his brothers once he saw their repentance was genuine. In turn, they came to love their brother. They all recognized God's hand had reversed their bad decisions. After their father died, Joseph's brothers feared he would take vengeance on them, but Joseph said, "...you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

In both stories, the siblings chose reconciliation, and God made it happen. If unfair preferential treatment exists in your family, your story can end well too. You have a choice. Will you ask God to help you accept your parents and siblings as His gifts to you? ■

parenting.

by Paul Holland

SPANK APPROPRIATELY

The Hebrews writer (12:7-11) tells us a few things about discipline as he compares physical discipline by fathers with spiritual discipline by the Father. First, discipline indicates a relationship, a parent-child relationship. The writer assumes a father is going to discipline his child. If there is no discipline, then the child is “illegitimate.” Second, discipline will (should) motivate the child to respect the parents.

Third, discipline is only for a “few days,” that is, for a short time. Likely, we have 18 years or less to discipline our children to set them on the right path. Fourth, we have to discipline our children according to what we believe is the best. While the Scriptures give us broad instructions, many occasions arise when we have to apply principles and make judgment calls with the help of our spouse. Fifth, no discipline seems joyful at the time. In fact, if punitive discipline does not **hurt** in some way, it is not punitive and will not discourage future negative behavior. Sixth, discipline will eventually yield righteousness. We must discipline with a goal in mind: producing faithful Christian adults.

With these thoughts in mind, let’s continue our discussion on spanking. In the last issue, we shared some thoughts on spanking. God does not **require** spanking, but He certainly **approves of** spanking. Many “scholars” argue against spanking, supposedly based on research. The disadvantage to such research is that spanking does not occur in a vacuum and it is difficult, perhaps even unethical, to try to isolate spanking from other aspects of the home and parenting. A home environment is complex, and there are many factors which impact a child and his or her behavior. A child who is spanked in a home where spanking is more like beating is not going to respond as well as a child who is spanked by a parent who disciplines as God would want.

Spanking is similar to “yelling.” No adult likes to be yelled at, nor do children. To get the point across, however, raising one’s voice can be effective. But if you do it all the time, even with children, then it is going to lose its effectiveness and likely cause you to lose respect. It is the same with spanking. On some occasions, spanking can be extremely effective since children, especially young children, want to avoid experiencing pain. But, if a parent uses spanking too often, it can lose its effectiveness and can also cause a child to lose respect for mom or dad. Spanking is one tool in the toolbox of child discipline.

Since parents are required by God to maintain self-control (Galatians 5:23; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21), it is important for parents not to lose control when they spank. If a parent has a hard time maintaining his temper, he probably should not spank. Spanking should not turn into abuse in any form, such as punching or slapping. Abuse occurs when the parent leaves bruises, welts, abrasions, or other long-lasting physical marks. If you are an adoptive parent or foster parent, you might stay away from spanking because of the child’s own background and experiences with physical abuse.

Some children might not respond to spanking. That does not mean one should spank harder or more often. It means parents may have to find another form of discipline that is undesirable to the child. If bad behavior is frustrating the parent but not the child, then the parent has to find something that is unpleasant to the child to get him to change his behavior. With our oldest (and I would not recommend this with all children), we could threaten to take away her pencil, notebook, and/or books to motivate her to change her behavior. It worked. Be resourceful. Every child is unique and has his or her own “pressure points” you can use for disciplinary purposes.

There is an appropriate age range, when it is most effective, for spanking. The age is a matter of decision between parents. Pediatrician James Dobson recommends spanking between the ages of 18 months and ten years.¹ It is appropriate to pop the hand or the leg of very young children. This works when a little child is grabbing someone’s eyeglasses or twisting someone’s nose. But as a child gets older, around three years old, spanking can be most effective. At the other end of the age spectrum, as a child approaches the teenage years, he or she can be reasoned with, relative to following rules. Parents also have more options for use in discipline. Additionally, the pain given through spanking does not impact teenagers as strongly as younger children.

One may ask whether spanking should be done with the hand or a switch or belt. I, personally, chose to use the hand so that I would be constantly reminded (when my hand stung) that I was inflicting pain on my daughters. That helped me temper my discipline on them. Others have suggested that a non-personal instrument, like a belt or switch, is more appropriate. Ultimately, mom and dad simply have to decide what they think is best in their family.

Due to the extreme nature of spanking, our view is that it should be reserved for the serious offenses. Outright disobedience, belligerence, lying, stealing, etc. are the forms of misbehavior that, in our view, warrant painful spanking. Yet, if there are other behaviors which are involved that contribute to the disobedience, other forms of discipline can be used instead of, or along with, spanking. For example, if the child is “glued” to the TV or video games and doesn’t stop when called by mom, something should be done relative to the TV or video games, along with disciplining the disobedience.

We would also urge with any form of discipline, but especially spanking, that the parent explain the offense in terms that are age-appropriate. Follow up discipline with wrapping your arms around your child and explaining that your responsibility as a parent is to teach him how to behave. Then explain what the proper behavior is and that you expect him to follow the rules. As the child gets older, and starts wanting to please Jesus, explain what behavior is appropriate for one who desires to follow Christ. “Most important, children must trust that their parents are functioning with the child’s best interest at heart.”² It is mom and dad’s role to explain that “best interest.”

Let us also make a comment about spanking in public. This can be especially effective with younger children. They are punished as much by the public nature of the discipline as by the spanking itself! It makes mom and dad feel awkward, perhaps, but it makes the child feel even more awkward. We would simply avoid doing a “full-fledged” spanking in public as it could create an unpleasant scene with other parents. A swat or two on the bottom could be effective enough.

Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, in *The Christian Parenting Handbook*, correctly advise that the goal of discipline is a changed heart.³ If spanking shows in a satisfactory way mom and dad’s disapproval of a behavior, then it will be effective. Otherwise, other forms of discipline might be more effective. To cite child psychologist John Rosemond, proper discipline is not about methods as much as it is **leadership**.⁴ ■

1. Dobson, James (1992), *The New Dare to Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale), p. 20.

2. Schlessinger, Laura (2000), *Parenthood by Proxy: Don’t Have Them If You Won’t Raise Them* (New York: Cliff Street), p. 175.

3. Turansky, Scott and Joanne (2013), *The Christian Parenting Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), p. 134.

4. Rosemond, John (2007), *Parenting by the Book* (New York: Howard), p. 221.



marriage.

"I AM A PARENT BEFORE A SPOUSE!"

by Moisés Pinedo

I like comedy, but I rarely watch it due to the predominant use of profanity among comedians. But a few years ago, our family signed up for a service that promised to be our “guardian angel” and filter all the bad stuff. So, I decided to turn on the filters and give a comedy show a try.

The comedian turned out to be a really funny guy. He began to talk about his family and made the show a little bit more personal. At one point, as he related some funny stories about his children, he told the audience, “But I want you to know this: I am a father before a husband!” Everybody in the audience began to clap. I was about to clap too, until I realized that this was not one of his jokes!

It is interesting to learn that the “children come first before the spouse” idea is so prevalent in society. Some even go as far as to say that it is **bad advice** to even suggest that your spouse comes before your children.¹ Talking to several Christian parents in the past, I have found that this idea is also common in the church.

However, I strongly believe that this idea is erroneous, originates in the **world** rather than the **Word**, and is causing dysfunction in families. When we say that “children come before our spouse,” we are relegating the marital relationship to a secondary place and endangering the survival of the home. Many spouses have done this to the point of considering breaking the marriage relationship a “lesser sin” than breaking the parents-children bond. The rate of divorce confirms that this is the case.²

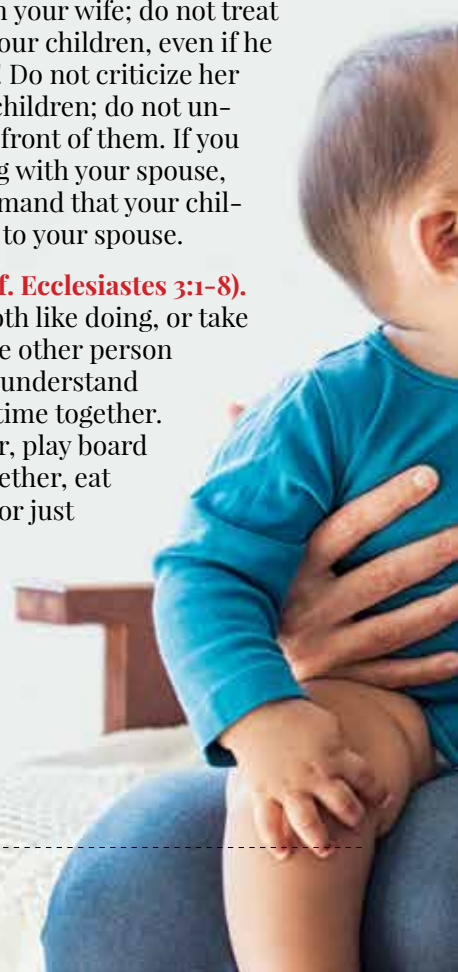
It is true that the Bible does not say something like “your spouse should come before your children,” but it clearly places the marital relationship in an elevated place in the family, only second to our relationship to God (Ephesians 5:23-33). This beautiful and unique bond was divinely chosen to describe the highest and most intimate relationship the Lord has with His church. Even from the beginning, we learn that when God created the first family, He made them male and female and joined them in sacred matrimony (Genesis 1:26-28). This unifying bond was described as “one flesh” and is to take priority over the parent-child relationship—as implied in the leaving and cleaving concept (Genesis 2:24).

Now, this does not mean that parents are not to care for their children, care for their needs, give them adequate time, and love them deeply (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4), but this means that spouses are to consider their marital

relationship with the highest of esteem, and invest a great deal of effort and time to nurture and build it up.

So, in view of your role as a parent and spouse, how can you show that your relationship with your spouse has the highest place in the family?

- **Attend to her/his intimate needs of affection (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:4-5).** Women and men have different needs, and they should discuss those needs to try to fulfill them to the best of their abilities. Do not let work stress you to the point that you become cold and insensitive to your wife’s needs. Do not let the children drain you to the point you do not have energy left to attend to your husband’s needs.
- **Praise her/him (cf. Proverbs 31:28).** Praise your wife for her talents, compassion, modesty, godliness, beauty, and management of the home. Praise your husband for his leadership, work ethic, altruism, wisdom, and faithfulness to the Lord. Find different ways and times to do so and motivate your children to do the same.
- **Respect and demand respect for her/him (cf. 1 Peter 3:6).** Do not be harsh with your wife; do not treat your husband as one of your children, even if he behaves like one of them! Do not criticize her abilities in front of your children; do not undervalue his authority in front of them. If you disagree about something with your spouse, talk it over in private. Demand that your children pay the due respect to your spouse.
- **Take time for her/him (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).** Discuss the things you both like doing, or take turns doing the things the other person likes. Help your children understand that Dad and Mom need time together. Go to the movies together, play board games together, walk together, eat in a restaurant together, or just relax together.
- **Do spiritual activities with her/him (cf. Ephesians 5:25-27).** Doing family devotional with your children is important, but do not forget



to have spiritual activities with your spouse. Listen to a sermon together, discuss biblical subjects together, and meditate together.

- **Pray with and for her/him (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17).** Lead prayer at home and pray for your wife. Let your children know, through your prayers, that you are thankful to God for your wife, and that you want Him to continue to bless your marriage. The wife should also do the same in her personal prayers.
- **Lift up some of her/his burdens (cf. Matthew 7:12).** If your children are older, teach them and demand that they do some of the house chores your wife currently does, or you do it; remember that no woman has ever divorced a man because he wears an apron and does the dishes! Do not overwhelm your husband with unnecessary or tedious honey-do-lists.
- **Attend marriage seminars or other marriage-strengthening activities (cf. 2 Peter 3:18).** If you have parents who are able and willing to take care of the children for you, leave the children with them for a weekend and attend a spiritual event that will rekindle and improve your marriage.

Although parents need to love our children deeply and sometimes make adjustments and sacrifices to meet children's needs as they grow and learn, we do not need to place our children on a family pedestal and give them all our attention and time to the detriment of our marriage. Instead, they need to see the high importance we place on our marriage. If we do this, then they will do the same for their own families. If the marriage relationship has a high priority, then there will be no probability of divorce or breaking the marriage bond, and the family will be blessed with lasting stability. ■

1. Rainbolt, Rachel (2015), "Who Comes First: Husband or Children?" Sage Parenting, <http://www.sageparenting.com/who-comes-first-husband-or-children/>.
2. "Marriage and Divorce" (2017), National Center for Health Statistics, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>.



an introduction to this series, and THE CREATION ACCOUNT IN GENESIS 1-3

by Kerri Epling

As women, we juggle a lot of roles and responsibilities in our lives. First and foremost, however, we are Christians. As such, we have the great privilege and responsibility to be diligent in our studies of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). True success lies in living our lives in accordance with God's will and getting ourselves (and as many as possible in our sphere of influence) to eternal life in heaven. Sometimes, our lives get so busy that we don't make time for serious, deep Bible study. This series of lessons will challenge us to take well-known Bible "stories" that we may sometimes think of as children's stories and study them on a deeper level. I hesitate to use the word "story" in relation to Bible accounts, as I don't want to leave the impression that these descriptions and characters are in any

way like those of fictional fairy tales, myths, etc. However, the first two definitions of the word "story" in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* are: (1) an account of incidents or events, and (2) a statement regarding the facts pertinent to a situation in question.¹ Henceforth, I will use this word to describe the accounts used in our studies on this basis.

I did not grow up as a member of the Lord's church and was unexpectedly "thrown in" to teaching a Bible class for young children by myself very soon after my conversion. I realized quickly that I did not have the foundation that even these children had, so I studied voraciously that first year to learn the basic stories and characters our curriculum would cover. As I did so, I grew rapidly in my faith. Twenty years later, I am still teaching these same stories to young children, and I challenge myself each time I teach a story to glean something new that I haven't noticed before (or perhaps have forgotten) about the account. These stories have continued to help me grow stronger each time I encounter them, and I pray that the same will be true for you as we tackle them. Each study will contain questions to help us deepen our own personal understanding of Scripture, as well as some questions to ask children about the accounts. For those of us who are moms, Bible class teachers, grandmothers, and mentors, this can be a great way to combine our own study with teaching the precious young souls with whom we come in contact.

While we will study specific stories together, here are some basic questions to help us learn from any story in Scripture.



- What are the basic facts about this book of the Bible? Who wrote it? To whom? When? Where?
- What is the setting of this account?
- Who are the major “characters” in this account? What role does each play? Why are they important? What is their family background? Are they followers of God or not?
- What is the basic sequence of events/details of the account?
- What can I learn about God from this account?

- What can I learn about man from this account?
- Why do I think God included this account in Scripture?
- What lessons can I take from this to apply to my own life?

Make up questions you would ask someone else about the story to test her reading comprehension. Think about what you would make sure to include if you were teaching this story to someone who has never read it, or make a list of questions **you** have about the story and try to find the answers!

THE CREATION ACCOUNT

Our first study together comes from the Creation account found in Genesis 1-3. Many times, we reduce the importance of these three chapters to just a list of the days of Creation for children. We have likely read this section of Scripture so many times that we skim over the details and fail to realize the incredible significance of this true event. I would like to challenge you to read Genesis chapters 1-3 as though you have never read it before and see what treasures you can mine from this account.

- What does the order of Creation tell us about God’s nature (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33,40)?
- Were these literal days? How do we know?
- Society would like for us to believe that our world is nothing more than a happy accident with little purpose and no sense of design. Is this what Scripture indicates? Cite Scriptures to support your answer. What physical evidence can we see in the world around us about the truth of the Earth’s origin?
- What do the pronouns used in this account tell us about God?
- What does it mean that things were brought forth “after their kind?” How does this compare to teachings in the world today?
- What does Genesis 2:15 tell us

about how God views man’s responsibility to work?

- There are some very negative things discussed in the latter part of this story, but already there is evidence of God’s great plan for the redemption of mankind. Where do you start to see a hint of the Messiah?
- How did the people in the garden respond when confronted with their sins? How do we/should we respond? Give some examples from Scripture of people who responded both positively and negatively when confronted with sin.
- Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and had very real effects for this first family. List some of these.
- Read verses 7-11 and 21 of chapter 3. What is the significance of these verses? What can we infer about the coverings Adam and Eve made for themselves?
- What does it mean to be made in God’s “image”? This word implies being a shadow or representation of the original. How should this impact our lives? Specifically, whom should we imitate? Give Scripture to confirm your answer.
- It is interesting that marriage was one of the first things created/instituted by God. What are some things we can learn about marriage from this story?

Questions for children

- What was created on each day during Creation?
- Who were the first two people God created?
- What did God say about His creation when He had finished?
- What happened on the seventh day?
- Who got to name the animals?
- Who tricked Eve?
- How did God punish the characters in this story?
- Why do you think God told us this story?

Suggestions for interaction with children

Sing songs about creation, point out things you see in the world and ask children Who made them, have them match things in creation with the correct days, and talk to them about how Adam had one wife who was just right for him! ■

1. “Story”, Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/story>; Access date: February 4, 2020.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kerri at kerripling@gmail.com with email subject of “Christian Family Study.”

featured.

the Hollands

Paul serves as the minister and an elder at the Swartz Creek church of Christ in Swartz Creek, Michigan, and is one of the editors for the *Christian Family* magazine. Rachel is a homemaker and teaches English online. She teaches the 1st - 4th grade Wednesday Bible class and enjoys serving the church in different areas. Jewell is a junior English major at Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) in Henderson, Tennessee. She is getting married in August. Ana graduates from high school in the spring and will study business management at FHU in the fall. Paul has served as a youth minister in Tennessee and Kentucky, and the family served as missionaries in Romania from 2000 to 2008. Paul preached for the Lord's church in Paris, Kentucky, before moving Swartz Creek. Here, the Hollands share ideas on keeping the family focused as they go through changes.



H

What changes did you experience before you met each other?

Rachel came from a divorced family, moved after her dad remarried a Christian, and was introduced to Christian education at the new church where they worshiped. She made a decision to go to a Christian university to help find her path with a Christian husband. Paul grew up a minister's son, moved every two years on average, and vowed he would never be a minister! Yet, the Gospel message compelled Paul to want to share it with others.

What changes have you experienced in your married life?

After we married, we had one more year of school left. We worked with the church in Scotts Hill, Tennessee. Since we were planning to move

to Romania, we had to find a church to sponsor us. We moved to Livingston, Tennessee to work with the youth. After one and a half years, we moved to Tompkinsville, Kentucky for another two years. Preparing for the mission field changed our focus. Learning a new language and leaving comforts and familiarities of America was a challenge. In 2000, we moved to Iasi, Romania to do mission work. Missionary life is very different from life in America. All of the challenges we faced helped us rely on one another and our teammates. We grew spiritually in ways we could never have imagined. After seven and a half years there, we returned to Paris, Kentucky, for Paul to preach for another six years. Another move to Swartz Creek, Michigan, has given us a new perspective.

Why did you choose to do mission work?

We knew when we met each other that we wanted to serve God together. The autumn we were dating, we visited a professor at FHU who had served as a missionary in Argentina for many years. He was speaking about teamwork. A friend asked us if we would like to be part of a mission team, and we started down that road, with three couples forming a team.

What was it like to move to a foreign country?

We told our supporters not to expect anything visible for the first two years. We would have to get used to living in a foreign country. We took a month to learn to pay bills, go grocery shopping, find a place to conduct Bible studies and worship, and get around

town. After that first month, we started studying the Romanian language all day, every day. We started worshipping in Romanian a year earlier than we had expected. Jewell and Ana felt like Romania was home, since they had grown up there from a young age. The adjustment for them was not moving from the U.S. to Europe but moving from Europe to the U.S.

How is life different in Romania than in the United States?

While we had all our needs provided, there were things we did not have in Romania. Rachel made homemade

jelly and syrup. Some things were mailed to us, like dry ranch salad dressing packets and Sure-Jell. With other things, we just learned to do without. Life is simpler in Romania. Families walk outside in warm weather and talk and visit, taking their children to the playground. Elderly men play chess in the parks. The lifestyle was slow and, in many ways, stress-free.

Did you experience reverse culture shock when you returned to the States?

When you get accustomed to and immersed in a second culture, your original culture seems strange. We taught the girls in English so they would not be behind in school. We also spent nine months in the States before we finally moved back. That helped the girls make adjustments. Although Ana moved back to the States when she was six, she didn't understand other children's obsession with mac and cheese, and weekly reading tests

stressed her out. Both girls had adjustments, but no adverse effects were suffered. They have commented that living in one place all one's life seems unusual to them (from their experiences). I think there was a period of "detox" from one culture to another. Adjustments can be made, but you will always treasure the impact new places have on your worldview.

What was it like moving to Michigan?

Ana was twelve at the time of our move, and she remembers envisioning Michigan as a frozen wasteland with polar bears roaming around. She made a pros and cons list, and on the cons list was "a lack of sweet tea." That problem has gone unresolved, but at least there are no polar bears! Both girls agree that moving to Michigan has been one of the best changes they have experienced. Jewell met her fiancé at the Swartz Creek congregation and wouldn't change that for anything. ■

Tips for dealing with CHANGE



- ✓ **ACCEPT CHANGE AS A NORMAL PART OF LIFE.** Being united and emotionally close as a family helps make adjustments and communication easier.
- ✓ **LOOK AT CHANGE AS EDUCATIONAL.** We constantly hear that we should get "out of our comfort zone." Change pushes us and in doing that, we learn new things and meet new people.
- ✓ **PRAY THAT GOD WILL HELP YOU.** He can help you appreciate the joys (and even challenges) of a new situation and find comfort in remembering past experiences. He will show you new opportunities to serve where you are (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- ✓ **READ HIS WORD OFTEN.** The Bible creates faith in us (Romans 10:17) and sustains our faith. In order to continually trust God, we must continually feed our spirits with His Word.
- ✓ **WORK WITH YOUR CHILDREN TO HELP THEM SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES.** Change affects them differently than adults. Listen to their concerns. Don't belittle their fears, but help them see the potential in new things and experiences. Continuity in your family traditions will help children adjust to changes as well.
- ✓ **KEEP FRIENDSHIPS FROM THE PAST THAT ARE ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL FOR YOU AND HELP YOUR CHILDREN KEEP THEIR FRIENDSHIPS.** Friends who walk with you through life give you a point of reference for future decisions you have to make.
- ✓ **TRUST GOD TO BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU ARE.** Whether you live in Tennessee, Kentucky, Romania, or Michigan, God is with you and will bless you with good things if you walk with Him and put service to Him first in your life (Matthew 6:33).

Finding your **ROLE** as a **TEENAGE GIRL**

by **Christina Vincent**

As a teenage girl, I remember sitting in the pew, watching boys of similar age learning their part of the service. It was plain to see that they were being trained to lead—in prayer, Scripture reading, the Lord’s Supper, singing, and preaching. It was encouraging to watch them grow, and it was something we all celebrated. Yet, as I watched them learn their role, I could not help but wonder to myself... “What is mine?”

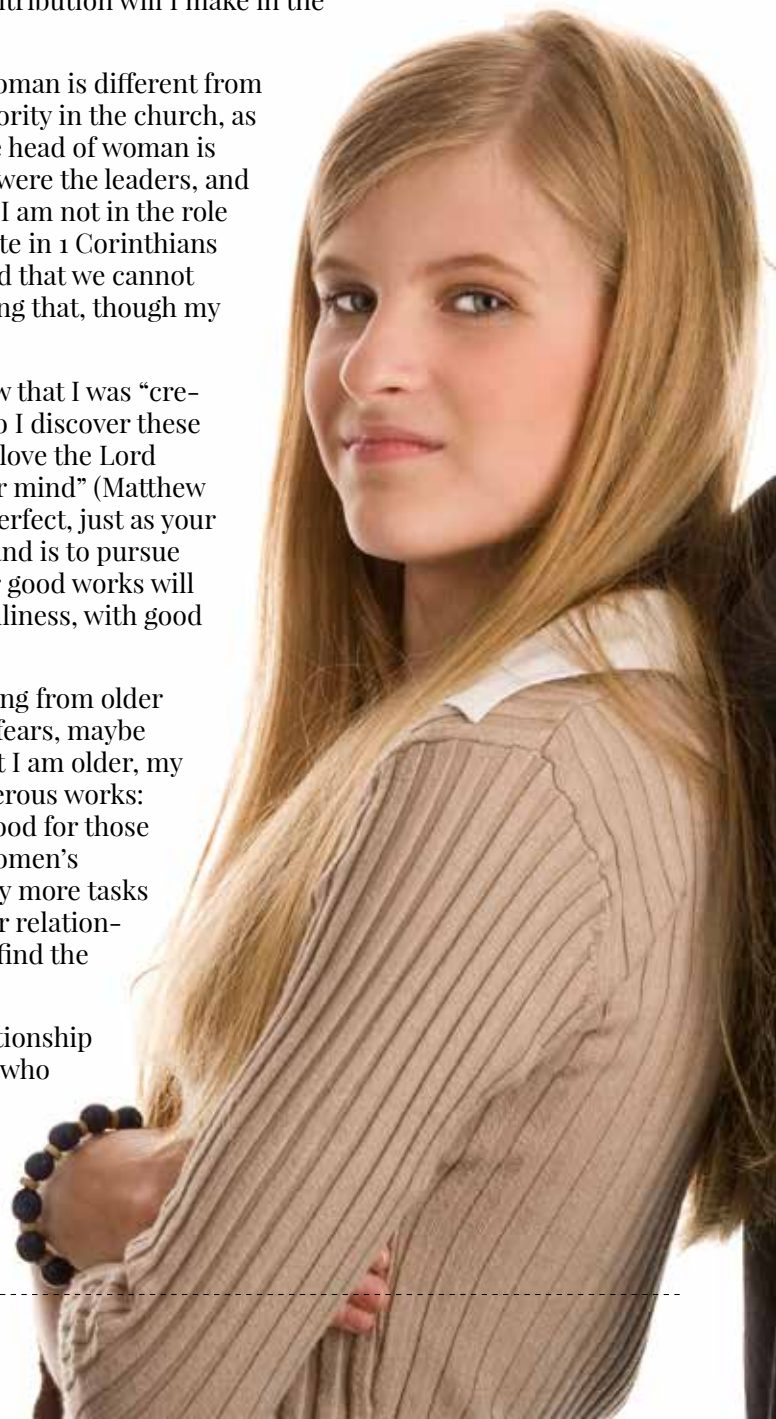
“What is my role as a teenage girl in the church?” This question kept coming to mind when I was young. Stemming from it, I remember wondering: “What important contribution will I make in the church?”

Being raised in the church, I had been taught my place as a woman is different from a man’s (1 Timothy 2:11–12). God clearly reveals the order of authority in the church, as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” I understood that the men were the leaders, and Christ is above all, but I was still confused. Did this mean, since I am not in the role of authority, that my function was less important? **No!** Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 that all members of the body of Christ are important and that we cannot function without all the parts. I find comfort in Scripture knowing that, though my role is different, it is vital to the body of Christ.

Yet, as a teenager, it leads to the question: “What now?” I know that I was “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10), but how do I discover these works? Jesus named the first and greatest command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37–38). By following this command, we may endeavor to “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Our greatest command is to pursue our relationship with God. When we strive to be Christ-like, our good works will come forth. Then, as women of the church, we may “profess godliness, with good works” (1 Timothy 2:10).

As a young woman, I wish I had been bolder and sought training from older women as described in Titus 2:3–5. If I had been clear about my fears, maybe then I would have learned my part better as a teenager. Now that I am older, my eyes are open to the women who labor in the church. I see numerous works: teaching children, writing cards, preparing potluck meals and food for those in need, organizing events, writing for the bulletin, leading at women’s occasions, visiting the sick, making crafts for the poor, and many more tasks I did not realize existed as a younger woman. As you pursue your relationship with God, you may seek the advice of the wiser to help you find the specific works God created you to do.

As the years go by, my role grows clearer as I develop my relationship with God. This is the primary work you must pursue. “A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). As you aim to please God, you will **want** to pursue the good works prepared by Him. Yet when you struggle, you cannot be afraid to seek the knowledge of the older, who can guide you to specific works. ■



What can I DO?

by Jared McLeod

ve heard it said many times: “The youth are the church of tomorrow.” It’s a true statement, but it’s not the whole truth. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Paul did not say, “We who are over the age of 18 are His workmanship.” The **whole** truth is this: If you, having put on Christ in baptism, are **in Christ**, then you are the church of **today**, not just the church of tomorrow.

So, how can you, a young Christian, be a working and vital member of the body of Christ? Here are a few ways:

1. Discover your strengths.

In Ephesians 4:16, we read that the body is “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**.” What is your part? The answer to that depends on where your strengths lie. Now is the best time in your life to discover those strengths, use them, and grow them. Do you have a knack for music? Try song-leading. Are you comfortable with speaking in front of others? Try preaching or leading a devotional or Bible Study. Are you soft spoken? Maybe your part is in service and care for others. The possibilities are endless. But, as you discover your strengths and your weaknesses, do not sell yourself short. Moses, when speaking with God in Exodus 3-6, said at three different times that he was not a good speaker (Exodus 4:10; 6:12,30). Yet, many times after this conversation, we see Moses speaking to the Israelites with great authority. He is even described as being “mighty in words” by Stephen in Acts 7:22. God knew Moses was capable of more than he thought he was. God knows you are capable of more than you likely think you are, too. I urge you: don’t ever say you don’t have the ability to do something for the kingdom!

2. Find and utilize opportunities to serve.

In addition to discovering your strengths, you must find and take advantage of the opportunities presented to you. When asked to help serve in a worship or non-worship capacity, accept the invitation. You can only grow as a Christian servant if you take the opportunities to cultivate your strengths. Also, don’t just wait for opportunities to be presented to you; go and seek out more opportunities! Let elders, deacons, and other leaders know of your desire to do more as a member of the body. If you see a need within the church, instead of waiting for someone else, look for ways that **you** can help fulfill that need.

3. Be a Christ-like example to your age group.

You may be able to teach the Gospel to others your age in a way that no one else can. Perhaps the best way to share the Gospel is by showing the effect of the Gospel in your own life and telling others about it. Urge others: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Be an example “in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Let others “see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Your peers are your mission field. Share Christ with them.

You are the church of today. Don’t wait for tomorrow to serve the kingdom. Use the abilities God has given you. Seek opportunities to use them. Live Christ, daily. You are His workmanship. **Now, go to work!** ■

children.

He's Got the Whole **WORLD**

by Melanie & Kimberley Pinedo

There are a lot of children's songs with simple words, but big meanings! "He's Got the Whole World" is one of them. We are going to talk about the real meaning of this song.

"He's got the whole world in His hands"

When you were a baby, your parents had to hold you in their hands. They had to take care of your every need! God is in control of this world, and He is here for us whenever we need Him. In Isaiah 41:10, we read, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." God is in control of everything, and we shouldn't worry. He tells us in Matthew 6 that He cares for even the smallest bird. He will definitely take care of us. We can feel love and comfort knowing that He has us "in His hands!"

"He's got the mommies and the daddies in His hands"

In a more personal way, He also watches over our family. We are taught about the importance of family in Ephesians. God gives us parents to guide us through life. Proverbs 22:6 says to them, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." As children, we need to show love and respect for our parents! Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." God designed the family in a perfect way, and He cares for each member of our families. Isn't it nice knowing that God is taking care of our mommies and daddies too?

"He's got the brothers and the sisters in His hands"

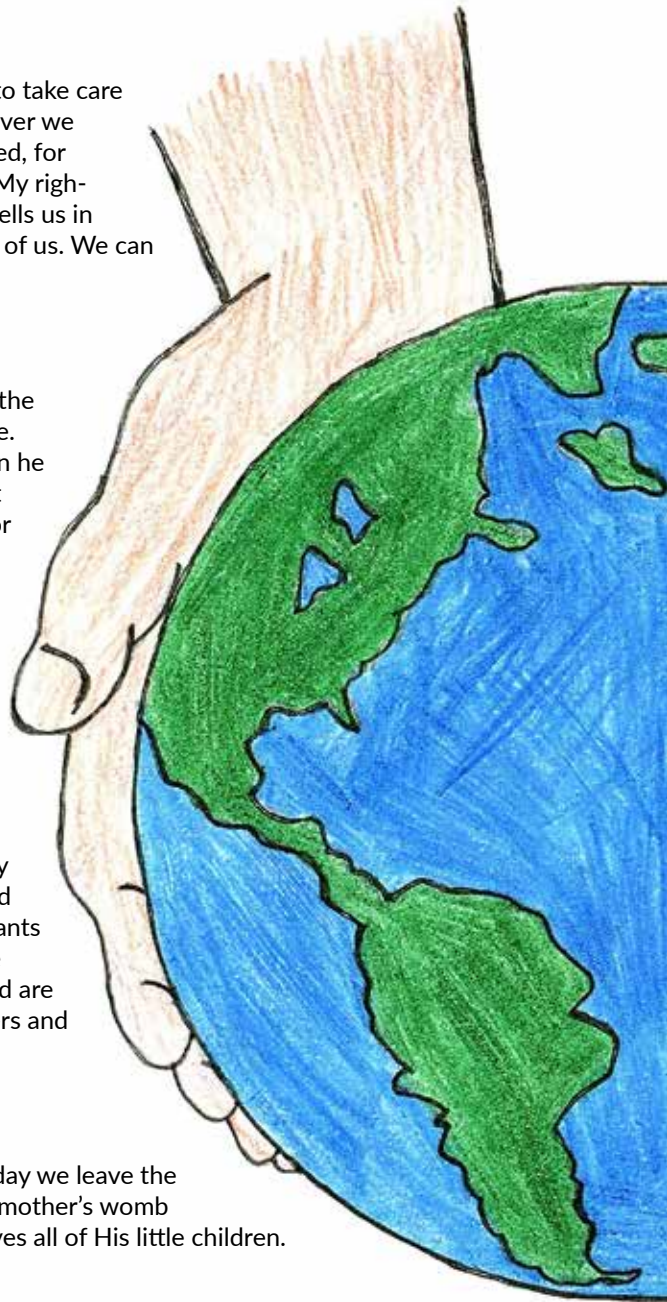
God loves each member of our families, and He wants each member of the family to work together. God loves unity! "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Brothers and sisters should help and encourage each other instead of arguing with one another. To "edify one another" means to "build each other up." You might enjoy playing with building blocks or legos. Each building block connects together and strengthens an object that is being built. If you have brothers or sisters, God wants you to work together and therefore make your family stronger because you are connecting to one another. God loves peacemakers. Matthew 5:9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." If you don't have brothers and sisters, you can still apply these principles in how you deal with your friends.

"He's got the itty-bitty babies in His hands"

This verse tells us that God watches over us from the time we are born to the day we leave the earth. Actually, God is even watching over you from the time you were in your mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). He sees all babies and children as precious and innocent. He loves all of His little children.

"He's got you and me brother, in His hands"

God is also watching over those in His church. The church is God's family, and the members are sometimes referred to as brothers and sisters. He loves to know that His people are gathering together to worship



Him. He loves to hear our praise. John 4:24 says: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." He is watching over us and will guide us through life. In Psalm 34, we learn that God watches over the righteous. He loves us and He loves His church.

"He's got the whole world in His hands"

This song ends with the verse "He's got the whole world in His hands" again. In Luke 12:22-23, we read, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing." God is telling us not to worry about the little things and that He will provide for our needs. God is all powerful and created this amazing world in which we live. He knows our every need and has provided a world which amazingly gives us everything we might need. He has provided us with air to breathe, sunshine for warmth, rain for growth, plants and animals for us to eat, and so much more! In the beginning, He put man in charge of His creation. He wants all of His children to do what is right and follow Him while we are in the world.

This song is a great reminder that God is in control and that He constantly has me in His hands and knows just what I need. I can feel safe and loved knowing that I have a Heavenly Father Who is watching over me every second of every day. ■



Illustration in this spread by
Kelsey Pinedo (age 10)

Online and printed Spanish
materials for children at:
www.ebherencia.org

Contact: editorial@ebglobal.org

He's Got the...

Look at the Bible verses to find out what God has in His hands. Then, fill in the blanks (use the NKJV).

Ecclesiastes 9:1: The _____ and the
_____ and their _____.

Psalm 31:15: My _____.

1 Chronicles 29:12: _____ and _____.

Psalm 95:4: The _____ of the
_____.

Job 12:10: The _____ of _____
_____, and the _____ of all _____.

questions.

Q&A

Q: Should Christian parents allow their children to attend parties?

—OKLAHOMA, U.S.

Peer influences can be very powerful over us (1 Corinthians 15:33). A party which involves immorality or ungodliness is dangerous for our children. For example, drinking alcohol often occurs at parties with non-Christians. Immodest dancing is also often found at parties. Peter warns Christians that when they stop living after the “will of the Gentiles, . . . walking in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries,” then their friends will be surprised when Christians no longer “run with them” into the same “flood of dissipation” (1 Peter 4:3-4). Those are the kinds of parties parents should not let their children attend. —PH

Q: How important is it to be emotionally mature in marriage?

—GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

It is extremely important to be emotionally mature when you get married and to marry a person who is emotionally mature. Living with someone involves sharing the same space, dividing chores, rearing children, and being around each other when you are happy, mad, impatient, and irritable. These all challenge our emotional maturity! Each of us need to grow in the Christian graces (Galatians 5:22-23) and Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-7) and look to marry someone who is consciously trying to grow in those areas as well.

That makes for an emotionally mature and stable marriage. —PH

Q: Did Jesus allow divorce because of fornication or adultery?

—ANONYMOUS

In Matthew 19:9, Jesus condemned divorce for any reason, except for “fornication.” This “fornication” (or “sexual immorality” in some Bible versions) refers to “adultery.” Every act of “adultery” is “fornication” (from the Greek *porneia*—any illicit sexual intercourse), but not every act of “fornication” is “adultery” (from the Greek *moichos*—an illicit intercourse where a **married** person is involved).

Therefore, Jesus allowed divorce because of “adultery” or “fornication committed by one spouse against his/her innocent mate.” However, there are acts of fornication that a person may commit when he/she is single that, even though they are still sins against God and damnable if not repented of, they are not sins against a marriage (since that bond does not yet exist) and are not grounds for future divorce with God’s approval. —MP

Q: My daughters are 6 and 3. They love each other but fight a lot. Should I intervene in their childish fights?

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

Yes. Sooner or later, all children will fight, but they need to learn to love each other, and part of it is helping them understand that

fighting is at odds with love. Since your children have different ages and personalities, then you will need to teach them accordingly. Your 3-year-old daughter may not understand much reasoning, so your instruction may be usually limited to a firm “No.” With your 6-year-old, you may be able to explain why fighting is bad. Also, you may want to point out to her that her younger sister does not understand as much as she does, and therefore, she needs to be more patient and flexible with her;

she needs to be an example to her. Help her think about ways to make peace with her sister instead of wanting her way. Also, remind her that, when she does not know what to do or how to act, she can come to you for help instead of “solving the problem” by herself. You may want to reinforce love lessons in your family Bible time and help them think about it. Finally, both children may need to receive some adequate form of discipline if they persist in disobeying and fighting. —MP

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