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Christian *family*

ESPAÑOL
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Our **FAMILIES**
around the world
and their stories of
FAITH *during the*
PANDEMIC

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In only a few months, the pandemic has spread like a wildfire and has affected, one way or another, all families around the world. It can be said that the family of today is not the same as the family of last year. Yet, despite tragedy, illness, and uncertainty, many Christian families have used this time to draw closer to the Lord. In this issue, our families around the world tell us their stories of faith during the pandemic.

This issue also helps families to cope with the loss of a dear one, and to make Christ the center of their home so children may grow up to love and live for the Lord. It presents God's definition of a true man and woman, gives hope in stormy times, helps young people to own their faith, and explores the goodness of God. May the Lord help you strengthen your family's faith through this new issue.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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Grief WORK!

by Kevin Williams

family.

Back in the 1960s, when I was a young boy, my aunt (Ruby Shipman) died of cancer. She was a godly woman who was easy to love. My mother took me to her hospital room before she died, and our family went to the funeral at the Macon Road church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. That is the first funeral that I remember attending. I still remember so many things about it. Funerals are not easy at any age! So, how do you handle the loss of a loved one?

Grieving is not an event, but a process. Too many times we might like to think that it is a single event in life. We have a loss, we grieve, and we get over it. However, experiencing the loss of one near to us involves much more. The truth is that we do not “get over” the loss of loved ones; we simply learn to accept the loss and live without them. If each of us could only realize this principle and accept it, then we would be better able to handle our grief, we would better help others who grieve, and we would know what to expect when we experience future losses.

This grief “process” is often some of the most difficult “work” that any of us will ever do, and rightfully so. It is real work! We have much invested physically, emotionally, and even spiritually with those whom we love. And, that being the case, we ought to expect to “grieve” when we lose them. That grief is a reflection of the closeness of the relationship we have with them. That being said, what are some simple things that we can do to help us in our grief process? Here are a few suggestions with one-word reminders that might help us.

1. Eyes. Look at pictures. We are all visual people to some extent. Reminiscing and shedding tears while viewing “memories” of those we love can be tremendously effective in helping us to learn to live with our loss (Genesis 50:10).

- 2. Mouth.** Talk about your loss and your concerns with someone who will listen. Do not keep things bottled-up inside. Rather, freely speak the things that are on your mind. It is often helpful to seek out someone who has gone through what we are currently experiencing because they can more readily relate to the process through which we are going. Familiarity breeds understanding. We all need a support group. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are just that; access them (1 Corinthians 12:25)!
- 3. Hands.** Do something constructive. While we do need time to grieve, even on an ongoing basis, we also need to “do” something and busy the mind and body. Be productive, help others, and feel good about it in the process (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- 4. Knees.** Get on them and pray for God’s help. No one can help us like He can! Not only talk to Him, but also listen to Him through His Word. There are so many helpful texts for those who grieve. God has prepared those for us from days of old (1 Peter 3:12).
- 5. Feet.** Keep going, moving, and developing a new routine over time. While we must deal with our loss, and take the time to do it, it is also very beneficial to avoid reclusion by being involved in the lives of other people and things outside your house (2 Samuel 12:16-20).

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26). ■



parenting.

by Paul Holland

OFF drugs, OUT of gangs, OUT of the church

Let us consider two contrasting scenarios as we begin. First, we have “Christian Family A.” Both parents are Christians and they understand that children are a gift from God (Genesis 33:5; 48:9). So, they “dote” on their children as much as time, energy, and reasonable finances allow. They want their children to grow up happy. The family spends a lot of time together, especially in after-school activities and on vacations. They go to church on Sundays. When a Bible-related question is asked, Dad answers it as best as he can, based on the knowledge he has gained from listening to the preacher on Sunday mornings. The parents’ philosophy is: “Idle hands are a devil’s workshop.” They want their children busy and active, doing good things that will contribute to their physical, academic, and emotional development.

The children are good children. They are not perfect but, by the world’s standards, they are exemplary. They make good grades in school. They never do drugs or engage in sexual immorality. They have healthy relationships with their friends and with the opposite gender. By all external measurements, “Christian Family A” is a success. When the children become adults and they look back at their childhood, the one word that will come to mind is “Family.”

Now, let us look at “Christian Family B.” This family is also led by two Christians who understand that children are a stewardship from God (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2). While they believe that family togetherness is essential to the family’s health, they also believe that Christ needs to be at the center of their family life. To say

“Christ” is at the center means that His **Word** and His **church** are at the center. They want their children to grow up faithful. While the family spends a lot of time together, much of that time is spent in church-related activities. They all attend Bible classes whenever they are offered. They attend worship with fellow Christians, both Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday evening. When work days are offered at church, Mom and Dad take the children, and as a family they all work to serve the Lord’s church.

Because Mom and Dad are actively involved in raising the children, they are engaged in the children’s after-school activities. They are involved with those activities to the point when they are scheduled on Wednesday or Sunday during worship time, Mom and Dad respectfully ask the activity leader to excuse their children because they have a prior engagement with their Savior. The leader, respecting the religious convictions of this family who is heavily involved, gladly consents.

When a Bible-related question is asked, Dad is able to give a thorough Bible-based answer because he studies the Bible on his own (as does Mom) and he has committed many Bible verses to memory himself. The parents’ philosophy is: “Children are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man. We are to send our children back to God” (cf. Psalm 127:3-5). So, they want their children growing up under godly influences at home and at church, doing things that will strengthen their faith in Christ and their commitment to their Savior.

These children also turn out to be good children. Again, they are not perfect but, by the world's standards, they are extraordinary. Good grades. No drugs. No sexual immorality. Healthy relationships. Not only is "Christian Family B" a success in the most fundamental of spiritual expectations, but the children, as young adults, make their own decisions to go to worship and be involved in their own local congregations. As adults, they look back at their childhood and the one word that comes to mind is "Christ."

According to an article on The Gospel Coalition website,¹ 70% of young people will drop out of church after high school. Only 35% will return to regular attendance. Why? Because too many Christian families reflect Christian family "A" while too few reflect Christian family "B."

In the 1970s, churches began hiring full-time youth ministers. "The bigger, the better" was a philosophy that governed many youth programs. After all, you can't teach them if they aren't there, right? Food. Musical instruments (among Protestants). Singing. If you had a large, vibrant youth program, you drew more families to the church. Many Christian parents effectively turned the child-rearing over to the youth minister (many of whom had no children themselves and were barely out of adolescence themselves). The guiding principle became: "Let's keep the kids busy. That will keep them out of gangs and off drugs."

The problem was, and is, that without direct, consistent, sacrificial **parental involvement**, youth ministry produces a whole lot of Christian Family "A's". The church has many "Christians" today who are not on drugs and not in gangs. That's good. But they're not faithful in the Lord's Church either. The focus of too many Christian families has been, over the past four or five decades, to keep children **busy** rather than develop **faithfulness** in them.

So, what can we do?

First, all of us as parents need to grasp this one, fundamental concept: the salvation of the soul is **the most important goal for any of us!** What I, as a dad, put into my children's minds and hearts, spiritually speaking, is **more important** than what I put into their belly! Our children can go to heaven unhealthy, with no athletic skills, and even with empty stomachs. But they cannot go to heaven with a heart devoid of Jesus Christ!

Many of us have seen pictures on Facebook which show a person making a serious error and the caption says, "You had only one job to do...!" We as parents have one job to do: to send our children back to God (Psalm 127:3-5). In essence, every time God allows a woman to become pregnant (even if the woman is not married!), He tells that mom and the dad: "Here is a little life. Prepare him/her to come back to me." That's the responsibility of every single parent: Prepare your child to go back to God.

Secondly, that means Mom and Dad must take an active lead in teaching and training the children in biblical teaching and service to Christ and the church. Mom and Dad need to have their own personal prayer life and their own personal Bible study habit.

Third, the more active parents are in the church, the more opportunities the children have to develop their own relationship with Christ and make faith their own. Don't drop your children off at the church building for the youth minister to raise. **Take** your children and be a part of the activities. I'm sure most youth ministers or deacons over youth would love to have the extra parental support.

Ultimately, we want our children to be off drugs, out of gangs, and out of hell. Let us bind them as tightly together to Jesus Christ as we can. Chorus does not do that. Baseball or basketball does not do that. A Christ-centered home and a church-centered family life will. ■

1. Wright, Dave (2012), "A Brief History of Youth Ministry," The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-brief-history-of-youth-ministry/>.

marriage.

by Kimberley Pinedo

A REAL WOMAN

“**M**an! I Feel Like a Woman!” Shania Twain’s popular hit is filled with a worldly definition of what it means to be “a woman.”

Oh, oh, oh, go totally crazy,

Forget I’m a lady;

Men’s shirts, short skirts...

Oh, oh, oh, really go wild, yeah,

Doin’ it in style...

Oh, oh, oh, get in the action,

Feel the attraction;

Color my hair, do what I dare...

Oh, oh, oh, I wanna be free, yeah,

To feel the way I feel.

Man! I feel like a woman!

Although written and sung with a spirit of just “having fun,” so many things in this song are truly against the biblical definition of the woman God desires for each of His daughters. Today’s worldly definition of a woman is self-sufficient, doesn’t need anyone, and definitely shouldn’t submit to a man! She gains her self-worth through her education and/or work. She spends most of her time outside the home seeking wealth and fame. She dresses the way that she wants because it is her body! She can sadly even abort a baby if she desires because it isn’t convenient for her.

However, as daughters of God, we need to look into biblical definitions of what God would like His daughters to look like. As we read in Genesis, God made the perfect family: one man for one woman, for life (1:26-27). Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, and Eve was created to be a helpmeet for her husband Adam (2:18). It was the perfect arrangement of a relationship made by a perfect God. In the New Testament, we learn that God desires for a woman to be submissive to her husband (Ephesians 5:22). This is obviously not a submission to a cruel, dominating, careless husband. God has outlined how He would like for the man to treat the wife, “just as Christ also loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25).

We have self-worth because we are created in God’s image and have a very clear purpose of living for God. My self-worth does not come from how physically attractive I am, how much money I have, how many name-brand clothes I own, the type of car I drive, or even the people with whom I surround myself. My self-worth comes from within, something that is not physical. I am special and was specifically created for a purpose! (Isaiah 43:7).

The Bible also describes the wife as a homemaker (Titus 2:5). A homemaker is often looked down upon as often people will ask, “What is your profession?” And if your answer is a “homemaker,” it is often considered in a negative light as if somehow you were not able to finish school or pursue a degree to do “more” with your life. Regardless of whether I have a college degree or a secular job, my main goal as a wife is to glorify God and to do so in my relationship with my husband. My main goal as a parent is to help guide my children to heaven. This requires a lot of time! I must assure that I am spending a sufficient amount of time with my family so that I can focus on my spiritual goals!

As women who live for God, we have to be careful not to give into the worldly definition of a real woman: someone who does what she wants to feel “free” (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). It is a blessing and a joy to live as a servant of the loving God!

Are **you** a real woman? ■



by **Moisés Pinedo**

A **REAL** MAN

I grew up in a society of “real men”—or rather, a society of “macho men.” In that society, it was shameful for a woman to have sexual intimacy before marriage or with different men (indeed, it is, and the Bible clearly condemns such activity—1 Corinthians 6:9-10). However, when a man engaged in the same kind of activity, people (men and even women) excused him with the following statement: “Men are men!” Clearly, the thought was that this is just the way “real men” are.

But what is a **true** “real man”? I have known a man who yelled at his wife and children and demanded compliance because he was a “real man;” another beat his wife with no shame because he was a “real man;” and another never allowed his wife to drive her car when he was in it because “real men” are not driven by women!

As Christians, it is important that we do not buy into worldly concepts but look into God’s Word for an ideal view of man. I contend that a “real man” is nothing of the things above, but he is a **man of God**. In 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul addressed Timothy with the description “man of God,” and exhorted him to honor that description with the following words:

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

When we break this verse into two parts, we see that

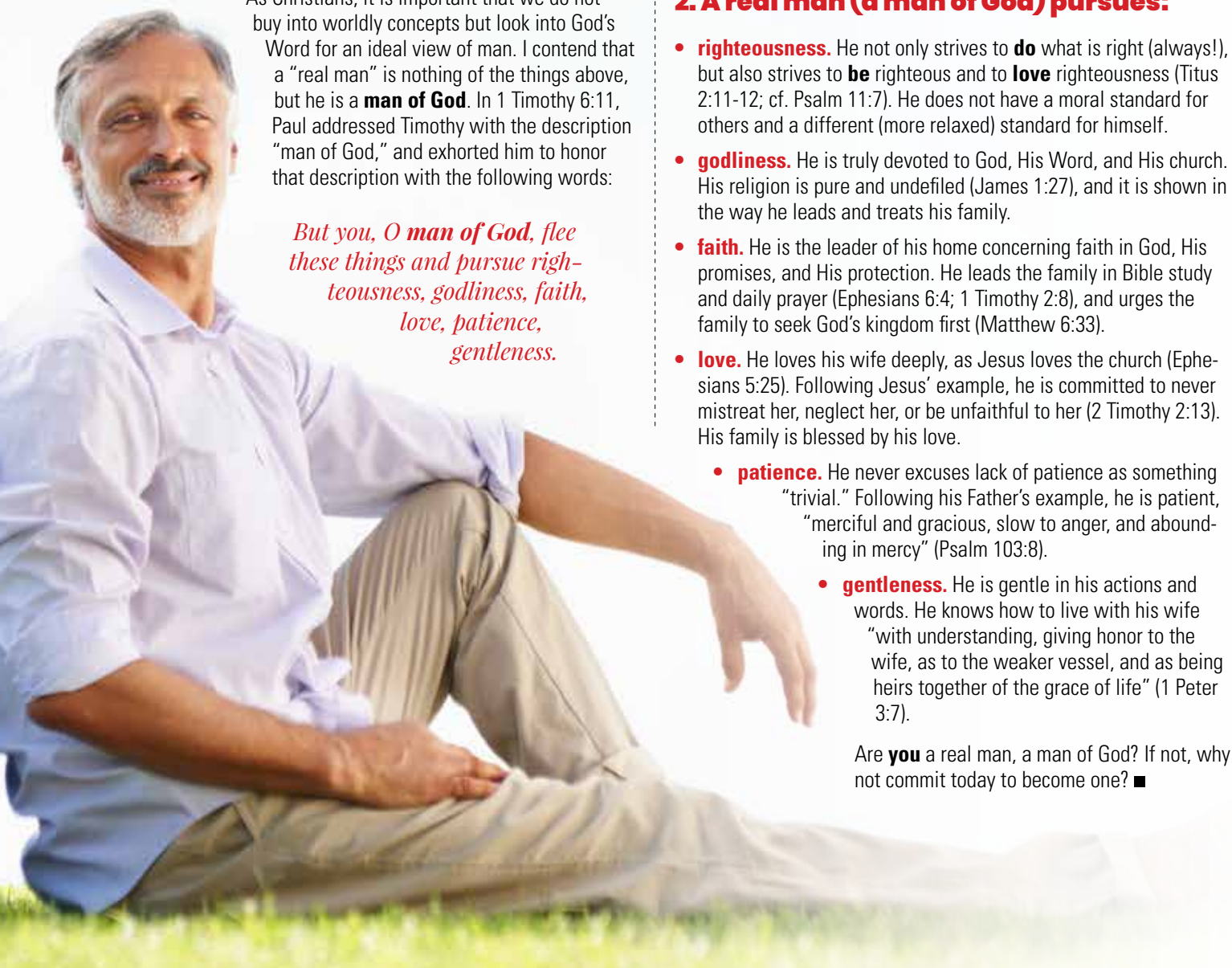
1. A real man (a man of God):

- **flee** “these things.” Which ones? Those works of the flesh Paul had listed in the previous verses: Pride, envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings, foolish and harmful lusts, and greediness (vss. 3-10; cf. Galatians 5:19-21). Following the example of Christ, the man of God is not a chauvinist, arrogant, or hedonistic (1 Peter 2:21-23). He strives to overcome flaws in his character and flees from any unholy attitudes and actions that will prevent him from seeing the face of his holy God (Hebrews 12:14).

2. A real man (a man of God) pursues:

- **righteousness**. He not only strives to **do** what is right (always!), but also strives to **be** righteous and to **love** righteousness (Titus 2:11-12; cf. Psalm 11:7). He does not have a moral standard for others and a different (more relaxed) standard for himself.
- **godliness**. He is truly devoted to God, His Word, and His church. His religion is pure and undefiled (James 1:27), and it is shown in the way he leads and treats his family.
- **faith**. He is the leader of his home concerning faith in God, His promises, and His protection. He leads the family in Bible study and daily prayer (Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:8), and urges the family to seek God’s kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).
- **love**. He loves his wife deeply, as Jesus loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). Following Jesus’ example, he is committed to never mistreat her, neglect her, or be unfaithful to her (2 Timothy 2:13). His family is blessed by his love.
- **patience**. He never excuses lack of patience as something “trivial.” Following his Father’s example, he is patient, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psalm 103:8).
- **gentleness**. He is gentle in his actions and words. He knows how to live with his wife “with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7).

Are **you** a real man, a man of God? If not, why not commit today to become one? ■



STORMY SEAS

by Kerri Epling

Have you ever been in a terrible storm? How did you feel? What thoughts ran through your mind? Growing up in Louisiana, I experienced quite a few tornadoes and severe thunderstorms that seemed to come out of nowhere. One minute we would be playing in the yard, and the next we would all pile into a windowless hallway and prepare for the storm. Once, I remember the wind coming on so suddenly that it flipped me out of the porch swing, and I had the air knocked out of me. It was terrifying, but I remember that when my parents moved me to a place of safety,

I felt calmer and less afraid. Spiritually speaking, we also have many storms that batter us from all sides. Today, we are facing a worldwide pandemic, and life has been altered from what we have experienced in the past. Many of us face storms of sickness, financial strain, stress, job loss, etc. This is not a new problem for Christians. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 1:9, “there is nothing new under the sun.” This article’s focus will be on Matthew 8:23–27, Mark 4:35–41, and Luke 8:22–25, where we read an account in which the apostles experienced their own storm. Let’s put ourselves in their shoes for this study and learn from the Master.

In past studies, we have listed quite a few questions that can be used when studying any account in Scripture. Feel free to refer to those to glean from these accounts.

Specific questions to consider about this event

- What kinds of things had the apostles experienced during their time with Jesus?
- Why were Jesus and the apostles in the boat?
- What was Jesus doing as they sailed? What does this show about His trust in God?



women and mothers / bible study.

- What was happening to the boat? What was the weather like?
- What kinds of storms are you facing?
- What did the apostles call Jesus?
- How did Jesus react when the apostles woke Him?
- What did Jesus say to the wind and waves? What does this show us about His relationship with His creation? What other scriptures would solidify our knowledge of His authority over creation?
- What question did Jesus ask the apostles? Should they have had faith? Why or why not?
- Could this question ever apply to us? Are we ever fearful and lacking faith? How could we strengthen our faith?
- The apostles had plenty of evidence that Jesus was Who He said He was. Do we? If so, what?

Questions for children

- Where were the apostles and Jesus?
- What kind of weather was happening?
- What was Jesus doing?
- How did the apostles react?
- What did Jesus do to the wind and waves?

- Why do you think God put this story in the Bible?

Suggestions for interaction with children

- Role play! Put young children in a sturdy box or laundry basket (to be their boat) and rock it back and forth to make it seem like they are in a storm. Have them pretend to “scoop water” out of the boat. Let Dad pretend to be sleeping while the kids wake him up. He can stand up and say, “Jesus said, ‘Peace, be still,’” and make the shaking stop. Talk about God’s power.
- Next time it storms, tell this story to your children and have them imagine what it must have felt like. Tell them to try to calm the storm. Talk about how powerful God is over His creation!
- Sing “Master, the Tempest is Raging.”
- Have your kids paint a storm on a piece of paper and write or glue “Peace, Be Still” over the storm.

My prayer is that digging into this account in Scripture will help you learn to face the storms in your life with the faith that Jesus showed. May we all remember that the One Who created and calmed the seas will never leave us nor forsake us. ■

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

featured.

Our **FAMILIES** around the world and their stories of **FAITH** during the **PANDEMIC**

At the beginning of the quarantine, our daughter began to have strong back pain that has caused her many other problems. Her health and mood deteriorated with each week for the past six months. These have been long months of constant struggle and prayer to find a cure for her, as well as for us. But through faith, prayer, and unity with my wife and daughter, we have received help from our God and Father to face the anxiety, pain, and isolation of this time. We have joy in our hearts even in this circumstance. God is faithful.

—Hurlingham, Argentina

Today Is My First Day...

Today is my first day to lift up my eyes,
Enjoy the sunshine, walking straight.
Today is my first day to leave behind fever,
Needles, suffocation, isolation, and uncertainty.
And today is my first day to see the horizon,
Breathing the air with the full strength of my lungs.

Today is my day to be happy and thankful
For those things that I thought I was going to lose.
Today is my day, a joyful day,
When I ask God to take care of me,
So I can live, smile, and say with the prophet:
“Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

—Anonymous poem sent by one of our readers
who recovered from COVID-19

Although I have not been physically affected by the coronavirus, several members of my extended family have been infected. Thanks to the Lord, most have recovered, but we have lost others. This situation has been difficult, but the Lord has been with us. This time of difficulty has helped us to develop unity in our family, to learn more about God's Word, and to pray more.

—Texas, U.S.

We have used this time of isolation to cling to God's promises that He will take care of us, teaching our daughters that God is good and will see for our needs. We are trying to grow in different areas of life, producing the fruit of the Spirit. Thanks to God's grace, we are well; and even though there is limited freedom to go out, our daughters have taught us much about their contentment with everyday life. —Alajuela, Costa Rica

In Spain, we were confined for three months. We were not able to attend services since March; services were online. During the pandemic, we have strengthened our family by studying the Bible more and studying with others via the internet. Thanks to God, we have used this time for our spiritual growth. —Spain

My family has faced struggles, not only with the pandemic, but also due to other common illnesses and our low income. However, our faith in God has not declined; we have learned to trust Him more and praise Him more as a family. Our faith has been the anchor in the middle of this storm. —Petapa, Guatemala

We are a family of six. Two of them contracted the virus and brought it home. My wife was the most affected since she is a diabetic, but the Lord allowed her to live. We have seen the hand of God protecting our family during this time, as well as the help of His church.

—Usulután, El Salvador

My brother and I contracted the virus, but we are well and safe thanks to the grace of God, the prayers of the saints, and medical care. God is good and merciful.

—Bucaramanga, Colombia

This time of pandemic has been very difficult, since we have seen the enemy trying to destroy our family due to not being able to see our grandchildren for almost a year now. The enemy has also tried to harm the church, and in some cases, he has succeeded, and the love of some has grown cold. Our family finances have also been affected since my salary was reduced by 30% in July and by another 20% the following months. But the Lord has kept us firm in the faith, and most importantly, the virus has not touched our family. We pray for the brotherhood around the world that is facing similar problems. May God give us the endurance and strength to overcome this time.

—Texas, U.S.

At the beginning of the pandemic, my family felt stressed; but the Lord strengthened us spiritually, physically, and mentally as we started to have daily time together in prayer and devotion. Even when a member of our family became sick, God gave us the strength to overcome this difficulty. To Him be the glory. —Tabasco, Mexico

At the beginning of the pandemic, my family and I felt worry and fear. We prayed to God and He strengthened our souls and faith. We began to see the situation from a different perspective and learned that God is in control even when we feel worry. Our family unity provided us encouragement. Reading the Holy Scriptures kept us firm and faithful. The Lord has been good to all of us.

—Connecticut, U.S.

Our family lives in Peru, but my wife's family is from Colombia. Early this year, our daughter traveled to Colombia to help my mother-in-law, who was very ill with terminal cancer. My mother-in-law's health deteriorated, and my wife traveled to Colombia in March; her mother died two weeks later. Although my wife and daughter were scheduled to fly back in April, Peru closed its international airport due to the pandemic, and they had to stay in Colombia for several months.

Being apart from my wife and daughter was a difficult time; but we kept constant communication, prayed together by phone, and studied the Bible by internet. An additional concern was that my wife also has cancer and was not able to continue her treatments while in Colombia. However, God was merciful, and they could finally come back to Peru at the end of August. This time of pandemic has taught us to trust God more; and our family is even stronger now than before. —Lima, Peru

This has been a time that we have seen God's hand on our family and the church. Although we faced the death of a dear brother, we have also seen God's provision. We have learned to depend each day on God's grace and mercy..., and we have learned that, through God's strength, "we are more than conquerors."

—Tlaxcala, Mexico

youth.

by Chris Jordan

Do you OWN YOUR FAITH?

I often discuss with our youth group the importance of having their own faith. Often when young people in the church leave home, they also leave the church. We think to ourselves, “They were at church every time the doors were open. They attended youth events and fellowships. They were at Bible camp and youth rallies with their youth group.” Parents and grandparents wonder where they went wrong. Elders, youth leaders, and preachers might ask what happened. The real question to ask is, “Whose faith did they own?” Our faith can’t be the faith of our parents, grandparents, preacher, elders, Bible school teacher, or youth minister. I believe that one of the biggest reasons that young people leave the church is because they never owned their own faith. How can this change?

First of all, we need to make sure we understand the definition of the word “faith.” The Bible defines it for us in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” I like how the New Century Version puts it: “Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it.” Additionally, we must understand where we can obtain this faith. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Paul, the inspired author, tells us that biblical faith comes from understanding the Word of God—the Bible! Notice that he did not mention that faith could be inherited or received from any other method or man.

So, how do we obtain and become owners of **our faith**?

1. We must make time to study God’s Word.

Second Timothy 2:15 tells us that we are to study the Word to show ourselves approved before God, so that we don’t need to be ashamed. We cannot rely on someone else to implant the Word of God in our own hearts and minds. The world is filled with many distractions that lead to our lack of study and conviction. I am a firm believer that we will make time for what really matters to us in this life. If we don’t make time for Bible study, we allow others to develop our faith for us, and we will never become owners of our own faith. When we do this, we are putting our faith in man rather than God. Hebrews 11:6 warns us: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” We must study God’s Word to know what God desires of us.





2. We must have a powerful prayer life.

The Lord desires more than anything to have a personal relationship with each one of us. Everyone knows that the key to a great relationship is communication. When is the last time you communicated with God on a very personal level? If our prayer life is suffering, then our relationship with God will also suffer. How can we know or love someone with whom we rarely talk? First Thessalonians 5:17 commands us to “pray without ceasing.” James 5:16 says that the “prayer of a righteous man avails much.” We should be praying every day for the Lord to make us stronger. We should be praying every day for Him to lead us away from temptations, (Matthew 26:41). We should be thanking God every day for the blessings He gives us (Philippians 4:6).

3. We must obey God’s will for us.

If we have never obeyed the Gospel of Christ, we must be willing to sacrifice our lives for His. It is by faith that we repent of the wrong in our lives and accept His will to be done. It is by faith that we are willing now and forever to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is by faith that we are willing to be baptized into Christ. This obedience to His will is what allows us to contact the precious, perfect blood of Christ which washes away our sins. It is then, by faith, that God will add us to His church. We must constantly evaluate our lives and make the needed changes. The Lord tells us in 1 John 1:7 that when “we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” First Peter 4:17-18 and Romans 14:10-12 teach us that we must all individually appear and give an account before the Lord. On that day, we will stand alone before God to give an account. Nobody else will be standing with us before God on that day. But this doesn’t mean that we are alone in Christianity! The Lord designed the church and the Christian home for a very special reason. Those institutions were perfectly designed to provide the support that the Lord knew we would need in order to stay faithful until the end. Choosing to be around Christian examples is an important tool in strengthening our faith.

Do you own your faith? Paul encourages us in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to “[e]xamine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.” In order to be pleasing to God, we must own our faith. It is important that it belongs to us and to no one else. My prayer is for every young Christian to become an obedient child of God and to own his/her own faith! ■

children.

GOD IS SO GOOD

by Julie Schroeder

There is a short song we often sing called “God Is So Good.” The first verse simply says, “God is so good.” In two of the four verses, the words present ways God is good. One verse is our response to God’s goodness to us. To help us think about the meaning of the words as we praise God, we will look closely at each of the verses.

GOD IS SO GOOD...

“Good” is a word that is used many times in the lives of toddlers and young children. Sometimes it is used with our pets. For example, we say, “Good dog,” or, “Good boy.” In this case, we are usually talking about the dog’s behavior. Sometimes we say that someone is good at soccer, or that someone has made a good choice. It is a simple word with many meanings. Did you know God fits all the meanings of “good”?

First, God has the characteristics needed to do His job. All we have to do is to look at God’s creation. We can see this with our own eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, smell with our nose, and taste with our mouth. When we see the colored sunset or the bright blue sky, hear the sounds of birds singing, smell the roses, or feel the softness of a bunny’s fur, we see God’s “goodness.” The Bible tells us five times in Genesis 1 that what God created was good (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 25, 31). At the end of the story of creation, it says, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (vs. 31).

Second, God is good because he gives freely to all. He provides sunshine and rain to people and creatures all over the world (read Psalm 104). God in His love for mankind does what is right.

Third, God is good because He keeps His promises. In Genesis 9, God promised Noah that He would never cause a flood to cover the whole earth again. He even made the rainbow as a sign of this promise. He promised Jesus would be born, live, die, and be raised from the dead. These were all promises made by God to Abraham and the Israelites (See Genesis 12). Because of these promises all people can be a part of God’s family.

HE CARES FOR me...

First Peter 5:7 says, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Anxieties are things you are scared about. God knows and cares about what is going on in your life. God knows how many hairs are on your head (Luke 12:7). He knows when a sparrow falls from a nest (Matthew 10:29). In these passages, Jesus tells us not to worry about how badly others behave toward us, but to trust and follow Him. In verse 31, Jesus says, “Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10). If God, the Creator of all the universe, knows the tiny details about all of His creatures, I know He cares for me.

HE ANSWERS PRAYERS...

In James 5:16, the Bible tells us, “...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” One example of God answering prayer is in Acts 10. Here we read about Cornelius, who prayed to God often. God sent Peter to him to teach him about Jesus.

In another passage in Acts, we read of the Christians praying because Peter was in prison. "Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5). God sent an angel to rescue him (Acts 12:6-19). In the Old Testament, we read about Hezekiah. He was a king of Judah. He was sick, and God sent the prophet Isaiah to tell him he would not get well. "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord" (Isaiah 38:2). God sent Isaiah back to Hezekiah to tell him, "...I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears" (vs. 5). The Bible tells us in Isaiah 38:5 and 2 Kings 20:6 that God let Hezekiah live fifteen more years. From these examples we can see that God does truly answer prayers. But we must remember that, like when we ask our parents for things, sometimes the answer is, "No". Sometimes it is, "Not now." The apostle Paul had something he called "a thorn in the flesh" that he prayed to God asking him to take it away. God's answer to Paul was "No." He told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). God is our heavenly Father and knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8).



Illustrations in this spread by
Kelsey Pinedo (age 11)

I Love Him so...

God is so good to us, He cares for us, and answers our prayers. How does God know that we love him? Love is not just something we say. Think about the people you love and that love you. How do you know? They talk to you and spend time with you. Parents show their love to you when they protect you from things that are bad for you. You show your love to your parents by obeying what they tell you to do or not to do. We show our love to God in the same ways. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." To keep His commandments, we need to read our Bibles often, to hear God talking to us. We need to pray to God all the time to talk to Him.

When we sing, "God is so good," we can think of all the wonderful things God has made. When we sing, "God cares for me," we can think of ways that God does truly care for us. We can also think about examples from the Bible of how God answers prayer. Like King David in the book of Psalms, we praise God and tell him how much we thank him when we sing, "I love Him so." ■

GOOD THINGS FROM GOD

God gives us so many good things in life. Find some of those things in the puzzle.

F	O	R	G	I	V	E	L	E	S	S	G
O	O	E	B	R	A	L	L	F	A	T	L
R	S	V	X	J	U	I	T	S	M	R	O
G	T	R	R	C	Z	F	I	B	A	L	R
I	H	A	O	X	P	E	A	C	E	D	I
V	I	I	L	S	T	L	P	L	Y	G	O
E	G	N	I	Y	L	U	L	C	A	R	U
N	H	W	L	E	I	N	Q	E	Z	A	S
E	K	O	K	B	R	E	A	D	N	Z	P
S	H	M	E	X	A	L	G	R	A	C	E
S	W	I	S	D	O	M	P	O	S	I	Q



1. **GRACE** (Psalm 84:11)
2. **FORGIVENESS** (2 Chronicles 7:14)
3. **PEACE** (John 14:27)
4. **WISDOM** (James 1:5)
5. **LIFE** (Acts 17:28)
6. **BREAD** (Matthew 6:11)
7. **RAIN** (Matthew 5:45)

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questions.

Q&A

Q: Some adult children still live at home with their parents but behave as rebellious teens. How should we deal with them? —BARINAS, VENEZUELA

“Kick them out”—not immediately but sooner than later. How old is the “adult” child? If we’re talking about working age (mid-twenties or older), then he (or she) should have a plan to rent an apartment or a house and move out and provide for himself. What is meant by “rebellious?” You and your wife are the leaders of that home. If the adult child will not follow your rules, he does not deserve to enjoy the blessings of your home. You would do your family good if you made your adult child provide for himself, in his own home. —PH

Q: Do you think that getting my children in a Christian school would strengthen their faith in God? —MATT, SWITZERLAND

Unless all the teachers in a school are members of the Lord’s church and agree with you and your wife on all doctrinal points, you are always going to face the challenge of teachers presenting different ideas to your children than what you present at home. If the “Christian” school is Protestant, then you will have certain doctrinal battles to “fight” in order to guard the faith of your children. Of course, a state school is often run by atheists or immoral people, so there is a different type of fight. If the choice of school is for physical safety reasons, that has to be considered.

Either way, be aware of what your children are being taught and help them reason through their education if it is not according to the Word of God. Teach them how to reason and how to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). —PH

Q: How should I teach “manhood” to our sons in compliance with the Bible? —ANTOFAGASTA, CHILE

The world has a distorted view of manhood, so it is important for Christians to look into the Bible for what the Lord wants for men (and women). This issue deals with this subject in the marriage section (page 7 for men; page 6 for women). Although it has been written from the perspective of married people, parents can use the same principles to teach their single sons how to be men of God. —MP

Q: My wife has a bad character; what can I do? —QUITO, ECUADOR

The short answer to this question is, “Continue to love her.” However, there are some things to understand about love and some other things that can be done to help your wife (or husband). First, “love” is not a feeling, but a determination to do what is best for the other person. God commands husbands to love their wives (Colossians 3:19)—whether they have a good character or not. The faulty character of a spouse does not free the other of his/her responsibility to obey God’s Word. Our marital relationship is to be founded, not

on the merit of our spouse, but on our love for God. If we understand this point, then it will be easier for us to continue working on our marriage **even if** our spouse does not change his/her attitude. God expects us to give 100% in our marriage. —PH

Additionally, asking a few questions may help: (1) Why is she having a bad character? I assume that she was not always like that. Then, there may be something that is irritating her. Identifying the

problem is key to solving it. (2) Are you, as a husband, showing a kind attitude and an example that she could follow? It is hard for a person to keep a bad attitude when everyone around her is always being kind and positive. Kindness is contagious. (3) Have you talked to her? She may not have thought much about her attitude, or she may know exactly why she is acting like this. Either way, have the intention to listen, try to understand her point of view, and try to make any corrections that are needed. —MP

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