

# Christianfamily

*A bilingual magazine for Christian families*

Volume 8, number 3  
July - September 2023

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*on working with the church's youth group*

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New Series: Family Memories — PAGE 3

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How to Prepare for Your Mission: Part 2 — PAGES 12-13

*and more...*



## From the editors

Many of the heroes of the faith were young people (e.g., Joseph, David, Daniel, Mary, and Timothy). Young people have great potential to work for the Lord and influence the world for good, but they need love, training, and trust. Elías and Liliana have been helping the youth at church, as well as their own daughters, to reach their highest potential for the glory of God. Take a few minutes to read about their work in this new issue.

Here we also introduce a new series on Family Memories that we hope you will enjoy. Continue to read to find wisdom to raise your children, strengthen your marriage, grow in your personal Bible study, be better prepared to share the Good News, and shine your light for God. May the Lord bless you and your family.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

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*Helping families become stronger in the Lord*

**Volume 8, number 3, July - September 2023**

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## “When are those pancakes going to be ready?”

**P**atience... It is easy to lose it. Let me give you an example.

**December, 2022**

My daughter Layla (4) asked me to play “Restaurant” with her. I sat at a little table in the sunroom, and she pulled a menu sheet from her kitchen set and asked me to order. The menu had a list like this:

- Coke
- Hotdogs
- French fries

I said, “I will have a hotdog.” She answered, “We no have hotdogs.” I protested, “But the menu says...” She interrupted: “We no sell hotdogs any longer.”

“Well, I will have a side of fries.”

“We out of fries.”

“Well, do you have a Coke?”

“Sorry; just water.”

“Ok. Give me a cup of water.”

She brought the “water” and said, “What you going to eat, then?” I asked, “What do you have?” She answered, “Pancakes!”

“Ok. Give me two pancakes.”

She began to busy herself; and since she was taking a while, I decided to read a little. Then she hollered: “I’m mixing!”

“Ok.”

A few minutes later: “I’m putting them in the oven!”

“Ok.”

Then she came to me and said, “Dad, when I go back to my kitchen, could you holler: When are

those pancakes going to be ready?” I agreed, I waited, and then I hollered: “When are those pancakes going to be ready?!” Then she turned to me with a mad face and said, “In just a minute! Be patient!”

Patience is an undervalued virtue. In fact, lacking patience is one of the sins we can freely confess without being frowned at; and, yet, patience is one of the Father’s most distinguished qualities (Exodus 34:6-7), one of the Spirit’s most beautiful products (Galatians 5:22-23), and one the Lord’s most cherished attributes (2 Peter 3:15). Notice how vital patience is in Christianity: We need it to produce spiritual fruit (Luke 8:15), display the righteousness of God (James 1:19-20), endure in moments of trials (2 Thessalonians 1:4), keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:2-3), reflect the perfection of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-5), preach the Gospel at all times

(2 Timothy 4:2), affirm our hearts until the coming of our Lord (James 5:7-8), preserve our souls (Luke 21:19), and receive the eternal reward (Hebrews 10:32-39).

Patience is greatly needed in the home. It needs to be exemplified by the parents, inculcated in the children, and effectuated by all the members of the family. Is patience being displayed in your home? ■

Layla, 2023





# RAISE THEM RIGHT

biblical wisdom for modern parenting  
from *Proverbs 22:6*

*Paul Holland*

**We** begin in Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

**Begin with the end in mind.** Parents should hold in the forefront of their mind a clear vision of the kind of person they want their child to be when he/she is 30 years old. In other words, we need to raise our **children** to become the **adults** God wants them to be.

Parents tend to focus on the **immediate** rather than the **important**. I understand how easy it is to get caught up in making good grades and doing well in a specific sporting event or musical recital. Those are immediate, but they might not necessarily be what is important. How does making straight A's relate to “training up a child in the way he should go?” Would you want a child who is at the top of her class aca-

demically, or would you want a child who knows what it means to be a servant of Christ?

If the latter is our preferred option, does our schedule and the emphasis in our home reflect that? If we really want our children to grow up to be followers of Christ, to have a good work ethic, and to be responsible adults, then we need to train them, while they are children, to develop those qualities of character they will need.

To use just one example, do we want our children to be self-motivated? How do we do that? First, we have to set the right pattern for them and be self-motivated ourselves. Do we wait for someone to tell us to do something, or do we do what we see needs to be done, without being asked to do it? Do we wait for the elders of the church to beg us to do something, or do we step forward when we see a need that we can fulfill?

Secondly, do we encourage our children to be self-motivated? Do we do their homework for them, or do we have them do their own homework? We can look over their work to make sure they have done it correctly. Do we challenge them to do their work at the level of ability we know they have? If they fail, do we make excuses for them, or do we help them evaluate why they failed and what they can do better in the future? Remember, failure is a part of the learning process as much as success is.

The **way** in which we are to direct our children has nothing to do with achievement in terms of the world. It refers to the way in which our children are to go in their lives, relative to how God designed them uniquely to respond to Him with their own abilities and talents. We are each given gifts (abilities) by the grace of God to be used for His glory (cf. 1 Peter 4:10); are we directing our children down the path that helps them learn how to utilize those gifts to serve God supremely and to serve their fellow man sacrificially? See Matthew 22:37-39. What we are talking about, then, is developing Christ's **values** and godly **character**, not necessarily athletic or academic accomplishments.

Once again, parents today tend to be near-sighted in focusing on the here-and-now rather than raising children to be responsible adults. That is why many parents tend to "micro-manage" their children's lives. We are afraid that they will fail, and so we hover over them, trying to make sure they are doing everything correctly. These parents tend not to have a "compass" which guides them in their long-term decisions as parents.

Read Exodus 4:22-23. This is God's message to Moses to take to Pharaoh when God's people, Israel, were slaves in Egypt: "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"

Notice that God gave Pharaoh: (1) His expectations: "Let My people go;" (2) the reason: "Israel is My firstborn;" and (3) the consequences: "If you do not, I will kill your firstborn son." Then, God stepped back and allowed Pharaoh to exercise his free will, to submit his will to God's will and do what God expected him to do. Notice Moses' message in Exodus 5:1 when he first appeared before Pharaoh: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go.'" We all know the ac-

count... Pharaoh refused. Moses got discouraged and went back to God (in 5:23) complaining that God has not delivered His people at all!

If you study chapter 6, you will see that God **does not change one single thing** about His expectations of either Moses or Pharaoh. In other words, discouragement on Moses' part does not change God's command, and disobedience on Pharaoh's part does not change God's command. As parents, God gave us His behavior as a pattern. Notice how God does not change His expectations, despite Pharaoh's refusal to obey: Exodus 6:11; 7:2, 16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3.

I have counted nine times that God repeated Himself to Pharaoh: "Let My people go." Now, God had already told Moses to tell Pharaoh that if he did not obey, the consequences were going to be severe: the death of his firstborn son. God did not tell Pharaoh **when** he would take his firstborn son's life. In fact, God did not tell Moses that he would bring nine plagues on Egypt **before** he took the life of Pharaoh's firstborn son. Pharaoh had ample opportunity to humble his heart, change his behavior, quit thinking that he was his own master, and submit to the powerful God of heaven. But he refused to obey ten times before God finally brought the law down on him.

If you want to learn how to parent biblically, look at God's method of parenting: God gave Pharaoh: (1) His expectations, (2) the reason/motivation, and (3) the consequences. That is how you parent biblically; that is how you parent with the end in mind. How do you want your children to live and behave once they become adults? Train them when they are young with that goal in mind.

You are far-sighted because you keep in mind the end result. You do not sweat the small stuff, the daily stuff, if it does not impact the long-term goal. In that way, parenting is more relaxed, and your feathers are rarely ruffled.

Here is something you and your spouse might try: Write down 10 descriptions of what your child should be when he/she is 30 years old. Ask yourself if your day-to-day parenting efforts and energies are properly aimed at producing that adult that fits your vision. Then, parent with the end or long-term goal in mind, and do not get distracted with the immediate hassles in life. ■





## *The fruit of the Spirit and your spouse*

Freddie Klein

### **What is joy, and how is it different than happiness?**

**J**oy and happiness are often used interchangeably though they are different. A simple way to see the distinction between the two is to think about how they are affected by outside circumstances. Happiness, on the one hand, is defined by those things that happen to us. The focus of happiness is on the physical and material world. Our happiness is increased or decreased by the world we live in.

By contrast, joy is that which stays with us throughout the trials and difficulties of life because it is not based on the physical or material world, but it is set in eternity. Therefore, joy is part of the faithful Christian life because we set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2). Christians have joy because we seek a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36).

Paul told the Corinthian church,

“ We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

He continued in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Paul reminds us that we will have great difficulties. However, we are not defined by that which is against us; rather, we are continuously reminded of the love of our Savior. That focus is joy beyond the material; that is joy beyond this world.

### **How does marriage intersect with joy?**

Many, sadly, confuse happiness with joy and joy with happiness. When we understand the difference, we are aware of the ups and downs that will come with any relationship, especially marriage. It is in a marriage that two people become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). They are united in a covenant, a bond, and an agreement with them and God (Malachi 2:14-16). Being a covenant, marriage is not an arrangement that either can walk away from in the eyes of God without sinning (Matthew 19:9). Thus, when we are sad or upset and the world is crashing down around us, our happiness may dwindle but true joy will not.

### **What is the basis for joy in our marriage?**

What are some elements or principles that bring joy into marriage and continue though we may feel bouts of unhappiness? There may be several to consider, but we will briefly discuss three. Joy in marriage is found in spiritual unity, familial unity, and physical unity. These areas of companionship not only bring the couple closer, but they also have the added benefit of increased joy along the way.

**1. Joy in spiritual unity (1 Corinthians 1:10).** Joy is found in the unity of religious focus. Throughout God's Word, we are reminded to be surrounded by the brethren. If this is true of the brethren, it is true of our spouse as well. As a couple, we must strive to have the same spiritual focus, using the Bible as our guide for all things (2 Peter 1:3). When God's Word is applied to our lives, we will have joy as a result (Romans 15:13). If you are in a marriage

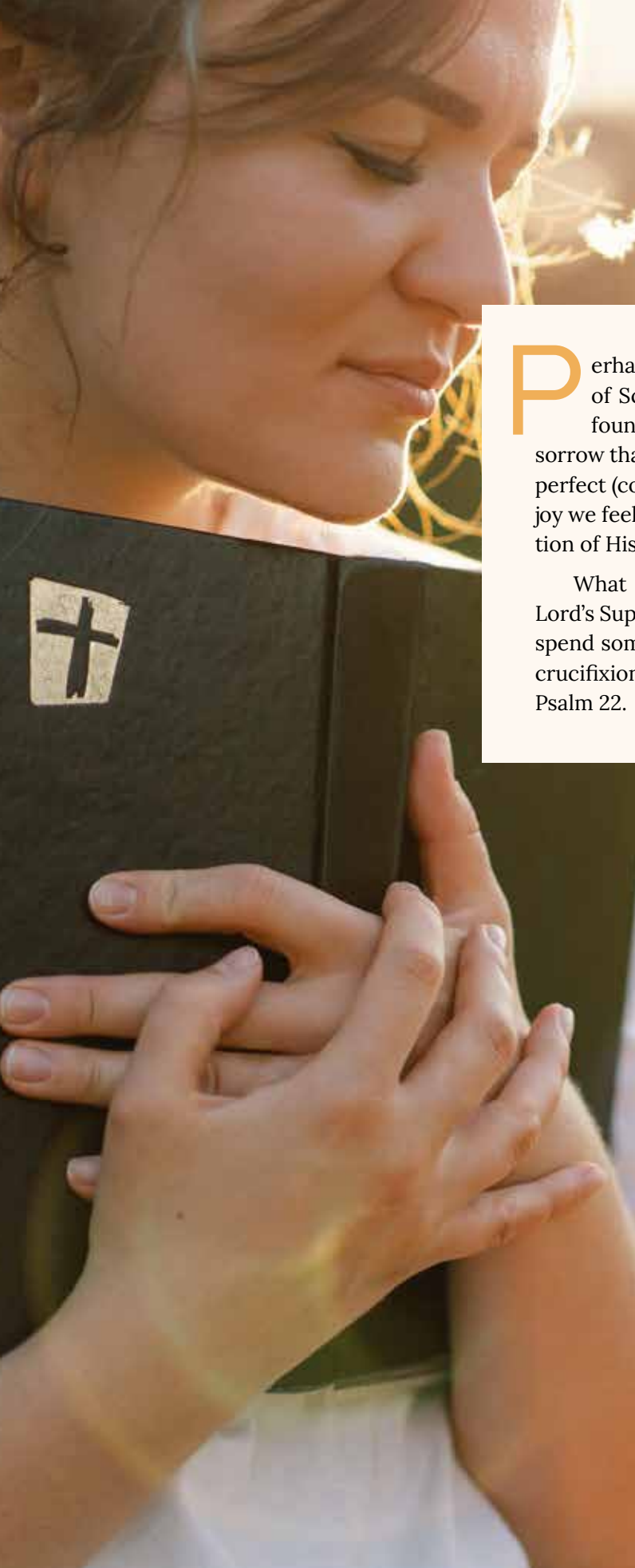
where you are not enjoying the fruit of spiritual unity, do not give up! Continue living for God and you will be blessed (1 Peter 3:1-2).

- 2. Joy in familial unity (Ephesians 5:22-30).** Paul makes a strong case for a proper order in the home: Christ, husband, wife, and children. This familial unity and order bring joy to the home. With God's instructions, everyone knows their place, and all have an important role to play. Sadly, because this is a biblical principle, the world is set on destroying family unity and striving to implement something that they see as better than God's plan for the home. Whether it is an egalitarian approach or some other alteration to the family structure, God's plan for the husband and wife is the only one that brings joy to the marriage and to the home as a whole because it is based on universal biblical principles.
- 3. Joy in physical unity (Genesis 2:24).** When God made a woman for Adam, He joined them together. There are many aspects of this joining of two people together, but an important part is a physical and sexual connection. Therefore, a marriage devoid of this physical aspect is a marriage devoid of a particular element of joy meant for marriage. Paul reminded Christian spouses to come together (1 Corinthians 7:5). Yet, as the years draw on, our bodies will change but the physical connection married couples cherish will always bring joy to a God-honoring marriage.

## *Conclusion*

Joy in our marriage is not the same as happiness in marriage. Joy in marriage comes from unity with our spouse in at least three key areas. These are critical areas to have in mind as we look for a spouse. If we are already married, building up these areas will further develop the joy we find in our marriage. If our spouse has passed from this life, we can hold on to the joy brought to us in marriage where these elements were elevated. In any case, we can promote these biblical ideals to the next generation of those who are thinking about marriage. ■





# At the CROSS

Kerri Epling

Perhaps the most riveting and difficult-to-read account in all of Scripture is that of the crucifixion of Christ. The beauty found in this story is countered by the incredible grief and sorrow that the perfect One experienced so that we might become perfect (complete) through Him. It can be difficult to reconcile the joy we feel for what He accomplished at the cross with the realization of His physical, mental, and emotional suffering.

What a blessing it is that we have a weekly reminder in the Lord's Supper of this incredible sacrifice! I would encourage you to spend some time this month reading through the accounts of the crucifixion in the Gospels, as well as meditating on Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

## Questions to consider

- When was God's plan for the redemption of mankind put into motion? See Genesis 3.
- Why did the Jews want Jesus to die?
- Who delivered Jesus to the Jews? Find Scripture references in the Old Testament that predicted this betrayal. How did Jesus respond?
- Why did Jesus rebuke Peter for harming Malchus?
- How did the Jews' view of the Messiah and His coming kingdom differ from the true Messiah and His kingdom?
- Research the Roman crucifixion procedures. If you want to see a visual representation of the cruelty inflicted on victims of this form of execution, you may watch a documentary on the subject.
- Study prophecies about the crucifixion and find their fulfillment in the New Testament accounts.
- Make a rough timeline of events surrounding the death of Jesus.
- Consider the points of view of various people at the time of the crucifixion: Mary, the mother of Jesus; John, the beloved apostle; the indignant Jews; the Roman centurion; Pilate; the scattered



apostles; Peter when the rooster crowed; Jesus Himself.

- Make a bookmark of the sayings of Jesus from the cross to consider the next time you partake of the Lord's Supper.
- Why was the crucifixion necessary? How is it connected to the sacrifices of the Old Testament?
- Why was Jesus the perfect choice to die for our sins? What roles does He now have in our lives since His sacrifice is complete? Example: 1 John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16.
- Remember that the story doesn't end here! Study His resurrection as well.
- How can we come into contact with the blood He shed for us at Calvary? How can we also partake in His resurrection? What does this accomplish for us? See Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27, and 1 Peter 3:21.

### **Ideas for studying this story with children**

This account is fundamental to our lives as Christians, and children absolutely need to learn that Jesus died on the cross so that we might be with Him in the presence of the Father one day. However, please be aware of the age of the children you are teaching and only share with them what is appropriate for their ages and levels of understanding.

### **Questions for children**

- Why did people want to hurt Jesus? Had he done anything wrong?
- How did Jesus respond to the people who hated Him?
- What was happening around the cross while He was being crucified?
- Who carried the cross of Jesus for Him?
- What did they put on Jesus' head?
- How did they make fun of Jesus?
- Why did Jesus die on the cross? What does that mean for us?
- What happened after He died on the cross? What did the women find when they went to His tomb on the third day? Why is this so special? ■



### Suggestions for interaction with children

- While you are teaching this story, have the children hold their arms out to their sides at shoulder-height and keep them elevated the whole time. Talk about how tired their arms got and how it might have even hurt a little. This is only a tiny fraction of what Jesus went through!
- Say prayers of thanksgiving for the blessings we have because Christ died for us!
- Talk about the Lord's Supper and how important it is to help us remember Jesus. Encourage older children who are already Christians to create a bookmark or visual reminder to help them focus during the Lord's Supper.
- Draw an outline of a cross on a piece of paper. Inside the cross have the children write down all the things Jesus said or did during the crucifixion. Outside the cross, have them write all the things other people did or said to Him. Pay attention to how kind and humble He was, even when people made fun of Him or hurt Him. How can we be like Jesus when people are unkind to us?
- Sing hymns about the death of Jesus (example: "At Calvary") and about His resurrection (example: "Up from the Grave He Arose" or "He Lives").
- There are many resurrection crafts and activities available online.
- Remind the kids that the story doesn't end with the death of Jesus. "He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!"

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Kerri at [editorial@ebglobal.org](mailto:editorial@ebglobal.org) with email subject of "Christian Family Study."

# the Pérez family

*on working with the church's youth group*

Elias, his wife Liliana, and their daughters Laura (24) and Sara (18) are a family blessed by God's presence. They are from Colombia and live in the city of Medellín. Elias and Liliana were married 25 years ago and have worked for a long time with the youth group of the church of Christ between Barranquilla and Balboa. Elias is one of the deacons in the church, and together with Liliana they also help Christian married couples at church. They and their daughters serve the church constantly.

*Cf.* Could you briefly describe the members of your family?

**Elias** is responsible, cheerful, loving, sincere, and devoted to his goals. **Liliana** is a woman of integrity, tender, responsible, helpful, and God-fearing. **Laura** is intelligent, courageous, loving, humble, and self-confident. **Sara** is responsible, sweet, honest, tidy, and intelligent.

*Cf.* You work with the youth group in the church. Could you explain to us what this ministry entails?

This ministry consists of teaching sound doctrine and the fear of God so that young people will persevere and love the things of God more and more each day, carry the Gospel, and be examples for those around them. We help in this ministry through activities such as camps, prayer meetings, workshops, and other activities that contribute to the fellowship and integration of young people.

*Cf.* What motivated you to get involved in this ministry?

The main motivation is love for God and His church. The youth group has a special place in our hearts. Liliana was part of the youth group of the church, and because of the activities that this group carried out, I came to know the church and gave my life to the Lord. We continue to work in this ministry because we know the importance of every young person having God in his/her heart and life.



*Cf.* **In what ways has this ministry benefited your family?**

This ministry has been a great blessing. Thanks to it, we have been closer as a family. Because of our work with the youth, our daughters have been involved in all the activities since they were little; this has contributed to their spiritual and personal growth. They have also been happy to help in this ministry.

*Cf.* **In what ways has this ministry benefited the church in your community or region?**

Thanks to this ministry, the youth group has been prepared and strengthened, individually and collectively, for the service of the church in the areas of worship, preaching, prayer, teaching, etc. In addition, this ministry has promoted the evangelization of souls and the unity of the youth of other congregations, strengthening the fellowship and communication among them.

*Cf.* **What are some of the challenges that this ministry has posed, and how have you dealt with them?**

There have been several trials in this ministry, such as external opposition, discouragement from some of the young people, lack of parental support, lack of financial resources, and the temptations of the world.



All these trials have been overcome through prayer, love for the work, constant faith, good communication, and full confidence that the work being done in the Lord is not in vain but will have its reward.

*Cf.* **What advice could you offer to parents to spiritually influence their young children in particular or the church youth in general?**

Your example is important in instilling in your children the desire to be involved in God's work. Understand that if your children do not become involved in the Lord's work at an early age, it will be more difficult for them to do so later (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:1). As the Bible teaches (Proverbs 22:6), a child should be instructed early in the way he should go. It is also important to constantly pray for young people and support the activities that strengthen their spiritual life. Young people are not only the future of the church, but they are also the present.

Our advice to the youth is to love God intensely, keep His commandments, seek wisdom, and strive for the crown of life. "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). ■



# GOING OUT PART 2

Jared McLeod

## How to **prepare** for your **mission**

**I**n Part 1 (Digging in: How to Deepen your Faith) we discussed, well, exactly that: strengthening and deepening the roots of our faith. Part 2 is basically the next step: How to fulfill the charge of the Great Commission. What is the mission? Essentially, it is to (1) **go** and (2) **make disciples**. Again, let us look at five ways that we can be better prepared and equipped for this mission.

### 1. Use What God Has Given You

God has given us all unique skills, abilities, and passions. Ask yourself these two questions: (1) What do I really enjoy doing? (2) What am I really good at? Then, find a way to incorporate the answers to both of these questions into an act of service for the kingdom and the glory of Christ the King. The apostle Paul says that, in order for the church to grow, each member, each part, must be working properly, using what it has been equipped to do (Ephesians 4:15-16). Are you using what God has equipped you with? If not, then you must...

### 2. Look for Opportunities

Is there a hole or area at your home congregation that could use some attention and effort? Perhaps you are there to fill that gap. Have you been blessed with certain God-given abilities and passions, but you are unsure of how to apply them to kingdom work? Seek guidance. Your elders want members who are willing and able to work, and they want to guide members to useful service and action. Seek their help if you are unsure of how to serve. Also, express your desire and willingness to serve in various capacities. Know, too, that though you are the “church of tomorrow,” if you have been baptized into the body of Christ, you are also the church of **today**. As Paul pointed out to young Timothy, “[l]et no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Be an example by looking for opportunities to serve and standing in any gaps that you may find.

### 3. Surround Yourself with Encouragers

This is not the same as finding those who will affirm everything you say or do. Sometimes, encouragement is found in the form of constructive feedback. Welcome constructive feedback rather than running from it! How can you grow if you do not look for areas of growth? But, make sure you are surrounded by people that want what is best for you and want you to succeed in your walk as a follower of Christ. Look for people who acknowledge, as Christ has, that you are a valued member of the body. Look to your shepherds who want to guide their flock in following the Great Commission. Look for individuals who will be a



“cloud of witnesses,” cheering you on as you run this race (Hebrews 12:1). Look for those who will encourage and build you up each step of the way (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

#### **4. Follow Spiritual Role Models**

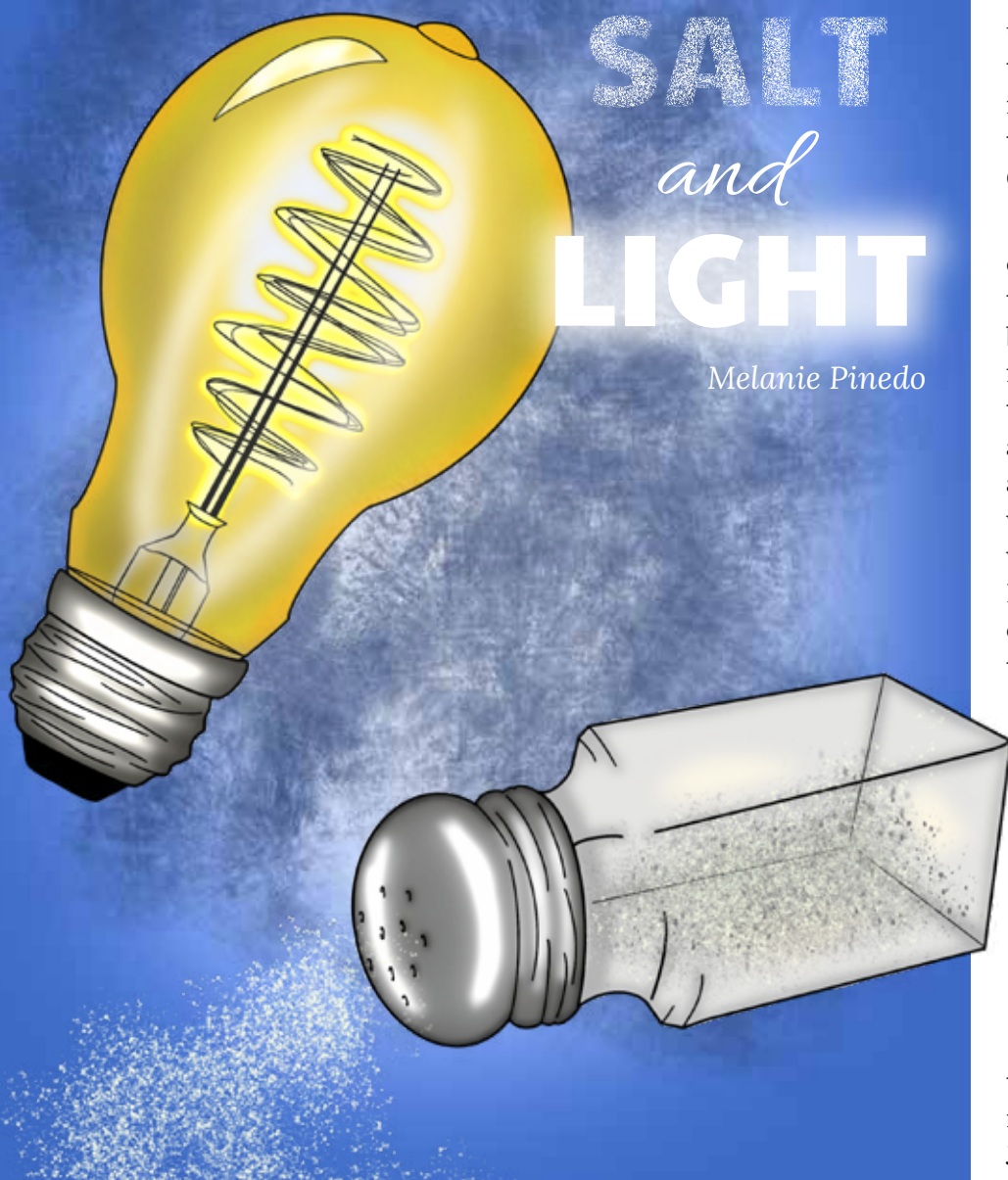
The Apostle Paul was a great example of what a spiritual role model looks like. He was a father-like figure to Timothy when it came to spiritual matters (1 Timothy 1:2). He called others to imitate him, just as he also imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). This is the type of spiritual role model you ought to seek: one whom you can imitate because he/she follows the example of Jesus (John 13:35). So, look to adult believers who are further down the road of their spiritual journey. Look for those who model that the best sense of self is found in the Lord and living as one who is created in His image (Romans 8:29). Through the example of good spiritual role models, you will be able to see who you are and who you can be in the Lord.

Last, but certainly not least...

#### **5. Embrace Prayer**

In the context of putting on the armor of God in Ephesians 6, Paul shares that prayer is an additional tool that soldiers of Christ are equipped with. He says, “...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (vss. 18-20). Prayer helps Christians. It is how we seek assistance and guidance from God. It is through blessings that come from prayer that we can be bold to share the Good News that we have been equipped with and tasked to share (see also Acts 4:23-31). I have once heard it said, “If you aren’t praying for something, then it must not be important enough to you.” That is certainly true. Prayer, no matter the size of the petition, is important to God and should therefore be important to us. So, pray ceaselessly and give thanks in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). Christ wants us to succeed in the mission that He has given us, so much so that He has promised to be with us every step of the way: “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). Be present with Him in prayer as He is present with you. ■





# SALT and LIGHT

Melanie Pinedo

useless. God expects Christians to be good examples to everyone, no matter where they are or what they are doing. We need to glorify God constantly.

Serving others is one way we can show that we are the salt of the earth. Writing a card, cleaning, babysitting, visiting, or cooking for someone could be a good place to start. Children like you have the ability to brighten up anyone's day, and I am sure that your parents will appreciate you helping out with extra work around the house. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" Serving and obeying your parents is equal to serving and obeying God, and that is what we are here to do: serve God and serve His people.

Matthew 5:14 says, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Just as we are supposed to be the salt of the earth, we are also supposed to be the light of the world. The light represents our good examples amid a dark world; we have to shine our lights and show others why we are different. Christians should never be ashamed to tell others that they are a part of a Christian family. Christians are to stand out spiritually, and they should fulfill that role.

We belong to God and He loves us so much. He wants us to continually shine our lights for Him. Showing others how much we love them is one way to share God's example of love. Matthew

**In** Matthew 5, we read of one of the greatest sermons ever preached: The Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was preached by Jesus, and it contains some of my favorite parables; one of them is the parable of the salt and light. I love how Jesus spoke in parables and how He taught people important concepts through these earthly stories.

Matthew 5:13 says, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing

but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." What does it mean when Jesus tells His followers that they are the "salt of the earth?" How can we be the salt? Jesus was using salt as an example. Being the salt of the earth means that we display Christ in our lives; people will notice that we are different because we love God. If salt loses its flavor, it is useless. We have the opportunity to be a good example, but if we do not behave as we should and glorify God by how we live, our example becomes



5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." We are not to do good things because we are looking for praise (Matthew 6), but we are to do them because we love the Lord and want to please Him. As mentioned before, we should glorify God in all that we do. If we are actively seeking God, we will be a good example to those around us.

John 13:34 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved

you, that you also love one another." First John 4:8 says, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." People are often recognized for their love, which is a big part of the Christian's example. Let's show everyone God's love. As you grow up and become a Christian one day, learn to be the salt of the earth, and never stop shining your light for God! ■



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# MATTHEW

## 5:13-16

Find the underlined words from Matthew 5:13-14 in the puzzle.

**You** are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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

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**Q.** *How can we deal with a member of our family who, while becoming a teen, begins to show some homosexual traits?* —TOLUCA, MEXICO

First, what do you mean by “homosexual traits?” We should not overreact to a young man who might not have the same interests as the typical male at his age: football or cars. However, if he is expressing some unhealthy interest in other boys, you should pray for him. Openly talk to him about his behavior and why he is making his choices. Listen to him. Help him understand it is okay to have close male friends, as David did (1 Samuel 18:1-5). But study with him that God created males and females (Genesis 5:1-2), and He designed them in their own unique way to glorify Him. Also, study that God’s holiness will not allow into His presence those who cross the barriers He has set (Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 22:5). Lovingly show him that putting our sexual desires above God’s will is a form of idolatry (Romans 1:22-27). —PH

**Q.** *If a Christian is not married by the civil law, is he committing fornication and should not be allowed to preach or teach in the church?* —GUATEMALA

First of all, we should remember that marriage is **not** a Christian institution; it predates the Christian era and even the Mosaic (Genesis 1:28; 2:18-24). After Creation, God allowed humanity to regulate this institution according to His will: an eligible man (that is, someone who is free to marry; see Matthew 19:9) for an eligible woman for life. In the Patriarchal age, the patriarchs (the fathers) made marriage arrangements for their children, and a ceremony was usually celebrated (cf. Genesis 24). This custom continued throughout the Old Testament among the people of God (cf. Judges 14:1-3). Other authority figures also arranged marriages—especially outside the people of God (cf. Genesis 41:45).

Today, different countries have different laws to regulate marriages. For example, in the U.S., an “ordained” preacher can solemnize a marriage. In some Latin American countries, only a civil authority can solemnize a marriage. Some of these regulations are in place to ensure that only eligible people are married. There is nothing wrong with these marriage regulations, as long as God’s will is honored. Therefore, Christians should submit to adequate marriage regulations that apply in the place they live (cf. Romans 13). Couples who are living together without being married are committing fornication, and no one who commits fornication is apt to lead the people of God (cf. 1 Timothy 4:12). —MP

**Q.** *How can I help my family to believe again in God and grow spiritually? We left the way of the Lord, and we need unity and faith again.* —ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY

When a congregation of God’s family had left the way of the Lord (Revelation 2:1-7), Jesus told them to (1) remember from where they had fallen, (2) repent, and (3) do the deeds they did at first. So, have a discussion with your family about where your life is at, and what life was like when you were active Christians. Have a discussion about how and why you “left.” Then repent of past sinful attitudes or behaviors. Finally, start doing again the works you did when you were active: read the Bible together as a family (start with one of the Gospel accounts), pray together, go to worship together, and participate in activities with the rest of the church. —PH ■