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DAY OF PRAYER
JUNE 6, 2020



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PARENTS

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DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES



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2020
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

MAKING DISCIPLES

— WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER —



Sometimes it Hurts When You Are a Mother

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

The Text

ISAIAH 66:13

The *Reader's Digest* magazine published 12 short stories about moms. Readers were invited to share in 100 words or less their poignant tales of the bond between mother and child. One of those stories, written by Robin Hynes, from Slingerland, New York, caught my eye.¹

“My mom had a great sense of humor and a knack for making everything fun. One thing that resonated with me, even as a small child, was how much she seemed to enjoy her own company and found ways to entertain herself. As a kid, I remember her giggling while paying bills. What was so funny about bill paying? She would put humorous notes in the reference section of the check: For the electric bill, she might put “You light up my life,” and for the mortgage she’d write “Four shingles closer to owning it all.”

We all probably have our own stories about our mothers. Some funny, some sad, but more often than not the stories we tell about our mothers are punctuated by love. In fact, most

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of us can agree that the most important thing our mother taught us was love, that no matter how bad their child may turn out, mom still loves them. Which is why a mother’s love reminds us of God’s love—no matter how we turn out, God still loves us. “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13).

That’s why someone wrote, “Mothers are like fine collectibles. As the years go by, they increase in value” (Unknown author).

The premise of today’s message is that **being a mother is not easy. In fact, sometimes it hurts when you are a mother.** We’d like to illustrate that premise through four cases.

I. It Hurts When You Are The Mother Of An Unborn Child

There are many women who have no children but have the heart of a mother. Women who yearn to have a child to hold and to whom to give love. Women who melt at the sight of a baby and long to have one of their own to hold, cuddle, feed, change, and sing to.

The Bible tells us about one mother like that. Her name was Hannah. She became the mother of Samuel, the prophet. The Bible account says that “she *was* in **bitterness of**

soul, and prayed to the Lord and **wept in anguish**” (1 Sam 1:10,11). *The Living Bible* renders verse 10 this way: “She was in **deep anguish** and was **crying bitterly** as she prayed to the Lord.”

We cannot minimize the pain, the anguish, the bitter tears of those mothers who have not yet been able to have a child of their own.

And then we must also remember those mothers who have lost a child before they were born, those who have had miscarriages or stillbirths. Yes, it hurts when you are the mother of an unborn child.

II. It Hurts To Be A Single Mother

The best example of this kind of mother is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her experience as a single pregnant woman before she married must have been most difficult. Think of the embarrassment, think of the shame, think of the uncertainty which she must have felt. For even though she was joyous to know she had been chosen to be the human vessel to carry God’s Divine Son, she knew very well what people would think and how they would treat her.

Sad to suffice, things have not changed all that much, at least in religious circles. An unwed mother is often still looked down upon in many churches.

Mary was not only a single mother when she became pregnant, but later she became a single mother again after the death of Joseph. Sometime between the twelfth birthday of Jesus and the beginning of His ministry at the age of thirty Joseph, the husband of Mary, must have died.

And so, Mary watched Jesus grow and helped Him grow as a single, widowed mother. We see her maternal love still protecting and watching for Him even after He had grown up. The mother of our Lord watched with growing uneasiness as her son slipped from her maternal grasp. The apron strings to which

Jesus was tied became longer and longer, and before she knew it He was so far away that she could hardly see Him.

It all began during the wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11). Among the guests were Jesus and Mary, who was understandably quite proud of her Son’s growing popularity. The anxious nature of a Jewish mother’s relationship to her son is legendary. Depending on his profession, a Jewish mother will introduce her son as “my son, the doctor” or “my son, the lawyer” or something similar. There is even a story of one such mother whose son had entered the Catholic priesthood. She introduced him as “my son, the father.”

On this particular occasion, Mary would soon be able to introduce Jesus as “my son, the miracle-worker,” but of course she didn’t realize that upon their arrival at the wedding. When she discovered that the master of the wedding banquet had run out of wine, she told Jesus about it. Apparently she felt that he would somehow be able to handle the emergency.

His response sounds harsher in translation than the writer originally intended: “Dear Woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.” He was simply warning His mother, gently but firmly, not to interfere in His affairs. His rebuke was the ancient reflex of another mild (but more modern) word of reproach: “Please, Mom, I’d rather do it myself!”

Jesus was indicating to Mary that He neither needed nor desired her help. He was a grown man now, and He wanted to establish His independence in no uncertain terms.

Whatever deeper theological significance one might seek in His answer, He surely meant to suggest at the very least that His vocational concerns were now solely His own and that He wouldn’t be willing to share His burdens or be able to share His triumphs with His mother—or with anyone else, for that matter.

For the rest of His life the loneliness of His prophetic office would force Him to alter

His previous relationship with His mother. The apron strings had now been cut, and the separation created a crisis. I can imagine how that must have hurt Mary. For even as proud as she must have been of Jesus, it hurts to have to cut the apron strings.

How do you fill the aching emptiness left behind when that completely self-sufficient Son leaves the nest forever, Mom? If you really want, you can tag along after Him, dogging His steps and hampering His progress. In that case He'll be your friend as well as your Son, and you'll be like the mother the wise man described: "Her children arise and call her blessed" (Prov. 31:28).

A Wise Mother

Mary's response to Jesus' fame and popularity was different. As soon as Jesus made it clear to her that she was meddling, however harmlessly, she retreated into the shadows. When she spoke again it was to some servants rather than to her Son.

After Jesus had changed the water into wine, she became only one member (the most important member, to be sure) of the group that accompanied him back to Capernaum. By agreeing to His increase while accepting her own decrease, Mary once again proved that she was teachable and had Jesus' best interests at heart.

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit all care for single mothers, for widows. Over and over in the Sacred pages we find directives and commands to take care of the widows and the fatherless.

Deuteronomy 10:17,18: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the **widow**, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing."

Psalm 146:9: "The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and **widow**."

Jesus, and the gospels, pay special attention to the widows. Luke makes it a point to mention Anna who was 84 years old and a widow, as a prophetess and one who welcomed Jesus in the Temple when His mother and husband brought Him to be dedicated. Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain because He cares for mothers and hurts when they hurt, and wants to alleviate their pain. Jesus also calls attention to the widow who gave all that she had, two pennies, "for the cause she loved."

Time and again, the Bible calls attention to God's love and concern for mothers who must battle alone to raise children, make a livelihood, and maintain the family together. It's hard, it hurts, but Jesus knows. He understands mothers, and He loves you.

Yes, it hurts when you are the mother of an unborn child. And, it sometimes hurts when you are a single mother, struggling to do it all alone.

III. It Hurts When You Are A Mother And Your Child Is Mistreated

Sometimes we get what we deserve, but Mary suffered when she saw her son, Jesus, who was guiltless and totally innocent, suffer unjustly for things He had not done. And it all started for Mary before her child, Jesus, was even one year old.

Luke 2:34,35 states: "Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'"

Just these words of warning must have stung Mary's ears. Perhaps she replayed them over and over. Not very long after this prophetic warning Mary and Joseph had to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus from the jealousy and hatred of Herod, the Great. As she fled she must have remembered those prophetic words.

That was just the beginning of the fulfillment because Mary saw how the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, rejected Him and nearly stoned Him to death on a Sabbath morning during a church service. She heard all the accusations, the criticism, the hatred. She saw the looks, the upraised hands of the priests, the teachers of the law, and other leaders of the people. She sensed the negative atmosphere that seemed to follow Jesus in spite of all the good he was doing to help people.

Mary heard of His arrest, the unfair trial, the mocking, and the beating. She was witness to her Son being nailed to a cross, his naked body exposed to everyone's view so as to increase the shame. She saw Him bleeding to death, gasping for each breath of air, and then she saw Him die.

How tragic it is to see your own child die. How painful it is to see your child die a horrible death and to be completely helpless, unable to do anything to help him. [Note: You may wish to read the book *They are all Dead, Aren't They* by Joy Swift, a book about the tragic death of all her children]. To have your child killed unjustly, unnecessarily, must be most painful. Mary knew that feeling because she experienced it at the foot of the cross where her Son was murdered.

Even then, Jesus demonstrated His love for His mother—for all mothers—in that He made provision for her care by asking His best and closest friend to care for her on His behalf.

Yes, it hurts to be a mother when your child is mistreated. Jesus understands that pain and knows it very well because He saw His own mother suffer that pain, that agony. Mothers, rest assured that God knows your pain. He has not ignored your pain, your suffering, or your agony.

It hurts when you are the mother of an unborn child. It hurts when you are a single mother. And, it hurts when you are a mother and your child is mistreated.

IV. It Hurts When You Are A Mother And Your Child Leaves The Right Path

Of course, we have the parable of the prodigal son in the Bible, the story of the son who forsook his father and walked away from it all. Yet, I also think about the mothers of King Saul and the betrayer Judas.

Saul had been chosen to be the first king of Israel. It seems as if he had all the qualifications for that office. He was tall, strong, and handsome. Just by his height he commanded attention. He would have been the people's choice—maybe that's why the Lord chose him. God simply gave the people the leader whom they wanted.

It may have been one of those times when God answered prayers against His will. Because, from the moment he was anointed, King Saul followed the path of slow descent to the place where he was doing everything that was contrary to God's will and command.

If his mother was alive at that time or not, we are not told. If she were, you can imagine the joy to see the child you raised chosen to be the king of Israel, and you can also imagine the pain she must have felt to see him grow farther away from the God she taught him to love and believe. She must have been distraught to see him rejected by his/her God. Imagine her agony in seeing her child, the fruit of her womb, following the path that leads to destruction.

The writer of the proverbs wrote, "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother" (Proverbs 10:1). And again, Proverbs 15:20 says, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother."

It could have been the same situation with the mother of Judas. To see her talented son going full speed ahead to becoming a great teacher in Israel, a faithful follower of Messiah, would have filled her heart with pride, joy, satisfaction. But imagine how she felt when she heard how he betrayed the only One who

can give salvation to humanity? It must have torn her soul to pieces.

Perhaps the reason I thought about these two men is because of their tragic deaths and the after-thoughts they must have created in people's minds. Mothers, have your children left the right path? If your child or children are walking in the wrong path, does this cause you great grief and concern? Have you felt the pointed fingers of well-meaning brothers and sisters suggesting that if you had done your job properly, your children would be in the church? How unfair!

Many mothers not only experience the pain of seeing children wander away from their only source of salvation, but they also deal with the guilt added by those who should be supporting them.

It hurts when you are the mother of an unborn child. It hurts when you are a single mother. It hurts when you are a mother and your child is mistreated. And, there is pain when you are a mother and your child leaves the right path.

And it may be because of this pain that God loves mothers in such a very special way because they, more than anyone else, portray the tender care, the warm love, that God has for us.

God too suffers when children die before they are born. God too suffers when His children are mistreated. God too suffers when His children leave the right path. And like a mother, God loves His children, no matter what. Jesus loves mothers and has a tender place in His heart for them.

In referring to the experience when mothers brought their children to Jesus, Ellen White wrote:

“AS THE MOTHERS PASSED ALONG THE DUSTY ROAD AND DREW NEAR THE SAVIOR, HE SAW THE UNBIDDEN TEAR AND THE QUIVERING LIP, AS THEY OFFERED A SILENT PRAYER IN BEHALF

OF THE CHILDREN . . . JESUS SPOKE WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE MOTHERS IN REFERENCE TO THEIR WORK, AND, OH, WHAT A RELIEF WAS THUS BROUGHT TO THEIR MINDS! WITH WHAT JOY THEY DWELT UPON THE GOODNESS AND THE MERCY OF JESUS, AS THEY LOOKED BACK TO THAT MEMORABLE OCCASION! HIS GRACIOUS WORDS HAD REMOVED THE BURDEN FROM THEIR HEARTS AND INSPIRED THEM WITH FRESH HOPE AND COURAGE. ALL SENSE OF WEARINESS WAS GONE”
(*THE ADVENTIST HOME*, P.273).

And then she closes with these words:

“THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING LESSON TO MOTHERS FOR ALL TIME. AFTER THEY HAVE DONE THE BEST THEY CAN DO FOR THE GOOD OF THEIR CHILDREN, THEY MAY BRING THEM TO JESUS . . . AND AS THE MOTHER'S HEART YEARNS FOR THE HELP SHE KNOWS SHE CANNOT GIVE, THE GRACE SHE CANNOT BESTOW, AND SHE CASTS HERSELF AND CHILDREN INTO THE MERCIFUL ARMS OF CHRIST, HE WILL RECEIVE AND BLESS THEM; HE WILL GIVE PEACE, HOPE, AND HAPPINESS TO MOTHER AND CHILDREN. THIS IS A PRECIOUS PRIVILEGE WHICH JESUS HAS GRANTED TO ALL MOTHERS”
(*THE ADVENTIST HOME*, P.274).

Mothers, have you experienced the pain that comes from not having a child or losing a child before they are born? Do you know the agony of being a single mother—be it before marriage, as a result of divorce, or because of your husband's death? Can you remember all the times when your child was mistreated? Are you concerned, maybe even in deep sorrow, because your child/children have left the right path and are now away from the faith? Don't despair! I want to tell you today that Jesus loves you with an unconditional love. I want to tell you today that He understands you like no one else possibly can.

Discipleship begins at home. Never stop praying for your children. Never stop lifting their name heavenward. A mother's prayers can and do make a difference. Don't give up! Take all that pain and lay it at the foot of the cross. Continue to be a disciple-making mother. Continue to reflect Jesus to your child. You may only realize the impact your prayers have had when you reach heaven.

I invite you to offer your children again and again to Him in prayer. Then, rest yourself in God's everlasting, ever-loving arms. Mothers, Jesus loves you. And this morning we want to tell you, that as a church family, we love you too! We are committed to kneeling down alongside you and joining you in prayer for your children!

Notes

- ¹ 12 Short, Sweet Stories About Moms (That Will Make You Want to Call Yours). <https://www.rd.com/true-stories/inspiring/mothers-day-short-stories/> accessed February 22, 2019

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Disciple-Making Parenting: Helping Our Children Develop a Moral Compass

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

Scriptural Principle

“CHOOSE FOR YOURSELVES THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE, WHETHER THE GODS WHICH YOUR FATHERS SERVED THAT WERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER, OR THE GODS OF THE AMORITES, IN WHOSE LAND YOU DWELL. BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.”

JOSHUA 24:15 (NKJV)

- How do the words, “choose for yourselves” relate to parenting?

3. Reflect

- Take a moment and reflect on today’s teenagers.
- How can parents help teenagers personalize their faith?

Overview

Your teen is now at an age where they may begin questioning faith and values. Perhaps they are asking questions such as: Why is faith important anyway? Am I following the faith of my parents or is it my faith? Our challenge as parents is to find ways to guide our young people through this time. How do we assist our teens through this time of reflection and questioning? How do we help them internalize their beliefs? Is this a time to teach or preach less and listen more?

Creating a moral compass in our teens is not something that we will accomplish once a week with church attendance. Rather, studies indicate that teens most likely to mature in faith are those raised in homes where faith is part of the normal ebb and flow of family life. In other words, passing the torch of spiritual beliefs and values to our children comes about through embedded practices; that is, through specific, deliberate religious activities that are

ICEBREAKER- GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Remember

- Remember when you were a teenager. Did you ever go to church or participate in spiritual activities because you wanted to meet your parents’ expectations that you do so?
- When did you make a personal decision for Jesus Christ?

2. Review

- As you consider the spiritual principle verse, what message do you glean from it?

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firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines—eating and sleeping, cleaning and organizing, talking and sharing, loving and caring. Faith development and internalizing spiritual values and beliefs happen on a day-to-day basis as we incorporate Jesus into every aspect of our home life and make Him the center of our family.

As we look at the challenge of helping our teens to internalize and live their faith, we will consider the following topics:

- Modeling
- Talking Faith
- Outsourcing your Teen’s Spiritual Growth
- Personalizing Faith

Modeling

According to Smith and Denton (2005), “the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents” (p. 56). It has been said that more is “caught” than is “taught” and perhaps this has never been truer than on faith issues. Consider this statement, “Teens tend to choose faith when they live in families that ‘talk the walk’ and ‘walk the talk’” (Lytech, 2004, p. 14). In other words, your speech and your actions are both important and must both be in harmony.

Have you ever asked, “Why me, Lord?” when contemplating the challenge of developing faith in your children? After all, you’re no expert when it comes to faith development. You are not a trained theologian. Shouldn’t this be left up to the experts? Why trust parents with something of so much eternal value?

Do you often think that your teen needs a faith makeover? The truth is that any makeover that needs to happen in your family needs to begin in your own heart. If you want your child to have a personal relationship with Christ, you need to have a personal relationship with Christ. If you want Jesus to live in your teen’s heart, He must live in yours first. Our children watch us closer than they listen to us. It’s important to both walk and talk our faith!

The family is the first community of faith and the most powerful influence on the faith of our children and teenagers. Modeling faith-based behavior at home is an essential aspect of helping your teen understand their faith and how to live it. As we have the conversation about the moral compass in our children, perhaps the best place to start is with a mirror. It is only after looking into our own hearts that we, as parents, will be able to look within the hearts of our children.

Practical Ways to “Walk the Talk and Talk the Walk”

1. Nurture a continued connection to the church.

The parents’ role of linking the child to the church continues to be important in the teen years. Parents influence teens in what they believe and how they practice their faith by maintaining a church attendance rule even into the teen years. Choose a church that is attractive to teens. If parents choose a church that attracts teens by the sense of belonging, meaning, and competencies that it offers, parents facilitate the link between the teen and the church that is crucial for developing religious loyalty (Lytech, 2004, p. 199). Your teen should feel that it is their church and not just the church of their parents. Church should be a place to participate and not just a spectator sport. Talk with your teen about ways they would like to serve and be involved in the activities of the church and then discuss those ideas with your youth director or your pastor. If church attendance is not important to you now then it will not be important to your teen later. So, how important is it to maintain a connection to the church? Does it matter? Look at these reasons why church involvement and maintaining that connection to the faith community indeed matters: (Adapted from: Stier, G., 2015).

- *Teenagers need models and mentors.* In the Jewish culture it wasn’t just parents who poured into the younger folks. Older men taught younger men and older women likewise mentored younger women (Titus

2:1-8). Of course, you as a parent are called to be the primary spiritual mentor of your own teenager but he/she also needs other godly adults as influencers in their life!

- *Teenagers need community.* In an age of bullying, gossip, slander, and hatefulness (which can destroy a teenager's self-identity), young people need other young people who can lift them up, encourage them, and challenge them in all the right ways. Time spent in a community of like believers strengthens our faith fortress.
- *Teenagers need mission.* When Jesus challenged his most-likely teenaged disciples to "go and make disciples of all nation," he was tapping into the activist wiring of these young men. In the same way, your teenager needs to be challenged with the mission to reach their peers with the good news of Jesus in a loving and contagious way. The church community is a place where they can be equipped to share the good news of Jesus with their own peers. This opportunity of helping your teen see their mission and then equipping them to live out that mission will accelerate the discipleship process in their life in ways you could never imagine!
- *Teenagers need theology.* Youth group is a place where teenagers can have spiritual beliefs and values reinforced. This should result in your teenagers knowing and owning their faith on a deeper level. Youth groups should be places where teenagers can ask tough questions. Skilled youth leaders can take questioning teens back to God's Word as the source of authority and help them process through all of the Biblical truth you are praying they grasp, believe, and live. Great youth groups build on the foundation that godly parents have already laid.
- *Teenagers need a safe place to confess and confide.* Often teenagers who struggle with sin and temptation have nowhere to confess and confide. They feel trapped by their sins. But a healthy youth ministry can create a safe space for teenagers to open up and talk honestly about their struggles. They can rest

with the knowledge that others are going through the same struggles and can pray for and encourage them.

2. Maintain daily family worship.

Do not let this slide because of busyness. It is important to be consistent and to make it age appropriate. Your teenage child is old enough to help lead out and choose the activities for family worship. You must model an intentional time to have a daily connection with Jesus. And, remember, make your daily worship fun and interactive instead of making it seem as if it were another chore.

3. Participate in service activities as a family.

Participating in Christian service has a powerful impact in the faith-life of teens. Christian service experiences make faith real and alive for young people. These experiences foster growth in faith and often change the lives of young people. And, participating as a family unit helps to strengthen those family bonds. It may be tempting and easier to let your child go and do a community service project with a church or school group. However, when you do it together as a family team you are modeling a caring, compassionate, and giving spirit. Engaging in service with one's family can be a powerful opportunity for growing in faith. Both children and adults are more likely to have a growing, strong faith when their family serves others together. When parent and child participate in service activities together, the child sees the parent's faith and values in action. The cross-generational bond takes place not only in the service event, but also in the retelling of the event through the years as it becomes a cherished and shared family memory.

4. Grow through family conflicts.

Every family will encounter conflict among members sooner or later. It is important to use these as opportunities to grow in faith. Conflicts among those we love the most need to be solved with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness. This is another opportunity for our children to learn and grow in faith.

5. Grow through family challenges.

Every family has challenges: finances, job loss, death of loved ones, illness, etc. These

challenges and trials can be faced through shared faith. Your child needs to see you, as parents and heads of the household, turning to God for support, guidance, and strength.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions with your group.

1. Do you agree with the statement that your child's faith is a mirror image of your faith? Explain your answer.
2. What does your faith look like when you look in that mirror?
3. What are some practical things you can do to enhance the faith you see reflected in the mirror?

Talking Faith

“Listen to Moses as he shares a command of God to the children of Israel: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, The Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates’ (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). . . Intentional repetition of God’s love and our response to that love was part of the divine strategy. This text is descriptive to a fault. The activity of sharing faith with one’s children was to take place over and over: when talking casually with them, when walking with them, when getting ready for the night’s rest, and when rising up in the morning. Passing on the value of God’s love, care, and provision to one’s children was essentially to be a full-time activity, an all-encompassing obsession” (Oliver, W. & E., 2016, p. 25).

So, when was the last time that you had a conversation with your teen that revolved

around faith? In today’s world, time is one of our most precious commodities. In our busy lives, we must make the best of the time that we have. The reality is that you do have time to talk about faith with your teen. You just need to take advantage of some of these slices of time. Yes, you’re busy, but keep in mind that time is what you make of it. So when is the best time to discuss our faith with our children? The only reasonable answer is anytime. Here are some ideas (Adapted from Holmen, 2007):

- **Devotional time.** One of the best times to talk about faith is during your family devotional time each day. Share the high and low experiences from the day and then take time to pray for each other. With teenagers you can ask, “What’s on your schedule tomorrow that I can pray for? Do any of your friends need prayer for anything?”
- **Car time.** Doesn’t it often seem that the most time you spend together as a family is when you’re in the car, on your way to the next thing you have to do? Try turning off the radio, unplugging all technology, and having a conversation with your child. Ask questions that require more than a one-word response. Also, take a moment to pray for the event that you’re headed to or for the people with whom you will be meeting.
- **Sick time.** Another significant block of time that you have with your teen occurs when they are sick and have to stay home from school or other activities. While no one looks forward to his or her child being sick, it does provide time to have a healthy conversation. Sick time may give you a chance to watch a DVD, listen to music, or play a game together. So why not choose an activity that will naturally lead to talking about issues of faith and life?
- **Mealttime.** Taking a moment to give God thanks and praise before eating establishes a ritual that remains with children into adulthood. In talking to God during prayer, you are also passing on a faith lesson to your teen. Just as a meal was central to the ministry of Jesus, the family meal can be a

central faith experience for family members. It is a daily opportunity to acknowledge and discover Jesus' presence in the midst of busy family life.

- **Vacation time.** Traveling together over a long distance or just getting away on a long weekend trip can be a great time to reestablish faith-talk in your family. Tithing ten percent of your vacation time to God. Do a family service project, take some quiet time to read the Bible together and have a family devotion each day. On the final evening of your vacation, spend time in prayer and worship. This doesn't have to be elaborate. Simply take some time to give thanks for the time you've spent together. Take turns sharing one thing that you were thankful for on the trip and one thing you look forward to when you get home.
- **One-on-One time.** One of the best things that you can do as a parent is to establish the ritual of one-on-one time with your teen. It can be weekly or monthly, but it needs to be built in to your life rhythm. A failure to establish this time will leave you saying later in life, "I should have done that." Spend a weekend alone with each of your children, or establish a monthly date night together. The particular activity is far less important than your commitment to spend time together with your teenager. This practice may continue into adulthood.

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Outsourcing your Teen's Spiritual Growth

Did you stop to consider the words of Deuteronomy 6 cited above? Who were they directed to? The Hebrew leaders? The Levites or priests? Or was Moses addressing all the parents? Who has the primary responsibility of developing a child's moral compass or in aiding in their spiritual development? Is it the pastor, the Sabbath School teacher, youth group leader, or perhaps the church school? No, the truth is that YOU, the parent, have the primary responsibility of discipling your child. Too often we "pass the buck." We convince

ourselves that we are not the experts. Others can do a better job than we can.

While there is no denying that church and school may assist parents in the work of spiritual child development. In fact, we have discussed how important it is to maintain a positive relationship with the church, the faith community. In addition, having our children attend Seventh-day Adventist schools also reinforces the principles and values we are trying to instill in our homes. Surrounding our children with those who have like-minded values is priceless and this three-fold approach of home, church, and school helps strengthen and fortify children's faith development. The more support that we have in this regard, the better. The church and the school are indeed powerful tools that should be utilized to the utmost; however, this in no way minimizes the place that the home plays in a teen's spiritual growth. The home continues to be the primary source for the faith development for children.

Have you ever considered why God planned parents to disciple their children? Why did God give the task to us "rookie"? The pastor is the expert. Why not let this task fall on his/her shoulders? There are two key reasons for us to not "outsource" this responsibility. First, the home is the best vehicle to transfer faith values. Second, while doing so we grow our own faith. Nothing develops our own faith more than seeking to grow our children as disciples of Jesus. This transfer of faith actually transforms us into the image of Jesus as we seek to reflect Him to our children.

We have been given the highest calling and the holy task of partnering with God to grow our children into His image. There is no task that we will be called upon to do that is of greater importance. And, there is no parenting responsibility on which we should place a higher priority.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What tasks comprise the role of parenting? If you were to write a job description for a parent what would it

look like? List the top 3 roles in order of importance. Explain why you listed them as you did.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Personalizing Faith

Is your teen borrowing your faith or developing their own? As a small child your little one may have participated in daily worship with you and went with you as a family to worship in church every week. But, what happens when it becomes their choice to make? What happens when those values are tested as a young adult? How do we make sure the faith of our fathers becomes the same faith of our children?

Perhaps one of the best things you can do to help your teen personalize his/her faith is to equip them with the knowledge and tools to understand their faith and apply it in a relevant and meaningful way to their daily life. It is your responsibility to help them connect the “rules” and your expectations to faith values. “Because I said so” is not a good explanation to give when you try to explain the reasoning behind your expectations. Incorporate faith values into your expectations for your teen’s behavior and explain why choices, behavior, and public persona need to reflect and adhere to the tenets of your faith. Encourage them to make decisions from a faith-based perspective. It will only be when they internalize the “why” answers that faith becomes an individual and personal one.

Questioning is a normal part of internalizing faith. This can be a very challenging time for parents but do not despair. Asking questions means that they are moving from “borrowing” your faith to “personalizing” it for themselves. What can you do and how do you respond when the faith questioning starts?

Tips to Deal with Teen’s Questioning Faith Values

1. **Do not panic.** Rejecting the religious beliefs of your upbringing is different from simply asking questions. If you act angry or upset then your child will shut down and stop the faith conversations with you. This only means that they are thinking and reflecting on their faith and that is a positive thing.
2. **Encourage questioning.** Engage in honest communication with your teen about his/her feelings, values, morals, and faith. This can be a great opportunity to build a better relationship with your child.
3. **Listen more than you talk!** Answering their questions may be important, however, the most important thing you can do is to listen. Listen to their heart.
4. **Love unconditionally.** Reassure your teen of your unconditional love for them. Continue to let them know that you are a safe place for them to take their concerns and questions.
5. **Pray with and for your teen.** Encourage them to take their concerns, questions, and even doubts to God in prayer. Pray for them that God would lead and guide them during this questioning time.

Wrap Up

Above all else, continue to be intentional in making Jesus the center of your home. In Deuteronomy, God instructed the Jewish people to make Biblical teaching part of the rhythm of their daily lives (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). Do you talk about God at the dinner table? Do you spend time reading the Bible to and with your children? Do you pray with them? Do you have daily family worship? Do you point out the wonders of creation? Do you encourage critical thinking and genuinely listen to their views? Are you passionate about your own relationship with God?

The research clearly indicates that spiritual practices, beliefs, and values are most often

passed on to our children when they are woven into the very fiber of home life. It needs to be a total immersion, a way of life. The daily round of everyday family activities must somehow be brought into the very presence of God. This involves parents praying, families eating together, conversations with your teens focusing on faith beliefs, doing service projects together as a family team, praying before meals, and engaging in daily family devotions.

Remember, the home remains the primary place where faith values are passed on to our children. Maximize the use of the short time you have them under your roof. Soon they will pack their few belongings and head off to college. It's important that their faith becomes a personal one now, a faith they will carry throughout their life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read the following statement and discuss it with your group.

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“You want a household for God; you want your family for God. You want to take them up to the gates of the city and say, ‘Here am I, Lord, and the children that Thou hast given me.’ They may be men and women that have grown to manhood and womanhood, but they are your children all the same; and your educating, and your watchfulness over them have been blessed of God, till they stand as overcomers. Now you can say, ‘Here am I, Lord, and the children.’”
(White, Child Guidance, p. 565)

A Prayer You May Say

Dear Father, please lead and guide my child through this time of personalizing their faith. May you be real to them. Walk with them and talk with them. Help them to develop a forever friendship with you. Impress Your will upon their hearts and minds. Bless them in the decisions they make and may they always hold onto Your hand. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Parenting Adolescents in Today's World

ALINA BALTAZAR

Introduction

Adolescence can be a scary time for many parents. This is the when children become more independent and parents aren't always able to keep an eye on them. This is also the time when parents reap the benefits of the discipline that was taught through childhood. Everything learned up to this point finally starts coming together. Try to see this as a time of opportunity. By the time children reach adolescence, they are well on their way to becoming the person they are going to be. It is in the teenage years that they begin to experiment with different ways

of expressing themselves which helps with the development of their identity. Though it appears you are no longer needed, this is the time you are needed most, but just in different ways.

- The first goal of this presentation is to help you better understand where your teen is coming from and the unique challenges that he/she faces.
- The second goal is to share biblical wisdom from multiple sources that can better equip you for the challenges you will face as a parent of a teen.

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APPLICATION EXERCISE

What fears do you have about parenting teenagers? Discuss as a group or with a partner.

This table gives a summary of the development that happens during the teen years (Popkins, 2009).

Pre-Teens (about 8-11 years old)	Young Teens (about 12-14 years old)	Older Teens (15-18 years old)
Puberty begins (girls 8-13; boys 9-15)	Mood swings	Physical and sexual development is complete
Growing sense of independence and self-sufficiency	Identity exploration begins	Develop ability to think more abstractly
Develop close same-sex friendships	Start worrying what others think of him/her	More aware of how the world should be compared to what it is now
Develop more concrete logic skills	Can think more critically, but still thinks he/she is invincible	Able to identify with other people's situations

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1. Adolescent Development

Though people often talk about teens' "raging hormones" and their effect on adolescent behavior, research does not support these views (Shirtcliff, 2009). This is due to the slow gradual nature of hormonal changes. Hormones can however exaggerate an individual's tendency to act in certain ways. A child who is easily angered and acts out with physical aggression may act out in more extreme ways when puberty starts and actually do damage to property or harm an individual.

In addition to the hormonal changes, the brain continues to grow and change (Popkin, 2009). The development happens in order:

1. Begins with the part of the brain that controls physical coordination and sensory processing.
2. Next the part that manages motivation.
3. The seat of emotions.
4. The last part (which isn't complete until the mid-twenties) is the executive functioning part of the brain that manages:
 - Decision making
 - Empathy
 - Being aware of consequences
 - Regulating emotions
 - Self-awareness
 - Morality

Having this knowledge can help explain some of the stupid things you did as a teen and what you have observed about your own children. This is why guidance and supervision are so important.

EXERCISE

What are the implications for parents regarding adolescent development, especially as it relates to brain development?

2. Know Thyself

Many parents approach the teen years with fear and trepidation. They may think back to the fights they had with their parents or the mistakes that they made. Parents ready themselves to battle their teens in order to keep them from the many temptations they will face and protect them. In actuality, what is happening is a spiritual battle, a battle for the heart (Tripp, 2001). Satan wants a child's heart and he will use all of his powers of persuasion to pull your teen away from God.

Teens and adults all have faced temptations. There are temptations to which you are more susceptible than others. Though you may think your teen isn't watching you, he/she is watching more than you know. Research has found that parents are the biggest influence on a teen's development. Part of that influence is role modeling. A parent's struggles may become their teen's struggles. It is good to be open about our challenges and the negative consequences that we have experienced. We should also talk about and show the ways in which we cope with temptation so our teens can learn from us. This is a good time to address bad habits or addictions. If we are unable to address these between us and God, there are plenty of resources available to help. These resources are listed later.

It helps to be aware of our parenting style. Baumrind identified three basic parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (1967).

Authoritarian Style: The Dictator

This is the old school way of parenting where father knows best and children should be seen and not heard. The parent is the one in charge with teens kept in line by threat of punishment. Teens are told what to do and how to do it. Many of us were raised this way and may have followed this parenting style when our child was young. When a child raised in this environment reaches the teen years, unfortunately it can also lead

to rebellion. In the U.S. today the focus is more on equality than hierarchy so your teen is going to increasingly expect to be treated with respect (Popkin, 2009). Teens resist the restrictions put on them and they start to challenge what they have been told. In addition, teens raised with this parenting style often struggle to know what to do when faced with challenges, especially when parents are not around to tell them what to do.

There are cultural variations in how children respond to this type of parenting style. In cultures where this style is the norm, parents and older adults are treated with high regard, and the culture is more oriented towards the community and less towards the individual. Children in these cultures tend to have less negative reactions than teens who live in the U.S. or those who have a European background. It bears noting, however, that excessively harsh and abusive parenting is harmful to all children regardless of culture.

Permissive Style: The Doormat

This parenting style is the opposite of the authoritarian style. With this style teens are allowed to do their own thing and have the freedom they so often desire. Few restrictions if any are put on the adolescent. Teens typically don't have a curfew and no responsibilities are expected to be fulfilled.

Parents don't typically plan to be a doormat to their child. Parents who develop this style of parenting often do it as a reaction to being raised in a harsh environment where the parent wants to be different than his/her abusive parent(s). Another scenario that characterizes this parenting style is seen when busy or overwhelmed parent has to deal with a child who has a strong and defiant personality. It is easier for the parent to default to a permissive style. Though the permissive style of parenting seems easier initially, it leads to unintended and sometimes very serious consequences.

Children and teens raised with the permissive style have higher rates of behavioral problems. They are more likely to be involved in risky behaviors, such as sexual activity, drug use, and criminal behavior. Since restrictions have not been put on them at home, they do what they feel like. These teens have a hard time being aware of the potential dangers and overestimate their ability to handle problems that may result. Teens raised in the permissive household can also be more anxious because they haven't learned how to manage their own behavior and desires. Teens need limits set by a more knowledgeable adult who cares about them.

Authoritative Style: The Active Parent

This parenting style is the middle ground between the authoritarian and permissive styles of parenting. The active parent gives the freedom teens so often desire, but within limits. The parent is the leader of the household, but the teen is entitled to respectfully express thoughts and feelings to his/her parents. The Active Parenting method of parenting acknowledges the importance of equality in the household where everybody is treated with respect (Popkin, 2009). Think of the parent as "benevolent dictator." The parent is still in charge, but he or she will listen to requests for reasonable adaptations and accommodations.

Research has found this parenting style to be the best for child development. There is typically a closer bond between parent and child than the authoritarian style, but the teen can feel secure knowing the parent is in charge and watching out for him/her. Children and teens raised in this environment know they are being guided and monitored so they are less likely to get involved in risky behavior because they are aware of the consequences when rules are broken. They are more likely to follow your rules even when you are not around because the reasons for the rules are known.

The downside to this parenting style is that parents are not the ultimate authority. Teens will argue and may not take no for an answer right away. It can be hard for to see teens being distressed with the punishments he/she receives because of the parents close relationship with them, but the parents know that it is for the best. It is not too late to switch to this style of parenting if you are a permissive parent. Teens who have been raised in the permissive environment will initially resist this parenting style, but once he/she realizes that their parents are doing this out of love, they typically buy into it.

EXERCISE

What parenting style do you tend to follow? What are the pros and cons you have noticed about your parenting style?

3. Unique Challenges

We live in a sinful world. All have experienced the horrible results of sin. The teen years are not exempt from that fact. Satan is a liar and tempter and will take advantage of your teen's natural inclination to want more freedom, strong desire for pleasure, and their limited awareness of the consequences. Some of the challenges teens face are not new, but others are new or have intensified in recent years.

Alcohol and drug use

Alcohol is the most commonly used legal substance. Though legal and potentially very harmful to adults, it does even more damage to teens. Teens who become addicted to alcohol become emotionally and often cognitively stuck at that age. They basically don't grow up and continue to make the mistakes teens make without awareness of consequences throughout adulthood. It is also much harder to maintain sobriety. Even if not addicted, when alcohol is abused it increases the chance teens will participate in even riskier behavior than they do when sober. This is particularly problematic during the college years where college students are more likely

to abuse alcohol than non-college attending peers. Though Adventist college students have much lower rates of getting drunk, there are still some who feel alcohol use is just part of the normal college experience.

Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal substance in the U.S. and the world. With more states in the U.S. and countries around the world legalizing marijuana there will be more marijuana available for teens to find and try. Since it is legal in many places, especially medical marijuana, it is seen as being less harmful. Though technically less harmful than alcohol, it is not without risk.

Teens are particularly vulnerable to the side effects of regular marijuana use. They are more likely to experience a cognitive decline that can be permanent especially when used regularly at a younger age. Marijuana is also known to be associated with increasing depression and anxiety and school drop-out rates. It is linked to triggering schizophrenia in those with a genetic tendency towards the disease.

One positive trend regarding teen substance use is the decreasing use of cigarettes, but that substance has increasingly been replaced with e-cigarettes or vaping. This is seen as less harmful and more socially acceptable than cigarette smoking due to the more pleasant aroma. Though it doesn't have the cancer-causing chemicals that cigarettes contain, they still have chemicals with unknown consequences. Since they contain nicotine, they are still addictive.

The opioid epidemic, though scary and increasing over the last few decades, classic heroin addiction is relatively rare in teens. That doesn't mean your teen won't be affected. Opioid addiction typically begins with pain medicines being prescribed for an actual injury or medical problem. Once that prescription runs out, some don't want to go without the benefits received from the pain medicine. Though teens aren't known to suffer from chronic pain, they do experience sports injuries or have wisdom teeth removed that

require pain medications to be prescribed. It is important to monitor and limit the use of these powerful painkillers as much as possible.

Teens are also known to abuse other prescription drugs, especially medication that treats anxiety or depression. It is recommended that you keep an eye on your medicine cabinet for any unusual change in the amount of pain or psychiatric medicines you may have. You should safely discard of any old pain or psychiatric prescription bottles you have at home in order to better protect your teen from this life-altering and potentially deadly addiction. Your local drug store can give you guidance. If necessary, you may even need to lock up the medications you have that could be abused by a teen or his/her friends. If you are concerned your teen may be abusing drugs or suffering from addiction, there is help. See the resources listed later.

Technology and entertainment

In today's modern world we often think of technology as a blessing and a curse. This is true for your teen as well. Your teen is able to access information and resources that help with academics in ways we never had when we were teens. It is also easier for parents to stay in touch and monitor teens' behavior.

The growth of technology has also provided more entertainment opportunities using various devices. You probably grew up with at least one television in your house that your parents complained was rotting your brain when you watched it too much. Parents back then were told to limit television usage to less than two hours per day. That advice is still true today, but it is harder to monitor all the different devices available for our teens to be entertained. Pornography is especially dangerous due to its easy accessibility, addictive quality, ability to damage sexuality, and put teens at risk of being victimized. There are systems that can be purchased that will help you monitor and restrict your teen's access to dangerous websites and entertainment options. Today's teens do have lower rates of engaging in risky behavior, probably due to increased use and easy access to a variety of

enjoyable entertainment options (Twenge, 2017). The downside is its addictive and socially debilitating qualities.

Social media is a wonderful way to stay in touch with friends and make new friends from every part of the globe. The downside is the more time spent on social media, the higher chance your teen will experience depression and anxiety. In fact, your teen's generation, called Generation Z or iGen, experiences more anxiety and depression than previous generations (Twenge, 2017).

This generation is growing up with easy access to Smart phones so they spend more time in front of a screen and less time in face to face interactions, but humans still have the same human contact requirements as always. This isolation can lead to depression and anxiety and makes teens more vulnerable to bullying that happens in-person and on-line. You can't get away from the bully by leaving the school; the bully can follow you 24/7 on-line. Not only is this generation more isolated, but this isolation leads to gaining less real-world life experience, which is required to be successful in adulthood. Our kids are not the only ones spending more time in front of the screen, parents are increasingly sucked into its addicting qualities as well. Parents aren't engaging with kids and giving them the undivided attention they often crave. Our teens need more face to face interactions with their peers, parents, and other caring adults, but there are other activities that absorb our attention.

Gaming is a favorite activity for many teens. There is a good chance you have had many arguments with your teen on the dangers of computer/video games. Generally, the biggest concern is the link between violent video games and increased aggression in children and adolescence, depending on the type of game and the amount of time spent. Recent research has found that teens who play meant for mature audiences that glorify risk-taking with anti-social heroes have higher rates of reckless driving, substance use, delinquency, and risky sex (Hull, Brunelle, Prescott, &

Sargent, 2014). Generally, the more violent the game and the more time spent playing it, the more problems a teen might experience. Also, with more time spent gaming comes the risk of becoming addicted. This then leads to increased chance of academic failure and mental and physical health issues because the game becomes more important than anything else. Generally it is best to limit gaming time and not to allow playing the more violent games. Ideally, all forms of screen entertainment should be limited to no more than two hours per day, even if it is educational. Teens benefit most from face to face interactions, real life experiences, and time in nature.

Sexual Issues

Our teens' reproductive organs are typically mature by early adolescence, but young people are getting married at later years. In the US the average age of first marriage for women is almost 28 and men it is almost 30 (US Census, 2018). That doesn't mean young adults are waiting until that time to experience sexual intimacy. The average age of first sexual intercourse is 18 years old in the US, with 16 years old being the legal age of consent in most states. Teens in the U.S. have higher rates of pregnancy than any other industrialized nation because of lower rates using birth control, though pregnancy rates have been steadily declining. Sexually transmitted diseases are also common during adolescence.

Though Christian teens are less likely to participate in risky sexual behaviors, that doesn't mean your teen isn't at risk. Sex is a difficult subject for many parents to talk to their teens about, but this is a must. The discussion should actually start in childhood when children are naturally curious where babies come from. As children get older the subject becomes more taboo, especially in Christian households. Just because you don't talk about it, doesn't mean your teen is not interested. They are just finding out about it from other sources, which you may not like. Your teen needs to know your values and

how you coped with sexual urges when you were young. A close father-daughter bond and open communication about sex has been found to delay sexual activity among girls. Another thing you can do is to get your teen involved in extra-curricular activities. They have been found to delay sexual activities, as long as the activities are properly monitored by responsible adults.

Recently we have seen a trend in the widespread acceptance of different sexual and gender identities. This has been helping to address the high rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide among these minority populations, but has led to some increasing identify confusion for many adolescents. There are higher rates of teens identifying as bisexual or not having a gender identity. It is during the teen years where teens explore different identities and modern times are allowing for a larger variety of identities for experimentation. The worst thing you can do is to reject your child if they choose a gender outside of their biological gender. It won't change the behavior and it leads to resentment and emotional pain. Do your best to be patient and understanding and show unconditional love, but also share your concerns with his/her chosen identity. This should be done with love and not out of anger or embarrassment.

Peer relationships

Peer relationships become increasingly important as children age, especially as our teens start to be less dependent on their parents. This is a healthy sign of maturity. The scary part is not always knowing who your teen is spending time with and what he/she is doing. It helps to guide your children to peers who will be a positive influence, but if you push your teen too hard away from some peers and towards others, he/she may resent you and engage those relationships behind your back. This can be a trying time, but don't give up. Take advantage of sharing observations regarding your concerns in subtle and less direct ways. You have more influence than you realize.

Mental health challenges

As mentioned earlier, this generation has higher rates of anxiety and depression. In addition, suicide rates have been steadily increasing every year for the past 10 years among teens. Social isolation, substance use, and social media saturation are partly to blame. Family conflict can be especially problematic during the teen years, especially between the teen and his or her parents and between the parents themselves. Teens need to know their parents will be there for them when they need them. Your love for your child should be demonstrated and communicated clearly. If he/she feels rejected by a parent, it can be devastating.

Another issue teens face is trauma. Teens who experienced abuse at younger ages or for the first time during the teen years may also struggle emotionally. If you notice your teen withdrawing and exhibiting strange behavior, don't be afraid to get professional help. (See resource list below)

Academics

Academics have become increasingly problematic for many teens. There is now more pressure than ever to succeed academically due to more competition to get into good colleges in order to land high-paying, secure jobs. Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities make it difficult to succeed the farther one gets in education. Teens can learn to adapt, but what used to work in elementary school may not work in high school. More teens are going straight to college after high school, but a large percentage drop out after the first year for multiple reasons. Teens worry about being unsure of what they want to do with the degree, and most have great concerns over student loan debt. Do what you can to be supportive and find the resources your teen may need to succeed academically.

EXERCISE

What challenges have you noticed your teen face (don't give details)? Share

with the group what you have found that helps your teen cope with his/her challenges.

4. Parental Role in Guiding Teens

The relationship between parents and children changes in the teen years. As mentioned earlier, they begin to pull away and identify more with peers. For parents who had a closer relationship with their younger children this can be an upsetting time. At some point during your child's adolescence he/she may say terrible things to you, but this is all part of the detachment process. Don't be discouraged, the bond you formed when your child was young is still important even now. Showing unconditional love is vital to his/her development.

Though teens are often busy pursuing their own interests and you may start getting busier in your career, parents should have regular communication with them. Teens spend more time with family than with peers so you have many opportunities to share your wisdom, you just need to be strategic. There may be some topics that can be difficult for teens to talk about, you may just have to wait until the right time. Remember hating parental lectures when you were young. It works best to dole out guidance in short spurts, with a healthy dose of listening included. Teens are more likely to open up to parents when they feel heard and supported when they talk. Take advantage of those times to clearly communicate your values regarding the challenges your teen is facing.

Teens are increasingly living with just one parent or in a shared custody situation. This can be a challenging time for teens feeling torn between loyalty to one parent over the other. Estranged parents might fight over rules and values they want taught to their teen. This can be a struggle for teens who are already wrestling with the issues mentioned earlier. Do what you can to find a middle ground with your child's other parent and be civil to one another. If there isn't another

parent, particularly a same-gender parent to your child, encourage a connection between your teen and a same-gender mentor. That mentor can give unique guidance to your son or daughter on how to become a man or a woman. Take advantage of mentoring programs at your local church or with Big Brothers Big Sisters program in your area.

Though teens desire and benefit from increasing freedom as they age, they still require monitoring. Research studies have shown that teens fare better when they know that their parents are monitoring their behavior, especially risky behaviors. While a parent may not catch him/her doing everything, chances are they will be aware when there is potential danger. Parents walk a fine line of being too nosy or being too hands off. Teens are trying to figure things out for themselves so they require space in order to do that. This will take some trial and error and may differ from child to child, but parents should remain engaged with their teens.

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Spiritual Development

Spiritual development in the adolescent years seems to be like a roller coaster that mostly goes down, but it can be an incredible time of growth and spiritual development that makes parents proud. Modeling a healthy spiritual life, taking your teen to church, and encouraging involvement in youth programs are things you can do to help your teen's spiritual growth. The adolescent years can be a time of questioning and curiosity that scares some parents into thinking their child won't be prepared for the Second Coming of Christ. Have patience and realize this is a normal part of spiritual development. Baptism is more like a birth certificate than a graduation diploma. It is just the beginning of your child's spiritual walk that develops over a lifetime.

EXERCISE

What role do you see yourself playing in your role as a parent in guiding your child through adolescence? What have you found to be the most helpful, share with the group.

In summary, here are some dos and don'ts of parenting teens in today's world.

1. **Don't control.** As much as you may not like your teen's choice in music or dress, this is not the time to force them to comply with all of your expectations. Establish rules and expectations for your teenager, but if you are too strict and bent on controlling every situation and decision, they will probably just do it behind your back without your guidance.
2. **Don't discourage.** Colossians 3:21 states, "Fathers [parents], do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (NKJV). Paul gave specific instructions on how family members should treat each another. Don't constantly express disapproval of your teen's choices or frequently lecture them on what they should or should not be doing. They will make mistakes. This is the best way for them to learn and prepare for life. Be there when they fall in order to provide encouragement and guidance.
3. **Do give them some freedom, but continue to monitor.** It is in the adolescent years when parents increasingly leave teens alone at home or in public places. This freedom is important to develop the independent thinking skills they will need as adults. However, parents still need to monitor adolescent behaviors, because teens can be impulsive and not likely to think through how severe the consequences may be to risk-taking behaviors. Parents of teens walk a fine line of allowing a certain amount of freedom while keeping an eye out for potential danger.
4. **Do be there for them.** Though your teen wants you to "back off," he/she does want you there when you're needed. Your teen wants someone he/she can turn to for guidance when difficult times come or when they get in trouble. This is not the time to lecture, this is the time to listen. Being a teen today is different than when you were a teen. They are facing pressures

you never had to deal with. Listening is the best way to understand and show you care.

5. **Do pray!** You can't always be there, but you know the Lord is watching out for them. It may seem like your teen is pulling away from God, but the foundation you laid when they were children will always be there. When you become discouraged with your teen, remember as long as there is life, there is hope. Never give up on your child no matter how far he or she may seem.

To find professional help in your area, within the U.S., if you have substance abuse and/or mental health concerns go to this website <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

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Keeping Our Homes Abuse-Free

KATIA G. REINERT

Introduction

Peter grew up in an Adventist home. His dad was first elder and highly respected at church. At home things were different. His father's charming personality at church turned into a raging demeanor at home when things did not exactly please him. He physically abused Peter's mom periodically, as well as Peter and his brother. He demanded respect and submission as the leader of the home, and he used the Bible to support his views. No one in the family was allowed to speak of the father's behavior outside of the home, or else. Peter carried wounds of physical and verbal abuse through childhood and into adulthood.

John had something to say, but he had to build up the courage to tell Abigail, his wife. He finally told her that he's been thinking about going back to school for further his education and hopefully get a better job with more income. "Why would you even consider that?" Abigail yelled. "You failed the last courses you took, so you're obviously not going to make it this time. You are stupid. You'll never last through the program, and we're not wasting our money on that. As it is, I am the one working and managing the bills." No punches were thrown in this conversation, but

deep wounds of verbal/emotional abuse were created.

Joan grew up in a lovely Adventist home, but fell in love with the wrong guy. He seemed very charming and in love with her. He cared so much, it seemed. He wanted to know where she was all the time and with whom. Slowly their relationship became the focus of her life. She had no more time for friends. He did not want her to work outside the home. She married him, but came to learn that he had many unusual requests for their sexual encounters. She was not comfortable but had to comply or else he would get enraged and force himself on her. She felt violated. Joan was deeply wounded by her husband's sexual abuse.

Andrea's father is actively involved in Adventist mission work around the world. He has a passion to reach the world. At home his disciplinary methods were very severe. Since early in her childhood, Andrea remembers episodes of heavy spanking which would sometimes lead to bleeding. Her emotional trauma resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, and depression. She is still trying to deal with her emotional wounds and seeking to heal the mental health conditions she is experiencing. She dreams to serve God, but has found her mental health is an obstacle that she must overcome. She is seeking emotional and spiritual healing.

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We could go on retelling many stories of child abuse, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse which unfortunately happen in Adventist families much more than we would like to admit. Why does it happen? Aren't we supposed to be Godly people, preaching the gospel to the world and living an exemplary life? How can we keep our homes abuse-free?

What is Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and abuse includes any attempt by one person in an intimate relationship or marriage to dominate and control the other, whether they are the spouse, the child, or the parent. Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over another. A perpetrator of an abuser uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear the other down and keep them under their thumb.

Domestic violence and abuse do not discriminate. Abuse occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, economic levels, and religious affiliations. And while women are more often victimized, men also experience abuse—especially verbal and emotional. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether from a man, woman, teenager, or an older adult. Everyone deserves to feel valued, respected, and safe.

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal assaults to violence. And while physical injury may pose the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy one's self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make the victim feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain—and the first step to breaking free is learning how to recognize when a relationship is abusive.

Prevalence of Abuse

Although violence and abuse impacts everyone, women, children, and elderly people

seem to bear the brunt of nonfatal physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.¹ Here are some numbers:

- 1 in 4 adults report having been physically abused as children.
- 1 in 5 women reports having been sexually abused as a child.
- 1 in 3 women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime.²
- 1 in 17 older adults reported abuse in the past month.
- Women report higher rates of lifetime exposure to rape, physical violence, and stalking than do men.³
- More than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 12 men have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.⁴
- In one study among Adventists, 67% of adult participants stated they had at least one of the following types of child abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, witnessing abuse among parents).⁵

Principles to follow for an Abuse-Free home

We know based on studies that the cycle of abuse seems to go on into adulthood, making child abuse survivors sometimes more likely to engage in abusive relationships as adults. Unhealthy boundaries are often a problem. Likewise, perpetrators of abuse have wounds of their own, often the result of childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, or dysfunction in the family. For instance, Peter—the child mentioned earlier who was abused by his father—could become a perpetrator of abuse if he does not find a way to deal with the wounds that he carries.

So how can we who live in a sinful, imperfect world while growing up in imperfect families

prevent domestic violence and live in an abuse-free home?

Here are 7 principles to consider:

1. Evaluate potential wounds from childhood. Before getting married, it is critical that each individual takes time evaluating their own background and any potential dysfunction or abuse which they may have experienced. Ideally they should talk with a counselor about these experiences and evaluate how they have impacted their mental and emotional life and well-being, as well as their behavior towards others in intimate relationships. Do they have anger issues as a result of what they endured? Do they use healthy boundaries towards themselves and others? These and other questions are important to evaluate. The first step is to identify the source of any deep wounds.

2. Seek Emotional and Spiritual Healing for identified wounds of abuse. Once the wounds and the sources of these wounds are identified, it is important that each one seek psychological and spiritual counseling. Healing from these past wounds is critical if the new home being formed is to be abuse-free. Understanding what forgiveness really means, and finding emotional healing is a must for anyone who has been wounded by abuse.

3. Know the signs of abuse. Too many people have difficulty identifying when physical, emotional, or sexual abuse has taken place. When people grow up in an abusive home sometimes that is the only “normal” they know. This helps explain why many survivors of abuse end up with an abusive partner. Sometimes violence can begin early in a relationship and other times it may take years to appear. The critical issue is knowing how to identify the warning signs. Below are some examples of warning signs:⁶

Does your partner, parent or child:

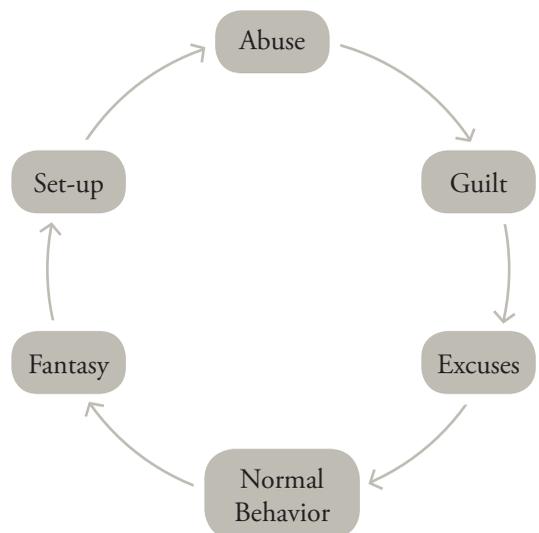
- have a bad and unpredictable temper
- hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you
- threaten to commit suicide if you leave
- is jealous of your friends/family or time spent away from him/her

- embarrass or shame you
- control all financial decisions even though you are an adult
- make you feel guilty for all the problems in the relationship
- prevent you from working
- Intentionally damage your property
- threaten violence against you, your pets or someone you love to gain compliance
- pressure you to have sex when you don't want to
- intimidate you physically, especially with weapons
- act excessively jealous and possessive
- control where you go or what you do
- keep you from seeing your friends or family
- limit your access to money, the phone, or the car
- constantly check up on you

Do you:

- feel afraid of your partner, parent or child much of the time?
- avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner, parent, or child?
- feel that you cannot do anything right for your partner, parent, or child?
- believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- feel emotionally numb or helpless?

Identify the cycle of abuse:⁷



Abuse – Your abusive partner, parent, or child lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behavior. This treatment is a power-play designed to show you “who is in control.”

Guilt – Your partner, parent, or child feels guilt after abusing you, but not because of their actions. They’re more worried about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for their abusive behavior.

Excuses – Your abuser rationalizes what they have done. The person may come up with a string of excuses or blame you for provoking them—anything to avoid taking responsibility.

“Normal” behavior – Your abuser does everything in their power to regain control and ensure that you’ll stay in the relationship. A perpetrator may act as if nothing has happened, or they might “turn on the charm.” This peaceful honeymoon phase may give you hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

Fantasy and planning – Your abuser begins to fantasize about repeating the abuse. They spend a lot of time thinking about what you’ve done wrong and how they’ll make you pay for it. Then they form a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.

Set-up – Your abuser sets you up and puts their plan in motion, creating a situation where they can justify abusing you. Your abuser’s apologies and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave. They may cause you to believe that you are the only person who can help them, that they will change their behavior, and that they truly love you. However, the dangers of staying are very real.

4. Don’t ignore the signs of abuse. Once you identify the first signs, don’t pretend that everything is okay, or that things will change for the better on its own. Many people tend to think this sign is an anomaly, and they rather believe it will go away. Sometimes they blame themselves for their abusive family member’s behavior (parent, child, or spouse). The tendency is not to confront the

issue. Pray earnestly and talk to someone you trust, maybe a pastor who understands, a friend or a counselor, and seek guidance. If you are a church member or leader who have noticed signs of abuse do not ignore it either. Approach one of the family members with kindness, offer friendship, make yourself available to pray for and with them anytime, or help in any way.

It is often helpful to document what you have experienced and the situations where you see the signs of abuse, so that you can recall the details later. Include the date, time, location, any injuries, and the circumstances of the abusive incident. This information could be very useful as you talk with your partner or a counselor, or even later on if needed for police reports and court cases, both criminal and civil.

5. Talk to the partner or family member.

Pray about it and explore how best to approach the family member about the abuse that you experienced. It could be a parent, a spouse, or a child who is the perpetrator. If the family member is willing to recognize the problem and seek help, explore how best to seek guidance. Sometimes couples’ therapy may be helpful, but often individual counseling is also critical, especially if the other person is not willing to seek help or denies any problems. If the situation has escalated or your fear of retaliation is high, then perform a danger assessment.⁸ If you have a high danger score, take precautions for your safety and that of any children. Seek a shelter, the police, or someone you trust.

6. Explore resources that could help you be a better parent/spouse/child and prevent abusive behaviors in your home. There are many resources available to help parents learn healthier ways to discipline or guide a child, and also cultivate healthy ways to communicate among family members. Read and seek these resources. The Adventist church has published extensively on this topic and offers many guides for parents, as well as other resources for developing a healthy marriage.

Pray as parents, and as couples, for God's wisdom. Read the inspired counsel given us in books by Ellen G. White.

7. As a church member or leader, learn effective ways to help and how to get involved in prevention. Whether you are a church member, leader, or pastor, you can pray for the family in crisis. Though prayer is critical and cannot be underemphasized, we must also ACT. It is critical to reach out with love and compassion using wisdom and kindness as we offer help, but it is equally critical that we educate ourselves to recognize signs of abuse and refer people to professionals who can help.

Here is how to recognize signs of abuse in families:⁹

People who are being abused may:

- Seem afraid or anxious to please their partner
- Go along with everything their partner says and does
- Check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they're doing
- Receive frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner
- Talk about their partner's temper, jealousy, or possessiveness

Warning signs of physical violence. People who are being physically abused may:

- Have frequent injuries, often using the excuse of "accidents" when questioned
- Frequently missing work, school, or social occasions without explanation
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors)

Warning signs of isolation. People who are being isolated by their abuser may:

- Be restricted from seeing family and friends
- Rarely go out in public without their partner
- Have limited access to money, credit cards, or the car

The psychological warning signs of abuse. People who are being abused may:

- Have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident
- Show major personality changes (e.g. an outgoing person becomes withdrawn)
- Be depressed, anxious, or suicidal

As a pastor or church leader, make sure your church is participating in the ENDITNOW¹⁰ Sabbath every year as a way to educate your church and community. There are excellent materials prepared each year, which include sermons, children stories, seminars, etc. Be intentional about raising awareness and referring people to appropriate experts who can help guide the family.

Refer people to appropriate experts who can help guide the family. Make yourself available and identify counselors in the church (if available) or in the community who are experts and can be trusted to help.

In cases of child abuse, witnessing or learning of a dangerous situation for anyone in the family, call the police or social services. In the case of spousal abuse, you may help save a life. In some places females are killed by their partner twice as much as males.¹¹ Unfortunately this has happened among Adventist families when pastors or other leaders have ignored victims calls for help.

As church leaders or individuals we can also become more involved in our community and partner with other ongoing domestic abuse prevention programs. We may assist a local shelter or domestic violence organization in their efforts to raise awareness in our community.

In other words, use your influence and refuse to support the culture perpetuated in music, movies, television, games, and the media that glorifies violence, particularly against women and children. When cases come before the church board, take it seriously and do not condone or protect the abuser because of his or her position in the church. Instead, use discipline appropriately and seek to refer both the victim and perpetrator for counseling.

God's Ideal for families

God has left us plenty of counsel in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to help us live in a home where angels and His love abound, and where there is no room of violence or abuse.

Consider this counsel:

Tenderness

Ellen G. White writes in *Signs of the Times*:

“In many families there is a great lack in expressing affection one for another. While there is no need of sentimentalism, there is need of expressing love and **tenderness*** in a chaste, pure, dignified way. Many absolutely cultivate hardness of heart and in word and action reveal the satanic side of the character. **Tender affection** should ever be cherished between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. Every hasty word should be checked, and there should not be even the appearance of the lack of love one for another. It is the duty of everyone in the family to be pleasant, to speak **kindly**.”¹²

Respect

Ellen G. White writes in *Adventist Home*:

“Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for **rulership**. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to **respect** and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other. . . . **Do not try to compel each other** to do as you wish. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Manifestations of **self-will destroy** the peace and happiness of the home. Let not your married life be one of contention. If you do, you will both be unhappy. **Be kind in speech and gentle** in action, **giving up your own wishes**. Watch well your words, for they have a powerful influence for good or for ill. Allow **no sharpness** to come in.”¹³

That is our duty. To have a home that is a little Heaven and where God and the angels can abide in. But here is the good news! Even when the relationship has not been healthy, abusive patterns exists there is always hope!

Seeking Christ as the Helper

Ellen G. White writes in *Ministry of Healing*:

“Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will **take Christ as their helper**. What human wisdom cannot do, **His grace will accomplish** for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can **unite hearts in bonds** that are of heavenly origin. **Love** will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet **more firm**, than can be woven by the looms of earth. **The result** is not a tissue fabric, but a **texture that will bear wear and test and trial**. Heart will be **bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love** that is enduring.”¹⁴

Hope for you too!

If you recognize that you are in a dysfunctional abusive relationship, remember to see yourself in the context of Biblical truth. You may not be able to talk to anyone about this yet. That is understandable. Don't believe what your abuser says about you; focus instead on what God says about you: “I have **called you by your name**, you are **Mine**” (Isaiah 43:1, NKJV).

May each of us, men and women, young and old, seek wisdom from God in our family relationships. May we humbly allow God to teach us how to relate to each other in the way that is pleasing to Him and in ways that reflect His character. More importantly, may the words of our mouths and the actions our heart honor Him as we share His love with one another. For that is how the world will know we are true disciples of Jesus Christ.

* *Items in boldfaced type have been added for emphasis and do not appear in the books from which these quotations have been drawn.*

Notes

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Molding Your Child's Development, Part 1: The Forces that Shape the Worldview of Your Child

KATELYN CAMPBELL AND JOSEPH KIDDER

“Parents should direct the instruction and training of their children while very young, to the end that they may be Christians. They are placed in our care to be trained, not as heirs to the throne of an earthly empire, but as kings unto God, to reign through unending ages.”¹ In this passage taken from Ellen White’s *Patriarchs and Prophets*, we can clearly see that the role of parent is of utmost significance. Mothers and fathers are tasked with caring for God’s treasured children. They are to teach them, train them, shape them, and empower them.

One of the most important things a parent can do for their child is to grow a Biblical worldview within that child’s heart. Doing so will set the young boy or girl on a positive trajectory in relationship with Jesus Christ. In this three-part article series we will discuss biblical worldview, the developmental stages of children, and what parents can do to influence them and build them up in the Lord. This is the heavenly task parents have been given.

From birth until a child’s preteen years, the mother, father, and primary care-givers tend to hold the greatest sway and impact in a child’s life. In a study conducted by Fuller Youth

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Institute, it was found that “parents continue to be the single greatest influence on their children’s faith.”² After childhood parental influence is usually reduced, with school, peers, media, and the like tending to have a greater impact on the child. However, it is in these childhood years when parental influence is greatest that worldview primarily develops. Therefore, if parents help their children create a solid Biblical foundation before their teenage years, they will be setting them up for lifelong Christian commitment.

This is why in these articles we will be focusing on the parenting of children from infancy until about the age of 12 or 13. In this installment, we will discuss just what Biblical worldview is, determine how to engage with worldview at a child’s various developmental stages, and look at a prime Biblical example of parental influence on a child’s worldview. With prayerful and intentional forethought, parents can use the early years of their children’s lives to have an eternal impact.

Biblical Worldview

For the sake of this article, we define worldview as a collection of basic assumptions about life and the world, creating vision through which the individual can see. Your child’s worldview is what is going to help orient him or her in life. Like a map which

turns meaningless terrain into distinguishable landmarks, worldview provides a means for interpreting the reality of the world. The worldview that your child develops will answer key questions for them: Who am I? Why am I here? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is real? What is right and wrong? All of these questions and more are answered by the worldview your child develops, shaping his or her outlook and basic assumptions. Everyone has a worldview, but there are many different philosophies that are used as the basis for these worldviews: evolution, creation, fatalism, and humanism are a few examples. The purpose of this article is to help you develop a *Biblical* worldview in your children that will orient them to live the Christian life to it's fullest.

Just what is a Biblical worldview? There are several foundational components to it. A Biblical worldview holds the Scriptures as authoritative divine revelation. God as creator, His character of righteousness and love, His plan for our lives, Jesus' saving sacrifice, redeeming grace, and the Ten Commandments are all bedrocks for a biblical worldview. Ultimately, a biblical worldview is founded upon a belief in God and commitment to following Him. As James Sire notes, "In the biblical worldview, in short, everything is first and foremost determined by the nature and character of God."³ Through this lens, Jesus is seen as our Creator, Savior, Redeemer, and Friend, and by utilizing a Biblical worldview, we are best able to think like Jesus, fulfilling Paul's words in Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (KJV).

Research conducted by George Barna has noted that most children begin developing their own worldview by the mere age of 2. The child's moral compass is fairly determined by the age of 9, and by the time a child turns 13, worldview is usually fully formed and set.⁴ All new experiences will be filtered through this worldview for interpretation and understanding. Just as physical and mental development is crucial in childhood, the formation of worldview from birth until 13 will set the trajectory for a child's future.

The assumptions and perceptions that comprise a child's worldview not only answers basic questions about the world, but they help establish the child's values and priorities, which in turn direct behavior and decision-making. No decision is made without a worldview. In order to make positive, healthy decisions, a child needs a positive, healthy worldview. A Biblical worldview can help children make intelligent decisions that will honor God and be a benefit to others as well as themselves. This is what God wants to see in the lives of his children: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).⁵ This is what a biblical worldview has to offer: an opportunity to live the life our Creator has meant for us to live.

Stages of Learning

Jean Piaget, a noted psychologist, laid substantial foundation for understanding the mental development of children. He proposed that a person's cognitive development occurs in four basic and primary stages⁶. From birth until about the age of 2 is the sensorimotor stage. During this time, the child learns from personal sensory engagement with the world around him or her. Learning occurs through touching, tasting, watching, smelling, and hearing. The world begins to be ordered for the child as he or she encounters and manipulates the objects within it. Parents can teach their children in a sensory-oriented way, through allowing them to see, hear, touch, and act in order to understand the world. Here are some examples: Visually show children pictures of animals or Bible characters; sing Bible-oriented songs with your children; guide them in folding their hands for prayer; give them leaves, rocks, or other objects from nature to touch and hold. The more you can connect your child with Jesus through his or her senses, the more the child will understand him.

From about age 2 through 7, the child is in the preoperational stage. During this time, memory and imagination begin to develop, and concepts of the past, present, and future solidify. Symbolic ideas begin to make sense

to the child, meaning that he or she is able to recognize that a word or object can stand for something else. Teaching children at this age means utilizing their natural propensity for imagination. Encourage them to draw out Bible stories, or join your children in acting the stories out. You can take them to a zoo, aquarium, or park and invite them to imagine Jesus creating all the plants, trees, and animals.

In her book, *Putting Their Hands in His*, Ruthie Jacobsen writes, “The Master Story Teller—Christ—often used objects in nature to help to embed a profound spiritual truth. He used the visible things of nature that His listeners were most familiar with—the waving fields of grain, the farmer planting his crops, a lost lamb. There are dramatic and mundane lessons to be drawn from nature. Some can be scary, even frightening to a child, but even from these realities of nature, there are powerful truths. And there are also stories and lessons of God’s majesty and power.”⁷⁷ Because children gain an understanding of time during this stage, you can explain the story of the Garden of Eden, God’s presence in our lives now, and His soon Second Coming so they can understand the timeline of the world. You can also begin teaching your children portions of Scripture to memorize, rewarding them for their efforts: at this age many kids will be eager to memorize. Your child’s imagination, concept of time, and capacity for memory are all key for helping him or her learn.

Ages 7 through 11 typically mark the concrete operational stage. A child in this stage will begin to develop logical thought processing. Thinking and problem solving becomes something the child can do internally within their own minds and without physically manipulating anything. During this time you can walk your child through the process of fact, truth, and application. First, tell Bible stories and explain the knowledge found in scripture—these are the facts. Once the facts are established, discuss what lessons can be learned from these stories and passages of the Bible—these are the truths. Finally, talk over with your child how the truths found in Scripture make a difference in his or her life and even

how these lessons and ideas can be shared with others—this is the application. This will lead to spiritual growth and maturity in the life of your child. At this age, children will be able to think through these deeper concepts thoughtfully and logically, so be sure to engage them in such thinking.

Ocurring from 11 years old and up, the formal operational stage features the refinement of a child’s ability to logically work through mental problems. Children are able to comprehend more abstract concepts, allowing them to move from simple and concrete facts to deeper, more life-changing ideas. Scripture reading can become more than informational: it can be transformational. During this time, parents can teach their children that every part of Scripture is for spiritual growth and maturity, providing them with development in wisdom and opportunities for sanctification. This age marks the time when a child’s spirituality truly starts becoming his or her own. It is important to encourage children to take the grand story of the Bible as their own personal story, which provides a means to eternal life (Philippians 2:16).

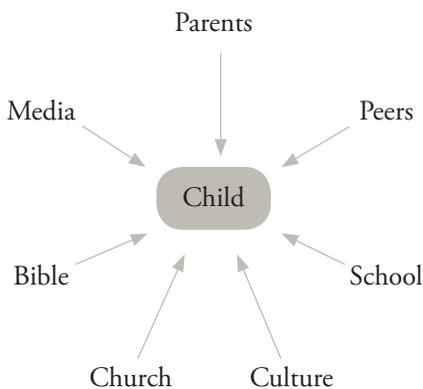
By keeping these stages of learning in mind, parents can best teach their children about God and the Bible, meeting their children where they are in their cognitive development. However, no matter exactly *how* parents teach their children, it is perhaps most important that parents simply keep in mind to teach their children about the character of God—his love, acceptance, forgiveness, goodness, and more. Ellen White describes how Jesus’ own parents did this for him: “They reminded Jesus of his identity as the Son of God. They taught him through songs and through nature. As they taught him, they themselves grew and learned more about God and his scriptures.”⁷⁸ Just as Jesus’ parents grew to know God better as they taught Him His character, parents today can also grow in their understanding of God even as they instruct their children.

The Effect of Culture

A recent survey conducted by the American Culture and Faith Institute revealed that over

half of adults in the United States (51%) believe that the nation's current pervasive culture has an overall negative effect upon children and teenagers.⁹ The survey showed that 93% of adults who claim a Biblical worldview believe that culture negatively impacts children, and even many adults (48%) who do not ascribe to a Biblical worldview still say that the country's common culture affects children in a poor way. If we as Christians wish to support the spiritual growth of our children, it may be wise to see how elements of culture impact them and what can be done to reduce negative impact and increase positive impact. No person exists in a vacuum: we are all affected by what goes on around us and to us within our environments.

The Forces that Shape the Worldview of Your Child



In the image above are some primary factors that can influence a child. When a child is young, his or her parents will have the greatest amount of influence in that child's life. In time as the child grows up, other factors will have greater influence. However, if the parents are intentional about teaching their child and setting their child down a good path at an early age, he or she will know how to navigate the other influential factors of life much better later on. During childhood it is crucial for parents to carefully consider what aspects of culture they want their children to engage with, and from which parts of culture they want to shelter them.

This question, in essence, is asking what kind of microculture you want to create. A

microculture is “a distinctive culture shared by a small group that is often based on location or within an organization.”¹⁰ While your family is set in the midst of local culture—complete with language, traditions, media, etc.—the family is itself a distinct culture. It can be influenced by surrounding cultural aspects, but it has its own established rules, customs, and ways of doing life. Within the home, parents get to set the tone and parameters for the family culture. As children grow up, they will in turn contribute to the microculture, but when the family first begins, it is the mother and father who contribute most to the development of the microculture. It is within this microculture that children will begin learning basic assumptions about the world around them as their worldviews begin to develop. According to most authorities in childhood development,¹¹ it is the mother and father (the primary caregivers) who are most influential to a child's growth. Thus, the question to parents remains: What kind of microculture do you want your family to have?

If you are seeking to raise your child with a Biblical worldview, your family's microculture needs to be intentionally crafted to promote this worldview. Ellen White writes, “Prayerfully, unitedly, the father and the mother should bear the grave responsibility of guiding their children aright.”¹² A good place to begin this thoughtful development of your microculture is to examine what Scripture suggests: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). If you are incorporating language that is lovely, media that is pure, rules that are just, and the like, you are creating an external framework to positively influence your children.

Examine the furnishings of your microculture—the music that plays in your home, the art that hangs on the walls, the stories you read together at night. Are they

virtuous? Do they teach about God? In this age of heightened technology and media focus, we recommend limiting your family's screen time, evaluating what your children are watching, and setting positive examples for them to follow. Carefully and thoughtfully select content which will build your family up. Spend time discussing what you watch or play, pointing out lessons about morals and considering what God might have found pleasing or displeasing.¹³

But don't let your culture be one that simply sits on the couch all day long! Fill your family's time with fun and affirming activities. It may be easy to think of all the things you *don't* want in your family's microculture. But consider this parable from Jesus:

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation” (Matthew 12:43-45).

Don't just empty your house of evil. Fill it with goodness and the presence of God. Have fun with your children. Play games, read books, cook food, have adventures, and all along the way teach your children about their Heavenly Father. The Psalmist wrote of this joy of a life spent with God, saying:

**“YOU WILL SHOW ME THE PATH OF LIFE;
IN YOUR PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY;
AT YOUR RIGHT HAND ARE PLEASURES
FOREVERMORE”
(PSALM 16:11)**

With healthy and direct influence, parents can create such a culture for their children, and through this culture they will experience the fullness of joy of God and develop a Biblical worldview.

The Influence of Parents: Lessons from the Life of Timothy

In the New Testament, Timothy is a primary example of what it looks like for a young person to be raised with a Biblical worldview. Timothy was a pastor and evangelist right alongside Paul, but it took years of discipling for him to become such a prominent preacher of the gospel. Scripture tells us that his family was very instrumental in Timothy's spiritual development. In 1 Timothy, Paul writes to the young man, saying, “...I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (1 Timothy 1:5).

Both Timothy's mother and grandmother raised him in the faith of the Lord. Their influence was so instrumental that believers in the surrounding area where he lived had plenty of positive things to say about him. “Then [Paul] came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:1,2). Before ever making contact with the great evangelist Paul, Timothy's faith in the Lord was evident, grown through his experience at home. Ellen White writes, “the piety and influence of his home life was not of a cheap order, but pure, sensible, and uncorrupted by false sentiments. The moral influence of his home was substantial, not fitful, not impulsive, not changeable. The Word of God was the rule which guided Timothy. He received his instruction line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Impressions of the highest possible order were kept before his mind. His home instructors cooperated with God in educating this young man to bear the burdens that were to come upon him at an early age.”¹⁴ The frontline of the cultivation of Biblical worldview starts with the child's parents and primary caregivers.

The Responsibility of the Community of Faith

Although we have been talking about the influence of parents, all believers should be involved in the spiritual development of children, youth, and young adults. Of course in the life of Timothy, after Paul decided to take the young man under his wing, a mentorship process began. In *Philippians 2:22*, Paul says of Timothy to the church of Philippi, “you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.” A strong relational bond was formed between these two. Paul was intentional about his close relationship with Timothy, teaching him and empowering him with opportunities to serve and expand the kingdom of God.

In fact, Paul had tremendous faith and trust in this young man. “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church” (*1 Corinthians 4:17*). Paul built up his prodigy and then sent him out to do great things for God. We can clearly see here the need for young people to have additional teachers and mentors outside of their immediate family. After all, as the old African proverb goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Paul desired to build a culture of mentorship within the church, something which he himself modeled and instructed others to do as well.

In the book of *Titus*, Paul wrote to another of his mentees, penning these words: “...older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having

nothing evil to say of you” (*Titus 2:2-8*). Paul was instructing the older men and women of the church to not only be responsible for their own behaviors but to be sure to train up the next generation of believers in a like manner. The church is meant to be a training ground for children and young adults to grow in Christ. As the Psalmist writes, “One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts” (*Psalms 145:4*).

Peter wrote in *1 Peter 5:1-2*, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you...” As members of a community of faith, the entire church is called upon to mentor and compassionately instruct boys and girls, young men and women, as they grow as Christians. We all have a part to play in the cultivation of the next generation’s worldview.

We can see such mentorship all throughout the Bible: Eli ministered to the young boy Samuel within the temple, teaching him about the voice of God (*1 Samuel 2:11; 1 Samuel 3*); Naomi mentored her bereaved daughter-in-law, Ruth, and taught her all about the true God of heaven and earth (*Ruth 1:15-19*); Mordechai comforted and empowered his cousin Esther, encouraging her to fulfill the plan God had put before her (*Esther 4*); and the married couple Priscilla and Aquila took in the young preacher Apollos and taught him new truths about Christ (*Acts 18:24-26*). When you begin looking for them, you will be surprised what young people God may put into your path.

Conclusion

The development of a Biblical worldview does not happen overnight or without thought or intentionality: it takes parents committed to teaching and growing their children after God’s own heart. As *Proverbs 22:6* says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” If you truly wish to see your son or daughter grow into a mature, strong person of faith, begin that process today.

Parents always have been and will continue to be the greatest impactors upon a child's faith. The previously mentioned study conducted by the Fuller Youth Institute has debunked the common misconception in today's cultural climate that parents have less and less influence upon their children.¹⁵ This idea simply is not true. In spite of the allures of culture, parents still hold the strongest sway over the worldview of their children.

The influence of a parent can never be underestimated. Your children are always watching and listening, ready to be influenced and molded by you, the parents. By recognizing where your child is in his or her developmental growth, you can engage with him or her in ways that best teach about Christ. Here we have begun to outline ways that you can do this—reading, applying, and memorizing Scripture; singing praise songs and psalms together; and appreciating and finding God's creative power in nature, among others. In the next two articles we will discuss more practical ways and methods you can implement in your home to grow your child in God.

Notes

- ¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Napa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 244.
- ² Dustin McClure, "Helping Kids Keep the Faith," Fuller Youth Institute, accessed March 28, 2019, <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/articles/helping-kids-keep-the-faith>.
- ³ James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 55.
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- ⁵ Unless otherwise noted all Bible quotes are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).
- ⁶ Saul McLeod, "Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development," Simply Psychology, accessed March 28, 2019. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html#stages>.
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- ⁸ Ellen White, *Youth's Instructor* (Sept. 8, 1898).
- ⁹ George Barna, "Americans Worried About Children," June 28, 2017. <http://www.georgebarna.com/research-flow/2017/6/28/americans-worried-about-children>.
- ¹⁰ Open Education Sociology Dictionary, accessed March 28, 2019. <https://sociologydictionary.org/microculture/>
- ¹¹ See these examples: Damon Verial, "The Effects of Environment on a Child's Behavior," accessed March 28, 2019. <https://www.livestrong.com/article/122830-effects-environment-children-behavior/>; and <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Effects-of-the-Environment-on-Children-FKJBTZUATJ>
- ¹² Ellen White, *Review and Herald* (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press, 2002).
- ¹³ Joseph Kidder and David Penno, "A Christian Perspective on Watching Secular TV Programming," Healthy Families for Eternity (Silver Spring, MD: North American Division Corporation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church), 61-62.
- ¹⁴ Ellen White, *SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 918.
- ¹⁵ Dustin McClure, "Helping Kids Keep the Faith."

“LOVE GOD, YOUR GOD, WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART: LOVE HIM WITH ALL THAT’S IN YOU, LOVE HIM WITH ALL YOU’VE GOT! WRITE THESE COMMANDMENTS THAT I’VE GIVEN YOU TODAY ON YOUR HEARTS. GET THEM INSIDE OF YOU AND THEN GET THEM INSIDE YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM WHEREVER YOU ARE, SITTING AT HOME OR WALKING IN THE STREET; TALK ABOUT THEM FROM THE TIME YOU GET UP IN THE MORNING TO WHEN YOU FALL INTO BED AT NIGHT.”
DEUTERONOMY 6:5-8 (MSG)

In today’s world, family time is a rare commodity. Yet, the words of Deuteronomy still apply! Leadership is given to the parents. “Get them inside of YOU” first, God seems to say, **then** get them inside your children! The Lord is very clear about His expectation of home leadership; parents must obey His commandments first and then “get them inside their children.” Proverbs 22:6 gives instruction from the oldest parenting manual, the Bible: “Train up a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God’s wisdom and will for his abilities and talents], even when he is old he will not depart from it” (AMP). Yet, often today the teaching of principles to children is left to the school and the church. Note the

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Social Media: Blessing or Curse!

WILMA KIRK-LEE

definition of leadership: a person who guides or directs a group.

In the not too distant past, families gathered around the dinner table and shared about their day with each other. Today, few families share a daily meal and when they are all in the same place, they are connected to the world beyond their table through their smartphones and other media.

Let’s look at some statistics from Common Sense Media, a leading source of entertainment and technology recommendations for families:

- Mobile media have become a nearly universal part of the children’s media landscape, across all levels of society.
- Nearly all (98 percent) children age 8 and under live in a home with some type of mobile device, the same percentage that have a TV in the home. Mobile media ownership is up from 75 percent in 2013 and 52 percent in 2011
- Ninety-five percent of families with children age 8 and under now have a smartphone, up from 63 percent in 2013 and 41 percent in 2011, and 78 percent have a tablet (up from 40 percent in 2013 and 8 percent just six years ago in 2011).

- 42 percent of children now have their own tablet device—up from 7 percent four years ago and less than 1 percent in 2011.

According to a Pew survey conducted during 2014 and 2015, 94 percent of teens who go online using a mobile device do so daily. Teens use multiple social platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular, and 71 percent of teens say they use more than one social media site.

“THE END AND CULMINATION OF ALL THINGS IS NEAR. THEREFORE, BE SOUND-MINDED AND SELF-CONTROLLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER [STAYING BALANCED AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD SO THAT YOUR COMMUNICATION WILL BE CLEAR, REASONABLE, SPECIFIC AND PLEASING TO HIM.]”
1 PETER 4:7 (AMP)

The Challenge of Technology

Modern technology has brought never before dreamt of challenges to home and family life. Previous generations communicated to those outside the home using a phone that was attached to a wall in the family home. If you were away from home, you looked for a phonebooth and hoped you had a quarter to make the call. People would use the phone in the booth to speak with others and to leave information behind—names and numbers posted somewhere on the wall of the phone booth. Only people who entered that particular phone booth would know the name or number.

In the era of the phone booth, I was taught the following: “Fools names and fools faces are always found in public places!” In the age of “anonymous” social media seems, does this adage still apply? Yes it does—even though we are led to think that things posted online can’t be seen. **They are always there!** When today’s young people apply to college or for employment, someone reviews their social media account. What they have posted can make the difference between acceptance or rejection.

Is there Any Hope?

So what’s a parent to do? How do today’s parents manage the ever-present media landscape? Do they have to move “off the grid” to prevent their children from using social media? What is the balance? These are great questions

The first thing to consider is this: Principles of value are usually **caught** not **taught**. Parents must examine at their own social media habits and usage. Everyone today owns a smartphone. Some children live in a home that does not have a landline just a smartphone. Adults pay for and distribute smartphones to their children in the home. They also make the smartphone the constant companion in their life. Healthy technology use must be demonstrated first by example. Parents must model this behavior or their children will never learn the lessons they hope to teach. Do we even know what is healthy use of technology and what is not?

No matter where you are or who you are, there is one thing in life that is the same for everyone: **Time!** Each of us is governed by 365 days a year, 52 weeks a year, 7 days per week, 24, 1140 minutes, and 86,000 seconds in a day. Our time belongs to God. Ellen White wrote that “Every moment is His and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 342).

Self-Control/Temperance in All Things

In order to train our children to learn self-control (temperance) when consuming or using media, self-control must be an intentional part of our family lifestyle. There’s a place for media, but there is nothing like “the ministry of **presence**.” Parents must provide an opportunity for children to share their feelings, concerns, doubts, and challenges without distraction or being rushed. This requires that parents prioritize how this time will be spent.

Again, the Lord asks us to prioritize our time with Him. Listen to Him speak in Psalm 46:10: “Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at Me, your High God, above politics, above everything” (MSG). Long before there was modern technology, God knew we could easily be distracted by our time priorities. When we place God first in our time priorities, He reminds us of the precious gifts He has entrusted to us in our children. He also reminds us to be the example for our children who in turn reflect His love to us.

Too often, temperance or self-control is only mentioned in relation issues of substance abuse. If we consider self-control (temperance) as a lifestyle, then we will be far more conscious of how we use things in this life that impact our time, including our devices. Paul states it this way, “Now every athlete who [goes into training and] competes in the games is disciplined and exercises self-control in all things,” (1 Corinthians 9:25, AMP).

We should encourage temperate use of media that is age-appropriate. Research shows that children under the age of six should not be allowed to use media. Additionally, parents should limit media usage for children older than six and restrict their access to media.

Phones and other media should be placed in a central, monitored location during meal times and at bedtime. When parents adhere to these guidelines and model them for their children, they are training up their children in the way that they should go. Remember principles are **caught** not **taught!**

Being a model leader is always difficult. Yet, our God entrusts us with training our children in the way they should go, and He’s also working on us at the same time! What a wonderful manifestation of love and grace. We provide our children with a healthy legacy by the time, memories, and feelings of connectedness with which they leave our homes. To accomplish this noble aspiration requires two things: **Time** and **Presence!** Both of these are priceless! The choice to use them wisely is up to us!

Conclusion

It is time to look at how we spend our time. Is Sabbath the only time we give to the Lord and His work? Are we so busy making a living that we have forgotten how to live? Maybe small steps would help.

Begin by encouraging daily Sabbath School study and personal worship time. The discussions we have at the family table during our meals could be focused on what we learned from our time with God in study.

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(Use the following assessment to see how much time you spend with your own media.)

HANDOUT

NOMOPHOBIA

*(irrational fear of being without your mobile phone
or being unable to use your phone for some reason)*

Are you a smartphone junkie? Rate each item on a scale of 1 (“completely disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”) and tally up your total score to find out. Be honest!

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. I would feel uncomfortable without constant access to information through my smartphone.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>7. If I did not have a data signal or could not connect to Wi-Fi, then I would constantly check to see if I had a signal or could find a Wi-Fi network.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |
| <p>2. I would be annoyed if I could not look information up on my smartphone when I wanted to do so.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>8. If I could not use my smartphone, I would be afraid of getting stranded somewhere.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |
| <p>3. Being unable to get the news (e.g., happenings, weather, etc.) on my smartphone would make me nervous.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>9. If I could not check my smartphone for a while, I would feel a desire to check it.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |
| <p>4. I would be annoyed if I could not use my smartphone and/or its capabilities when I wanted to do so.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>10. If I did not have my smartphone with me ... I would feel anxious because I could not instantly communicate with my family and/or friends.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |
| <p>5. Running out of battery in my smartphone would scare me.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>11. I would be worried because my family and/or friends could not reach me.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |
| <p>6. If I were to run out of credits or hit my monthly data limit, I would panic.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> | <p>12. I would feel nervous because I would not be able to receive text messages and calls.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> |

HANDOUT

13. I would be anxious because I could not keep in touch with my family and/or friends.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. I would be nervous because I could not know if someone had tried to get a hold of me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. I would feel anxious because my constant connection to my family and friends would be broken.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. I would be nervous because I would be disconnected from my online identity.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. I would be uncomfortable because I could not stay up-to-date with social media and online networks.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. I would feel awkward because I could not check my notifications for updates from my connections and online networks.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. I would feel anxious because I could not check my email messages.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. I would feel weird because I would not know what to do.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How You Score

20: Not at all *nomophobic*. You have a very healthy relationship with your device and have no problem being separated from it.

21-60: *Mild nomophobia*. You get a little antsy when you forget your phone at home for a day or get stuck somewhere without WiFi, but the anxiety isn't too overwhelming.

61-100: *Moderate nomophobia*. You're pretty attached to your device. You often check for updates while you're walking down the street or talking to a friend, and you often feel anxious when you're disconnected. *Time for a digital detox?*

101-120: *Severe nomophobia*. You can barely go for 60 seconds without checking your phone. It's the first thing you check in the morning and the last at night, and dominates most of your activities in-between. It might be time for a serious intervention.

Care for Kids Left Behind in Breakup

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

Q: I got divorced last year after a 6-year marriage that was wrong to begin with! My 13-year-old daughter keeps telling me that me and my ex are toxic because we show so much hatred towards each other. She says that she feels lonely, abandoned, and unloved and says maybe I would be better off without her. How can I help her to feel better?

A: A divorce or separation of any kind can be traumatic for everyone involved, but especially for children. While there is a common belief that children are ultimately better off being in an environment where their parents are not arguing, children are usually devastated to see their family fall apart—if they are not in homes where there is physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. An aspect of divorce that most parents do not consider for themselves or their children is the grief process that goes along with the loss of a marriage and disintegration of the family. For a child—as well as the parents—divorce leaves deep psychological wounds and scars that if left unattended will affect all future relationships.

Your child is expressing her deep pain and hurt, which you should take very seriously. And since it appears she has already experienced the

pain of separation twice in her short life, it is possible she feels a deep sense of hopelessness. She may even be imagining herself as the cause of the distress in the lives of the significant adults in her life. This type of trauma in a child's life can lead to risky behaviors such as problems at school, choosing the wrong friends, and even leading to future problems with the law.

At this juncture, we strongly encourage you to seek professional counseling immediately from someone who has expertise in working with families and adolescents. Concurrently, here are a few things you can do to help alleviate some of your daughter's fears:

- 1) Make her well-being your highest priority. Of course, ensure you remain healthy psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and physically, so you have the reserves to take care of your daughter. Many divorced people use a lot energy getting back at their ex (or exes), or they jump into a new romantic relationship to help them recover from the previous relationship breakup. These quick solutions are unhealthy for all parties involved and do nothing but put a small bandage on a very large wound, causing further damage to the children involved. Also, you may have a few wounds that need to be healed, so now is a good time for that healing to begin and to develop additional self-awareness.

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- 2) Assure her of your love and stability in her life. Give her lots of hugs and verbally tell her that you love her. Even if you have to work more to provide for both of you, establish routines such as regular times for family worship, breakfast and/or dinner together, or just to have fun together.
- 3) Commit to having a positive relationship with your recent ex-husband and her father if he is still in the picture. Resist the urge to bad mouth your ex in front of your daughter. Children of divorced parents tend to feel they did something wrong or feel guilty for the divorce. Regardless of

the reason for the divorce, no matter how dreadful the situation may have been, keep your explanations honest but without graphic details. If she has a close relationship with her step-dad and/or her biological dad, work on an amicable way to have them remain in her life, if appropriate.

2 Corinthians 12:9 declares: “And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness...” We pray that during this difficult period in your life you and your daughter will experience hope and healing through God’s grace, love, and power.



2019
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

STRENGTHENING DISCIPLES

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

Centennial Edition

Keep Me From Screaming at These Kids!

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

Q: My children are driving me insane. I am a single parent and have two children, six and nine. Two girls. Sometimes I feel like I am going to have a stroke when they continually bicker with each other and don't listen to me asking them to stop. What concerns me is that I often scream at them, and I know that cannot be good. However, I find myself screaming at my girls too often, and I need help to stop before I damage them beyond repair. Please help.

A: Thank you for your thoughtful question, and for your willingness to be so vulnerable to make sure you become the best mother you can be to your girls.

Welcome to the challenging world of parenting, where there are no perfect parents because there are no perfect people. In the process of responding to your question we inevitably are thinking about the many times our responses to our children, who are now adults, were far less than ideal. The truth is, all parents blemish their children in some way. One of the important goals of parenting, then, has to be to keep the blemishing of our children to a minimum. It is really important that we don't completely destroy our children

beyond repair. The fact that you are writing to us conveys that you are the type of mother who does not want to get to the place of completely shattering the childhood of your children.

There is no denying that parenting, like all other relationships, takes intentionality to determine what kind of relationship one wants to have with one's children. You must ask yourself the question if you want to have an awful relationship with a few "good" times. Deciding what kind of parent you want to be, will help you stay away from the kind of parent you don't want to be.

In their excellent book, *The Parent You Want to Be*, Drs. Les and Leslie Parrot encourage parents to brainstorm for a few minutes and write down qualities they want to avoid in their parenting. Circle the top two traits they are most likely to have, and be intentional about avoiding that type of behavior. If you are aware of your weak spots and practice emotional intelligence—staying in control of your emotions—you are more likely to parent in a way that will be constructive, rather than destructive to your children.

One of the biggest problems with parenting is the notion that to be a parent means to control one's children from behaving in undesirable ways, by any means necessary. Back in the 1980's there was a very popular family show on television where we once heard the father say to his son—

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albeit in humor: “I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.” While this may sound like a funny statement, it isn’t at all funny, given the reality that many children are being abused by their parents, even to the point of death. To stay away from negative practices with your children, you have to decide ahead of time, what behaviors you will not allow yourself to engage in.

Ellen White, a prolific and gifted Christian writer, states in her book *Child Guidance* (page 86): “The requirements of the parents should always be reasonable; kindness should be expressed, not by foolish indulgence, by wise direction. Parents are to teach their children pleasantly, without scolding or faultfinding, seeking to bind the hearts of the little ones to them by silken cords of love.”

Ultimately, what children most need from their parents is unconditional love. This kind of love, to be sure, is only found in Jesus, and can only be replicated by parents when the love of Jesus dwells in them by choice.

The apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 13:4, “Love suffers long (is patient) and is kind...” We encourage you to determine you will practice being patient and kind with your children each day, while setting healthy boundaries for them to follow. Mostly, though, your children will tend to follow the behavior you live before them each day.

You will continue in our prayers.



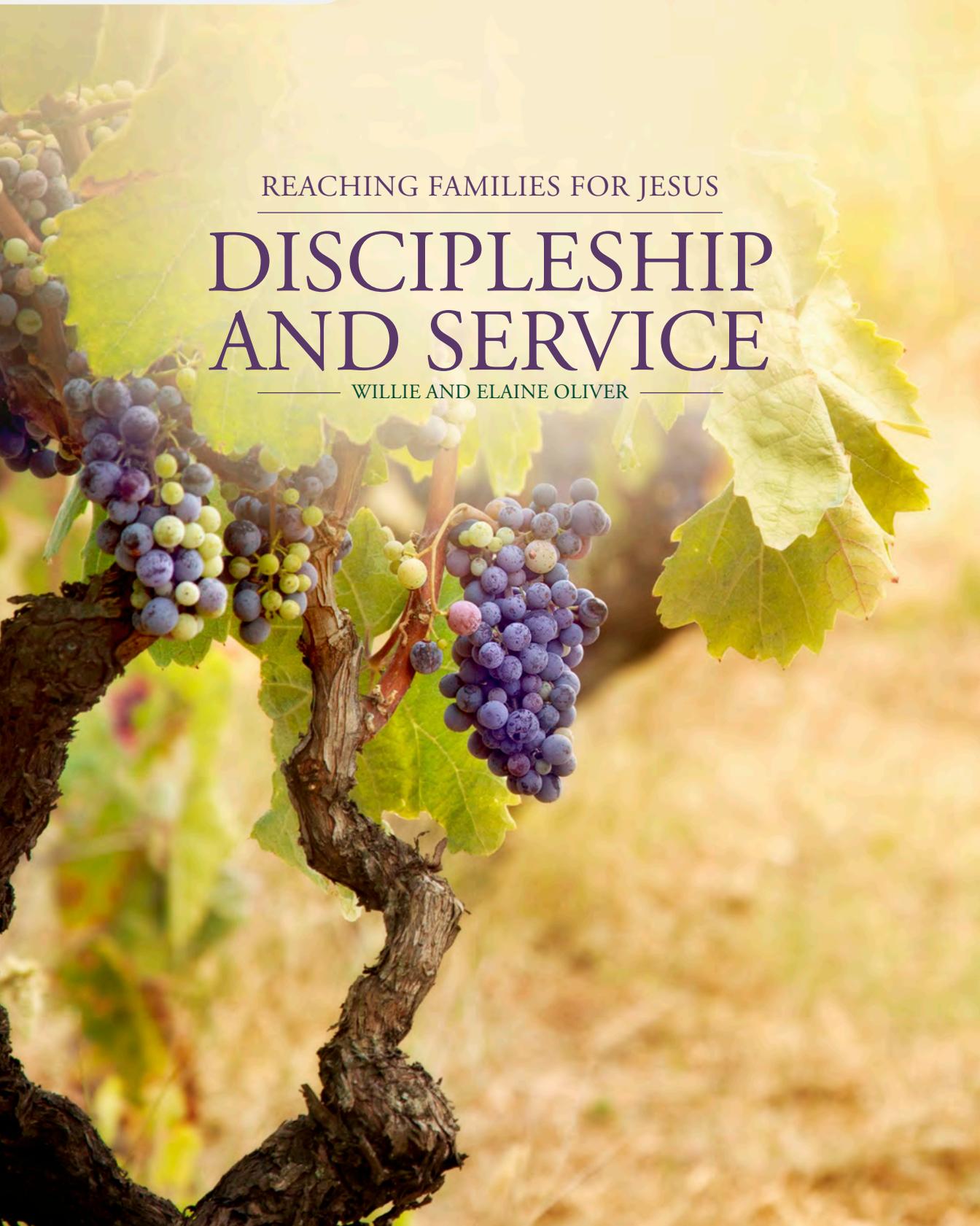
2018
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

DISCIPLESHIP AND SERVICE

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



The Power of Praying Parents

S. JOSEPH KIDDER

The Text

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

Introduction

24

I met Larry during Christmas. He was rough looking and heavily covered with tattoos—up and down his arms, on his neck, even on his head. In the course of our conversation, he told me that he was the head deacon at his church. I was taken aback! I don’t normally see myself as judgmental, but I could not understand why a church would let a guy who looked as rough as Larry be the head deacon. That is when he shared his story with me.

He grew up in the Church and was the product of Adventist education from elementary school until the first year of college. When he got to college, he did not feel like he fit in with their strict rules and regulations. He left school and ended up joining the Hells Angels. He totally embraced the gang life—drugs, women, drinking, full-body tattoos.

During Larry’s years away from God, his mother woke up at five o’clock every morning to pray for her son. She had little contact with Larry and often did not know where he was,

whether he was dead or alive—in jail or out of jail—but she kept clinging to hope. For fifteen years, Larry’s mother faithfully prayed for her son and claimed Bible promises on his behalf.

Fifteen years later, Larry finally decided it was time to leave the Hells Angels. He and his girlfriend settled down in the Bay Area. He got a job, but stole from his boss to support his drug addiction. He was caught and fired. Soon after, he ran out of money. He and his girlfriend were evicted from their apartment and shortly thereafter, she left him. Larry, unable to recover, lived on the streets of San Francisco. He ate from trash cans and scavenged for necessities.

Larry became so depressed that he felt suicide was the only option. One Sabbath morning, he took his gun and pointed it at his head. With his finger on the trigger, he heard a voice telling him to go to church. He had not been to church in fifteen years so he ignored the voice. Resetting his grip, he heard the voice again saying, “Go to church.” He tried to ignore the voice again. This happened several times. How did Larry respond? What happened to him? We’ll get back to that shortly.

Covering Our Children with Prayer

Every single day we may find ourselves doing a lot for our children—loving and caring for them, nurturing, teaching, training, helping,

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leading, equipping, encouraging, protecting, and so much more. We spend precious hours just living out life, helping with homework, and driving them to activities. We spend money on sports, lessons, and various classes to help them grow and become all they can be, providing opportunities for them to do what they most love in this world. But in the midst of busy, full lives we have to ask ourselves: Are we praying for our children?

I am not referring to quick prayers that have little thought behind them. I mean *really* praying specific, powerful, promise-filled, hope-inspired prayers. The only thing of eternal significance that will stand the test of time is our prayers for our children. Our prayers for our children never die. They live on in their lives. Their relationship with Jesus is the only thing they can take with them to heaven, and for this we should pray for them.

When my two children were young, after supper we would have family worship. Shortly after that I would typically leave for a meeting or pastoral visitation. My wife would tuck the children in bed after praying with each one of them. When I would return home, I would go into their rooms and also pray with them. Then my wife and I would go into our bedroom and pray for our children's salvation, protection, future, and character. Many times we would claim specific Bible promises on their behalf. To this day, my adult children remain committed followers of Jesus.

There is nothing more powerful than the earnest prayers of parents who humbly kneel down and lift their children before the Lord. Ellen White writes,

“THE POWER OF A MOTHER’S PRAYERS CANNOT BE TOO HIGHLY ESTIMATED. SHE WHO KNEELS BESIDE HER SON AND DAUGHTER THROUGH THE VICISSITUDES OF CHILDHOOD, THROUGH THE PERILS OF YOUTH, WILL NEVER KNOW TILL THE JUDGMENT THE INFLUENCE OF HER PRAYERS UPON THE LIFE OF HER CHILDREN. IF SHE IS CONNECTED BY FAITH WITH THE SON OF GOD, THE

MOTHER’S TENDER HAND MAY HOLD BACK HER SON FROM THE POWER OF TEMPTATION, MAY RESTRAIN HER DAUGHTER FROM INDULGING IN SIN. WHEN PASSION IS WARRING FOR THE MASTERY, THE POWER OF LOVE, THE RESTRAINING, EARNEST, DETERMINED INFLUENCE OF THE MOTHER, MAY BALANCE THE SOUL ON THE SIDE OF RIGHT.”
WHITE, ADVENTIST HOME P. 266

In my pastoral ministry I have seen the difference it makes when parents pray for their children. Those children are protected by God. They often decided to follow Jesus and more often than not, come back to the Lord when they go astray.

Prayers are powerful because we have a God who does even the impossible when we pray. Hannah prayed for something that was impossible for her—to have a child—but God granted her wish. The same God who granted Hannah's wish for a child honors the prayers of parents for the salvation, protection, and future of their children. Hannah knew Who had helped her: “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him” (1 Samuel 1:27). My hope is that every parent will be able to claim this promise on behalf of their children.

Now I would like to share with you seven important areas for which to pray concerning your children. At the end, there is 31-day prayer plan which may help you get started praying for your children. You may repeat it or adapt it as you wish.

1. Salvation

As a father, my greatest desire in the world is to see my children walking with the Lord, and I pray for this all the time. John had it right when he wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

I want to pray that my children have an experience like Paul who said, “I want to

know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11, NIV). When children do this, is there any greater joy that a parent can have?

Prayer for Our Children’s Salvation:

“Father, I pray that my daughter will confess with her mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in her heart that You have raised Christ from the dead.

May my daughter call on Your name (Romans 10:9,13)! Father, lead my daughter in the paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake. I pray that You will shed Your love abroad in her heart, and teach my daughter to delight in You (Romans 5:5).

Jesus, bind Satan and break his power over my daughter for he is a defeated foe. Please send your angels and godly men and women to minister to my daughter.

Holy Spirit, I ask that you draw my daughter to Jesus Christ and into a close, personal relationship with Him.

Thank You, Lord, for Your gift of salvation. Thank You for saving my daughter. I pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.”

2. Character

We desire very strongly for our children to be Christ-like. The Apostle Paul’s prayer was that they would follow his example, as he followed the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). We pray that our children not only know doctrine, but that they would know Jesus and have His character. Our greatest hope is that others will be able to see Him in them, that their light would shine before others, that others may see their good deeds and glorify their Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

It is not enough to simply “wish” that our children would be like Jesus. We must be godly examples of Christ to our children, and we

must earnestly pray His character into their lives. In my own Bible study I love to discover the character of God in His word. Whenever I list these characteristics, I prayerfully ask Him to place those characteristics in my children and me. There is no greater act of worship than to be Christ-like, for we were created in His image for fellowship with Him.

Prayer for Our Children’s Characters:

“Father, thank you that my son is Your child! You have chosen him to be holy, and he is dearly loved. Out of that love, may my son’s life be marked by tenderhearted mercy, by kindness, by humility, by gentleness, and by patience. May he grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Let my son’s light shine before others, that they may see his good deeds and glorify You (Matthew 5:16).

I pray that my son will be quick to forgive an offense, forgiving as quickly and completely as You forgave us! And above all else, I pray that he will live a life of love which binds us all together in perfect unity (Ephesians 4:32).

May my son’s heart be filled with the peace of Christ and thankfulness. Let every detail of my son’s life —words, actions, and thoughts— be done in the name of Jesus, thanking You every step of the way.

May my son learn to do right, seek justice, and defend the oppressed. May he take up the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow (Isaiah 1:17).

I pray my son will serve You faithfully with all his heart and consider what great things You have done for him” (1 Samuel 12:24). In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

3. Relationships

Our prayers should be centered on God guiding our children “along the right paths for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3) and leading them in choosing their friends and future spouses. We are to pray that they will have relationships

that are positive and which will lead them to Christ.

Ask God to protect your child daily from those who would be an evil influence to them. “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night” (Psalm 1:1, 2, NIV).

One of the biggest influences on our children are their friends. We pray that God will bring committed Christians like the apostle, Andrew, to their paths who will help lead them to Jesus. We also want our children to be like Andrew and bring other people to Christ.¹ We might even pray that God will miraculously remove a friend of questionable character from our child’s life.

Prayer for Our Children’s Relationships:

“Father, bring to my children’s paths the friends You want them to have. Lord, keep them from the wrong influences. Provide my children with godly relationships and fun things to do that are also pleasing to You.

Father, thank You that my children walk in the way of godly Christians and keep the paths of the righteous. Thank You, Father, that You provide wise and godly friendships for my children. May my children find godly spouses that will encourage them in their faith and walk with the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:14). In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

4. Joy

We desire to bring happiness to our loved ones. That desire is a tiny reflection of God’s desire to lavish our children with happiness beyond measure. The concept of joy is found more than 200 times in the Bible, thus showing the value God places on it.² Joy is even a fruit of the Spirit, a result of having the Holy Spirit in our lives (Ephesians 5:22).

The ultimate joy is having God’s presence in our children’s lives. “You make known to

me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand” (Psalm 16:11, NIV). Picture the unimaginable, eternal delight that God wants to give. Make eternal happiness in God’s presence your reference point and goal as you pray for your children.

Ultimately, only God can offer total, eternal happiness. This joy is not based on material possessions, accomplishments, or circumstances, but contentment in the Lord. Paul says, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV).

Prayer for Our Children’s Joy:

“Oh Jesus, You alone know what will make my daughter happy and whole. You alone have set her on the path to eternal happiness in Your presence, so do whatever You think is best. I only ask that You fill her with Your Holy Spirit, as I place her in Your hands. May Your joy be her strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

May she be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that she may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that she may know You (Colossians 2:2). May my daughter keep her life free from the love of money and be content with what she has, because You have said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ (Hebrews 13:5, NIV). May Your presence and eternal delight rest in her heart, mind, and soul forever. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

5. Protection

When I was studying at Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon, a civil war between the Christians and the Muslims broke out. The college was located in the Christian territory at the edge of the battle line. Many rockets would fall on the campus, increasingly becoming more and more dangerous. My mom prayed every day and claimed the promises of protection in Psalm 91 on my behalf:

“WHOEVER DWELLS IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL REST IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY. I WILL SAY OF THE LORD, ‘HE IS MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS, MY GOD, IN WHOM I TRUST.’ SURELY HE WILL SAVE YOU FROM THE FOWLER’S SNARE AND FROM THE DEADLY PESTILENCE. HE WILL COVER YOU WITH HIS FEATHERS, AND UNDER HIS WINGS YOU WILL FIND REFUGE; HIS FAITHFULNESS WILL BE YOUR SHIELD AND RAMPART. YOU WILL NOT FEAR THE TERROR OF NIGHT, NOR THE ARROW THAT FLIES BY DAY, NOR THE PESTILENCE THAT STALKS IN THE DARKNESS, NOR THE PLAGUE THAT DESTROYS AT MIDDAY. A THOUSAND MAY FALL AT YOUR SIDE, TEN THOUSAND AT YOUR RIGHT HAND, BUT IT WILL NOT COME NEAR YOU.”
PSALM 91:1-7, NIV

The reason I am alive today is because she claimed those promises for me. Therefore today, I pray a prayer of protection on behalf of my children for the many dangers they face every day. I also ask God to protect them from sin and evil. Every day they face such temptations as drugs, alcohol, pornography, and even friends who could lead them down the wrong paths. In our struggle against evil we are dealing with spiritual powers. Therefore, we are to put on the whole armor of God and stand against the attacks of the evil one.

“FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER. PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU CAN TAKE YOUR STAND AGAINST THE DEVIL’S SCHEMES. FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THE POWERS OF THIS DARK WORLD AND AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS. THEREFORE PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT WHEN THE DAY OF EVIL COMES, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND YOUR GROUND, AND AFTER YOU HAVE DONE EVERYTHING, TO STAND.”
EPHESIANS 6:10-13, NIV

One powerful weapon that every Christian parent has is the ability to pray a daily hedge of protection around their children. “But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3, NIV).

Be specific in claiming the promise in Scripture that is related to the kind of protection that is needed for your children. For example, for protection from sin you can claim a verse such as Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you (King James Version).” For protection from discouragement, you could claim this promise: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6; and see also Hebrews 13:5).

Prayer for Our Children’s Protection:

“Father, in the name of Jesus, I pray a hedge of protection around my children. I thank You that You are a wall of fire around them. Thank You that You have given Your angels charge over my children to keep them in all their ways. I thank You that Your angels surround them while they are out and away from home. Thank You that You protect them from harm, accidents, and all kinds of danger. In peace may they lie down and sleep, for You alone, Lord, make them dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8).

“Thank You, Lord, that You are the fortress and the refuge of my children. Thank You that Your Word is a lamp for their feet and a light for their path. Thank You that the wicked one can’t touch them, and no evil will befall them.”³

“Father, bless them and keep them; Make Your face shine on them and be gracious to them; Turn Your face toward them and give them peace (Numbers 6:24-26). In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

6. Future

It is our sincere prayer that our children will now and forever walk faithfully with the Lord as Enoch did (Genesis 5:24) and that Jesus would be their lifelong Friend and Savior.

For our children's future we pray that they will choose Jesus to be their guide in every decision they will make. We want them to make decisions not based solely on logic or the needs of the moment, but based on God's will guided by the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:105).

We must ask God to help them make wise decisions. One of the most important decisions they will make is the choice of a spouse. This decision should be made with much prayer, counsel, and wisdom. God promises wisdom to all who simply ask: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5, NIV). We pray that our children will desire God's will, surrender their lives, and ask Him to be their directing agent. Our prayers should be centered on them choosing wisely and choosing someone God would approve, somebody who will encourage them in the Lord.

We pray for our children to have a future that is secure in Christ. He is in control and will be present with them long after we are gone.

Prayer for Our Children's Futures:

"Lord, I thank you that you know the plans you have for my son—to prosper him and not to harm him, to give him hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). May You supply all of his emotional, physical, and spiritual needs according to Your riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). I pray that my son will not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But may his delight be in Your law, and may he meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:1–2).

"I pray that my son will trust in You with all his heart and lean not on his own understanding; in all his ways submit to You, and that You will make his paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). May my son forget what is behind and always strive toward what is ahead. (Philippians 3:13). May he be confident that the good work You began in him will be carried out to completion until You come again (Philippians 1:6). In Jesus' name, Amen."

7. Faithfulness

Our desire for our children is to be faithful in the small and big things of life. We want them to be faithful to God, their spouses, children, work, finances, and Church.

The Early Church was very faithful in their church attendance, praise and worship, and prayer. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts," (Acts 2:46, NIV). We yearn for our children to do the same thing.

When the time comes when they must stand for their faith, we want them to stand like Daniel's three friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who had a choice between worshipping the king and avoiding the fiery furnace or worshipping God alone and potentially dying. They said to the king:

**"KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR, WE DO NOT NEED TO DEFEND OURSELVES BEFORE YOU IN THIS MATTER. IF WE ARE THROWN INTO THE BLAZING FURNACE, THE GOD WE SERVE IS ABLE TO DELIVER US FROM IT, AND HE WILL DELIVER US FROM YOUR MAJESTY'S HAND. BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT, WE WANT YOU TO KNOW, YOUR MAJESTY, THAT WE WILL NOT SERVE YOUR GODS OR WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF GOLD YOU HAVE SET UP."
DANIEL 3:16-18, NIV**

In order to make sure we are faithful in the big things, we have to be faithful in the little things. Luke writes, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10, NIV).

When I became an Adventist, I faced a challenging dilemma—be faithful to God and honor His Sabbath or go to the university and take my exams on the Sabbath. I decided that I would be obedient to God and follow His will. When I failed to take the exams for two years running, the university kicked me out. My family nearly beat me to death for becoming

an Adventist. I was abandoned by them and thrown out onto the street. That was 38 years ago. As I reflect on that time, I see that God was making all things work together for good for my family and me. Today I pray that my children will do the same and stand faithfully for God in the small and the big things of life, no matter what the price.

Prayer for Our Children's Faithfulness:

"Lord, You are always faithful to us. Your Word shows us time and again that You are faithful. I pray that my children will be faithful to You, that they would not wander from You. I pray that You teach them what it means to be faithful to You, to Your Word, and to Your Church. Give them steadiness as they follow You. Teach them to be faithful in small, simple acts of faith, as well as big acts of faith. I pray that like Joshua they will declared, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

"Lord, I pray that they would be like Daniel who could have avoided the lions' den, but chose instead to be faithful to God (Daniel 6:10-16). I pray that You will give them Your Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). I pray that they will be strong and courageous and not be afraid, but to stand for You at all times (Joshua 1:9). In Jesus' name, Amen."

The Power of a Praying Mother

Allow me now to return to the story of Larry, the ex-Hells Angels gang member whose mother prayed him back to God. After several suicide attempts and hearing the voice of God, Larry finally gave in to the voice and went to church in San Francisco.

The church was full so Larry sat in the last pew at the rear of the church. Because he was living on the streets with no access to a shower or basic hygiene, he smelled so bad that everyone sitting within a 5-pew radius got up and left the sanctuary. The pastor soon stood up to preach. He put his Bible and notes on

the pulpit and looked out at the congregation. Larry caught his attention. The pastor leaned forward, staring at Larry for about a minute before going back to his notes. But he could not preach. Once again he leaned forward to stare at Larry and once again he unsuccessfully went back to his notes.

Now the whole church began to focus on Larry. Still unable to preach, the pastor left the pulpit and started walking to the back of the church. He headed straight for Larry. He fell at his feet, embraced him, hugging and kissing him and crying for joy. Larry had been his roommate in college. Of all the churches for Larry to go to, he came to one where God had prepared a reception of unconditional love.

One month before Larry gave up his suicide attempt and went to church, the pastor and his wife hosted some of their college friends who were traveling to Yosemite Park. That evening after supper the group reminisced about their college days and pulled out a yearbook. Flipping through the pages, the pastor's wife saw a picture of Larry and wondered aloud what had become of him. They spoke about what they knew of his life—far from God, into drugs and gang life. After a moment they stopped their conversation, feeling convicted to pray for Larry.

The following day, when their friends went home, the pastor and his wife made a commitment to pray every day for Larry in hopes of seeing him again. A month later Larry showed up at their church! No sermon was preached that Sabbath. Instead, the pastor shared this story and the church celebrated.

The evening I met Larry, he and his fiancé rose to leave the dinner table where several people were eating. A few minutes later a couple in their 60s left. Then another guy left. I was curious, so I rose and followed them to see where they were going. They had gone out to a side room. The people who rose to leave, I later learned, were the parents and brother of Larry's fiancée. Larry was giving them Bible studies. Now I understood why this special man was the head deacon.

The faithful prayers of Larry's mother and the prayers of his former classmates did not return void. They were answered in an incredible way. Larry did come back to his family, to the Lord, and to the Church.

Conclusion

As you pray for your children: pray through Scripture; start a prayer journal in which family and friends write prayers for them; form a prayer circle; turn your worries into prayers; develop a prayer war room (putting prayers and answers to prayers on the wall); pray big (intensely, defensively, and offensively with your children and with your spouse). Our children need our persistent Bible-based prayers. When we form our prayers from the Scripture, we are speaking God's own will for them (Hebrews 4:12). We must make a commitment to pray for them all their lives. It is the best gift we can give them.

Being a parent is tough, but God calls us to persevere in this endeavor, fixing our eyes upon

Him (Hebrews 12:1-2). It requires patience, humbleness, selflessness, and truth. Our love for our children must protect, trust, hope, persevere, and never fail (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). My desire is that we will continue to pray for our children and grandchildren until all of us are safely home with Him.

Notes

- ¹ Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Christ (John 1:40-42). He also brought a small boy with his fish and loaves to Christ (John 6:6-9). We also read that he helped bring Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-22).
- ² There are over 200 verses referring to joy in the NIV translation of the Bible. http://www.faithgateway.com/25-bible-verses-about-joy/#.WWzqTBS_tII. Accessed July 19, 2017.
- ³ Prayer adapted from <http://www.cfaith.com/index.php/article-display/105-featured-c5-articles/21626-prayer-to-stand-in-the-gap-for-your-children>. Accessed July 17, 2017.

31 Days of Prayer for Our Children

1. Salvation—“Lord, let salvation spring up within my children, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” (Isaiah 45:8; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 3:5)

2. Growth in Grace—“I pray that my children may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)

3. Love—“Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to live a life of love, through the Spirit who dwells in them.” (Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:2)

4. Honesty and Integrity—“May integrity and honesty be their virtue and their protection.” (Psalm 25:21; Proverbs 10:9)

5. Reliance on God—“May my child grow to trust You with all of her heart and not lean on her own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 3:5).

6. Love for God’s Word—“May my children grow to find Your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb.” (Psalm 19:10)

7. God’s Protection—“I praise You for You are faithful; You will strengthen and guard my child from evil.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

8. Mercy—“May my children always be merciful, just as their Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36; Luke 1:50)

9. Respect (for self, others, and authority)—“Father, grant that my children may show proper respect to everyone, as Your Word commands.” (1 Peter 2:17)

10. Biblical Self-Esteem—“Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:10)

11. Faithfulness—“Let love and faithfulness never leave my children, but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts.” (Proverbs 3:3; Proverbs 14:22)

12. Courage—“May my children always be strong and courageous in their character.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

13. Purity—“Create in them a pure heart, O God, and let that purity of heart be shown in their actions.” (Psalm 51:10)

14. Kindness—“Lord, may my children always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.” (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

15. Generosity—“Grant that my children may be generous and willing to share, and so lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age.” (1 Timothy 6:18-19)

16. Peace—“Father, let my children make every effort to do what leads to peace.” (Romans 14:19; Isaiah 26:3)

17. Joy—“May my children be filled with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Thessalonians 1:6; Psalm 92:4)

18. Perseverance—“Lord, teach my children perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to run with perseverance the race marked out for them.” (Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

19. Humility—“God, please cultivate in my children the ability to show true humility toward all.” (Titus 3:2; Proverbs 22:4)

20. Compassion—“Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion.” (Colossians 3:12; Psalm 145:9)

21. Responsibility—“Grant that my children may learn responsibility, for each one should carry his own load.” (Galatians 6:5; Colossians 3:23)

22. Contentment—“Father, teach my children the secret of being content in any and every situation, through Him who gives them strength.” (Philippians 4:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:6)

23. Faith—“I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children’s hearts, that by faith they may gain what has been promised to them.” (Luke 17:5-6; Hebrews 11:1-40)

24. A Servant’s Heart—“God, please help my children develop servant’s hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, not men.” (Ephesians 6:7; Romans 12:11)

25. Hope—“May the God of hope grant that my children may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

26. Wisdom— “When my child lacks wisdom, help her understand that she should ask You. You give generously and without criticizing.” (James 1:5).

27. Passion for God—“Lord, please instill in my children a soul that ‘followeth hard after thee,’ one that clings passionately to You.” (Psalm 63:8; Psalm 42:1; 1 Lamentations 3:25)

28. Self-Discipline—“Father, I pray that my children may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair.” (Proverbs 1:3; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6)

29. Prayerfulness—“Grant, Lord, that my children’s lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that they may learn to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

30. Gratitude—“Help my children to live lives that are always overflowing with thankfulness and always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 2:7; Psalm 107:8).

31. Obedience to God— “Remind my child to obey You rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Building a Healthy Home

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

NOTE:

Please provide the handouts to those participating in this workshop. Download the printing file from: <http://family.adventist.org/planbook2018>

The Text

FOR WHICH OF YOU, INTENDING TO BUILD A TOWER, DOES NOT SIT DOWN FIRST AND COUNT THE COST, WHETHER HE HAS ENOUGH TO FINISH IT LEST, AFTER HE HAS LAID THE FOUNDATION, AND IS NOT ABLE TO FINISH, ALL WHO SEE IT BEGIN TO MOCK HIM, SAYING, "THIS MAN BEGAN TO BUILD AND WAS NOT ABLE TO FINISH."
LUKE 14:28-30, NKJV

INTRODUCTION

There are many different types of homes. [You may use pictures of different types of dwellings – a straw house, an apartment building, a two-story house, a mansion, a small house]

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Today we're going to help you build a home, not just a house. But to show you how to build a healthy home, we're going to use the model of a house.

I. SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

The best foundation for a healthy home is a spiritual foundation. Please read **Matthew 7:24-25** and **Joshua 24:15**).

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1. A Spiritual Family Worships Together.

The spiritual family chooses to attend and be involved in a church that teaches the Word of God from the pulpit, from each Sabbath school class, and from every platform of leadership.

2. A Spiritual Family Honors God's Word and Applies it in Their Home. The spiritual family teaches, reads aloud, discusses, and reveres the Word of God. They realize that nothing is more important than teaching God's Word in their home because it is alive, life-changing, and eternal. When should you talk about God's Word according to Deuteronomy 6:7?

3. Spiritual Families Make Prayer a Daily Part of Their Home Life.

II. TRUST & COMMITMENT

1. Commitment

Most people repeat wedding vows on their wedding day that include words such as:

"I, (NAME OF THE GROOM), take you, (NAME OF THE BRIDE), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, **until death do us part.**" We make these vows as a lifetime commitment. In their Book, "The Long-term Marriage," Floyd and Harriet Thatcher wrote: "This **commitment** cannot be a one-time affirmation, for buried within each of us is the deep psychological need for constant reassurance, to know where we stand with our partner in the relationship of marriage. It is the awareness that we are loved and accepted that builds our own sense of self-esteem and self-acceptance and makes it possible to give and **express** love in return."¹

2. Trust

Trust is strengthened when there is complete honesty. Complete honesty includes:

- Historical Honesty – There should be nothing in your past that your spouse, or future spouse, does not know.
- Emotional Honesty – You should be able to share your feelings with those in your family without fear.
- Present Honesty – There should be no secrets as to where you are, who you are with, what you're doing, etc.
- Future Honesty – What are your goals and plans for the future?

III. PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Many people never prepare for marriage. What should you do to prepare for a lifetime together with your spouse?

1. **Marry a Believer.** The Apostle Paul stated: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? – 2 Corinthians 6:14-15*

Someone said, "Love is like a pair of socks, you have to have two and they gotta match." (UNKNOWN) Many Christians – indeed, many Adventists – believe that once they are married, the unbeliever will be convinced to

become a Christian/Adventist. Does that ever happen? Yes, in some cases it does, but why take a chance on something this vital to the foundation of a Christian home? Yes, you may have deep feelings for the unbeliever, but this issue, above all others, must be settled before the wedding ceremony. If you're praying that the person you want to marry becomes a Christian, see that prayer answered before you even agree to marry them. God never intended marriage to be an evangelism tool.

2. **Inspect the Baggage.** Another element necessary to prepare for marriage is to realize that whether we admit it or not, we all bring "baggage" into a relationship. Our baggage usually consists of past experiences, negative memories, fears, or other issues. This baggage is rarely shared with our partners, and can eventually become the source of great pain and conflict. All baggage should be opened, inspected, and thoroughly examined before the marriage takes place. Do you know of any baggage that you are bringing, or have brought, into your marriage?

3. **Settle the "Leave and Cleave" Issue.** *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24) In the historical and cultural setting of the Old Testament, it was an understood fact that the woman would leave her parents' home to go live with her husband, so the wording here only includes a directive to the male. But today, in order to establish a healthy marriage, both partners must understand and follow those clear instructions from God's Word. What does this mean today?

First, Both Partners must Be Willing to Leave. Each partner must leave the "I" life to take on the "we" life. Leaving involves two kinds of surgery:

- **Severing the cord of dependency:** This means choosing not to rely on your parents for material or emotional support.
- **Severing the cord of allegiance:** Before the wedding day, your most significant relationships are with your mother and father, but during that ceremony your priorities change. You should continue to honor your

parents (Exodus 20:12), but your priority must now become your spouse. Your first and foremost loyalty is to your spouse.

What are some common ways that individuals fail to cut the cord of dependence after they are married?

Second, Both Partners must Cleave to Each Other. The word “cleave” means to lean toward, or be joined to your partner. To cleave to your marriage partner “means to choose your spouse above others, even yourself. You cleave, lean toward, or join to your partner by meeting their needs, hearing their words, understanding their feelings, and desires. **You cleave to each other alone for physical fulfillment and enjoyment.**

4. **Take Your Time.** The fourth step in preparing for marriage is to make sure you have spent enough time in preparation. As Shakespeare wrote in King Henry, “A hasty marriage seldom proveth well.” It takes time to know another person well enough to decide to spend your life with them. Proverbs 21:5 says it well, “**The plans of the diligent and informed will lead to abundance, but everyone who is hasty will only come to want and ruin.**” A wedding is a one-day event, but a marriage is a lifetime commitment. Take the time necessary to learn everything you can about the person with whom you plan to spend a lifetime.

The couple should focus on two key areas when taking their time:

- A. **Get to Know the Other Person’s Family.**
- B. **Get to Know as Much as Possible about Him/her.**

5. **Establish a “Covenant” Marriage.** Think about what a covenant, a promise, or a vow means to God. Read the following texts: Deuteronomy 23:21, 23.

6. **Seek Biblically-based Premarital Counseling.**

IV. NOURISHING THE FAMILY

There are two basic avenues for communication.

1. **Verbal communication**, that is, the use of words.
2. **Nonverbal body language.** We give each other non-verbal cues in relationships all the time. These may include posture, gestures, eye movement, or facial expressions.

Families Usually Exhibit One of Three Communication Styles:

1. **Aggressive Communicators.** This family communicates by being rude to one another. They are bossy overbearing people, and the words they use are selfish, accusing, and often volatile. Physical aggression may even be a characteristic of this nonfunctional family. Some members of the family never express their opinions out of fear of retaliation.
2. **Passive Communicators.** Communication is strained and rare in this family. Family members may be too shy or quiet and are often fearful of confrontation. Most often, there is apathy to the point that family members ignore each other or don't care to communicate with one another.
3. **Assertive Communicators.** This family makes communication a priority. Family members are free to express opinions and ideas. They are calm, confident, and want to understand what others are saying and meaning. They listen and respond to each other in appropriate ways. Each family member strives to respect the feelings and thoughts of the others.

Learning to Listen

The most overlooked skill in communication is the art of listening. Successful families have learned that communication only works when members learn to listen to each other. You've probably heard the adage, "God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He intended us to listen twice as much as we talk!" It's a good point. Most people only listen in order to answer, attack, or defend. In fact, families are made up of basically four types of listeners.

1. **The Judge.** The judge is the person in the family who believes they are always right. Their mind is already made up, so they see no benefit in listening to others. This person is usually negative and critical. They voice their opinion instead of listening. Psalm 115:6 refers to this type of person. Complete the following verse. "They have ears, but they do not hear."
2. **The Counselor.** The counselor listens only long enough to make a quick assessment and move on. This person is preoccupied with evaluating and offering advice that is usually not asked for. They accuse others of not listening. They only listen in order to dictate and tell others what should be done. Proverb 18:13 refers to this person: *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*
3. **The Inquisitor.** This person believes the way to listen is to constantly shoot questions at the other person or persons - something which can be tiresome and counterproductive. The inquisitor is prone to interrupt and is easily distracted. Asking questions in order to clarify understanding is important, but the inquisitor overdoes this tactic.
4. **The Good Listener.** By far, the most effective listener in the family is the person who listens not only to the words being said, but who also tries to understand the feelings of the person-speaking. The listener pays close attention to body language, nonverbal signs, and facial expressions. The good listener is not judgmental of what is being said or how it is being expressed. The good listener's desire is to understand and respond accordingly.

According to James 1:19, we should be quick to listen , and slow to speak , slow to anger.

V. STRENGTHENING INTIMACY

Outdo one another in showing honor. – Romans 12:10 NRSV

It should come as no surprise that because men and women are different, their emotional needs are going to be different. The key words are, "emotional needs." All humans have common needs. However, husbands and wives also have differing emotional needs.

The Five Basic Emotional Needs of Women

1. **A Woman Needs Her Husband's Affection.** She needs to be regarded as valuable, important, and worthy. The most romantic things a husband can do are those things that demonstrate how precious his wife is to him. In fact, that's how a woman would define "romance." Romantic moments, as well as romantic acts, are those designed to make a woman feel especially treasured and loved. – It's the little things that count!
2. **A Woman Needs Conversation.** Women connect at the emotional level through verbal communication. When she knows the facts and has all the details, a woman feels more secure. A woman needs specific words from her husband: words of affirmation, love, and encouragement that only a husband should provide. Her self-esteem and security are intact when she hears her husband express how he feels about her.
3. **A Woman Needs Honesty and Openness.** Neither men nor women want a spouse who can't be trusted; but for a woman it's imperative that she be able to trust her husband. A woman needs her husband to be a man of his word, respected in the community, and known as an honest, forthright man who will do what he says he will do. A woman needs to be able to depend on her husband to keep his word, and she becomes heart-broken if she discovers that her husband has been deceitful in any way. Another area in which a woman needs honesty is **regarding a man's feelings and his innermost thoughts.**
4. **A Woman Needs Financial Stability (or Support).** To her, financial stability means that her household will be clothed, fed, housed, and cared for. It's important to note that a woman doesn't need wealth or abundance in the form of new cars, the

finest clothes, or the most expensive home. What she needs is the feeling of safety that comes when her family's basic needs are met. 1 Timothy 5:8 labels a man who does not provide for his family as "worse than an infidel." When a husband meets his wife's need as a provider of financial stability, the wife has her own responsibility. She mustn't overspend or apply undue pressure on her husband for more than they can afford. She must be a partner in trimming costs and watching the budget.

5. A Woman Needs a Man's Commitment to the Family. A woman needs to know the family is her husband's first priority. She needs her husband to demonstrate his commitment to the family by making time for his family. Too many husbands seem to be more committed to their careers, friends, sports interests, or hobbies because those are the interests that consume their attention and time, and the family gets what is left – which is often very little. There's an old adage that is very appropriate: **Love is spelled T-I-M-E**. Fathers, your children will have many friends in their lifetime; they will have many teachers and others who will care for them. But absolutely no one can be your child's father but you.

The Five Basic Needs of Men

1. A Man Needs Sexual Fulfillment. It should surprise no one when we suggest that men are more sexually oriented than women. Women will often offer sex in order to receive intimacy (remember her need is to be treated as something precious), and men will feign intimacy in order to get sex. Many women dread the sexual encounter and avoid it, using excuse after excuse to postpone it. Of course, this attitude doesn't go unnoticed by the man. He begins to take it personally and his ego suffers. His wife's disinterest may make him feel undesirable. When his sexual needs are finally met, he often feels like he has forced himself upon his wife, and the experience leaves him frustrated and less than satisfied. For some women, sexual intercourse may not be pleasurable because of physical reasons. Certainly a physician can help you determine the cause and the treatment in those cases.

Don't go on for years without seeking help in this important area of intimacy.

- 2. A Man Needs a Wife Who Will Be His Playmate (Or Recreational Companionship).** It's not uncommon for women, when they are single, to join men in pursuing their interests. They find themselves hunting, fishing, playing football and watching movies they would never have chosen on their own. After marriage, wives try to interest their husbands in activities more to their liking. If their attempts fail, they may encourage their husbands to continue their recreational activities without them.
- 3. A Man Needs a Wife Who Cares about Herself (or an Attractive Spouse).** A man doesn't need a wife with a perfect figure or the most beautiful face. But a man does need a wife who cares about herself – the way she looks, her clothes, and her personal habits. In other words, it is important to him that his wife strives to be as attractive as she can be.
- 4. A Man Needs a Peaceful Home (or Domestic Support).** The peaceful home is sometimes noisy with the happy chatter of children. There might even be clutter in the entryway or on the stairs. The peaceful home can be made up of children, teenagers, and parents who have problems, but they are not out of control. There is a calm center, a focus. God rules this home, and it is bathed in love and prayer. Proverb 21:19 states it is better to live in the wilderness than with an angry, complaining woman. According to Proverb 27:15, a woman who is continually whining and complaining is like a continual dripping.
- 5. A Man Needs Admiration and Respect.** A man would rather be admired than loved. What do we mean? When a man is admired, he feels loved. That is the language of love for the male, words of affirmation and admiration. Specifically, the man needs his wife's admiration and respect. He may or may not have admiration from his boss, fellow employees, or other family members. He may be in a thankless job where there is little praise or recognition. Yet when he has a loving wife who bolsters his self-esteem by

finding things about him to admire, he feels successful (Ephesians 5:33). When the need for admiration is not met in the home, a young man will seek it outside the home — from gangs, unwholesome relationships, or any other source that will help satisfy that need.

Parents Meet the Needs of Their Children

1. **Children Need Unconditional Love.** We need to teach our children the principle of these words: *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 NKJV)”*
2. **Children Need to Be Trained.** *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverb 22:6)* Parents must realize that with children more is caught than is taught.
3. **Children Need to Be Nurtured.** The word “nurture” means “to provide nourishment and support during the fragile stages of development.” It is imperative that parents provide this nurture with words, with touch, and with their time.
4. **Children Need Genuine, Deserved Praise.**
5. **Children Need Parents Who Are in Control.**

VI. PROTECTING INTIMACY

A. KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT. *Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (Ephesians 4:26 NRSV).* All relationships have the potential for conflict. Conflict is a normal, natural part of life. As strange as it may seem, a life void of conflict is not healthy. Just remember this important principle: **Not All Conflict Is Bad!**

There are four possible responses to conflict.

1. I win; you lose.
2. You win; I lose.

3. We both lose, and no one wins.
4. Everyone wins, and no one loses.

Your goal should be that everyone wins and no one loses.

Principles Of Constructive Conflict Resolution

1. **Practice The Prevention Rule.** *“The beginning of strife is like the letting of water. Stop the flow before it starts. Quit before the quarrel breaks out.” – Proverb 17:14.* Once begun, the evolution of the conflict is incredibly hard to shut down.
2. **Look For Areas Where You Are To Blame.** When you look for your responsibility in the conflict, it causes the other party to soften and often come to your defense. Ask yourselves these questions:
 - a. **Is it a Worthy Battle?** Proverb 19:11
 - b. **Am I Wrong?**
 - c. **Should I React or Respond?**
 - d. **What Difference Is this Going to Make in My Life in Three Days? What Impact Will it Have in Five Years?**

Here are a few suggestions as to how to say things more effectively to one another.

- **Use the Still, Small Voice.** (1 Kings 19:12). Lower your voice. Take a deep breath and speak in measured tones. If you're in a rage, step away and calm down. Watch your body language and eye contact. A certain demeaning toss of the head or look in the eye can make the hearer angry and defensive.
- **Maintain Your Sense of Humor.**
- **Don't Get Personal.** Don't say irresponsible things about each other with the intent to hurt and demean. That's attacking the person, not the issue at hand.
- **Don't Bring up the Past.**
- **Don't Get off the Subject.**

B. LEARN TO FORGIVE. *If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:15 NRSV)*

What Forgiveness Is

1. **Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them.** Forgiveness is achieved

only when we acknowledge what was done without any denial or covering up – and still refuse to make the offender pay for their crime. Forgiveness is often painful. It hurts to kiss revenge good-bye. Forgiveness is not forgetting what the other person did. Forgiveness is no longer holding that person accountable for the transgression.

2. **Choosing to keep no record of wrong.** Love “keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Why do we keep track of the times we are offended? To use them. To prove what happened. To wave them before someone who doubts what actually happened. Love is a choice. Forgiveness is a choice. When we develop a lifestyle of forgiveness, we learn to erase the wrong rather than file it away in our mental computer.
3. **Refusing to punish.** Refusing to punish those who deserve it – giving up the natural desire to see them “get what’s coming to them.” It is refusing to cave in to the fear that this person or those people won’t get the punishment or rebuke we think they deserve.
4. **Not telling what they did.** Anyone who truly forgives does not gossip about their offender. If you must tell someone, make sure that person is trustworthy and will never repeat your situation to those it does not concern.
5. **Being merciful.** “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). One difference between grace and mercy is that grace is getting what we don’t deserve, and mercy is not getting what we do deserve. So, when we show mercy we are withholding justice from those who have injured us, and that is one aspect of godliness.
6. **Forgiveness involves letting go.** Remember playing tug-of-war as a child? As long as the parties on each end of the rope are tugging, you have a “war.” But when someone lets go, the war is over.

VII. A FUTURE TOGETHER

Establish Positive Memories and Traditions.

2 **Thessalonians 2:15.** Traditions achieve three results in successful families.

1. **Traditions Bring a Family Together, Causing the Members to Know One Another Better.** Traditions will establish themselves if you simply allow yourself to be a part of your family. When you least expect it, a tradition will emerge with a great memory on its heels.
2. **Traditions Create Positive Memories Which Can Provide Encouragement and Stability.** Traditions are memories of memories. The memories which accompany our traditions can have a powerful impact. As recorded in **Psalm 137:1**, while the children of Israel were in captivity, what was their response regarding their memories?
3. **Traditions Are Cherished and Passed along to Future Generations.** Cherished traditions and memories give our families a sense of who they are, from whence they came, and where they are going.

PRAYER

As Important as a Spiritual Foundation is, we need to bathe our home in constant prayer. These two are related, like two bookends.

“His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression.”²

CONCLUSION

As you build your own home, which of these ingredients will you include? What other ingredients will you include besides the ones mentioned? Each home is different; therefore, your home does not have to have all these same ingredients. At the same time, some of these

are indispensable. A home without a solid foundation will fall. A home without protective boundaries (walls) is vulnerable. A home without proper shelter (roof) will be open to damage from climate changes. A home without heat (prayer) may cause illness and eventual death. These are indispensable.

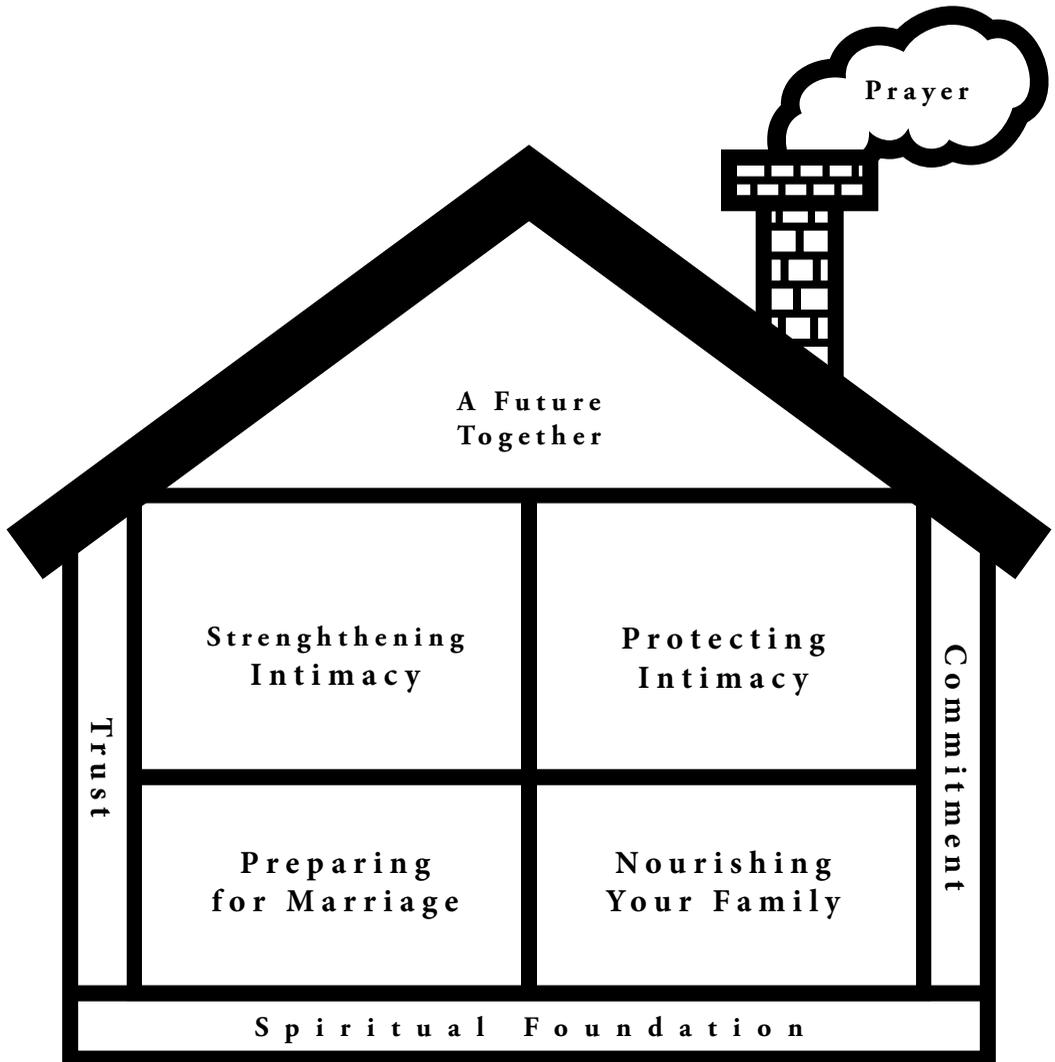
Other elements of a healthy home are very important, but may change from time to time depending on your current circumstances. If you don't have children, meeting the needs of your children is not necessary. Your own emotional needs and those of your spouse may differ and may not be the ones listed as typical

to most men or most women. Therefore, you need to think about which are your most important needs and which are your spouse's most important needs and then aim to meet each other's emotional needs.

The most important consideration is to think carefully about how you are or will be building a healthy home. "Count the cost" (Luke 14:28-30).

Notes

- ¹ Thatcher, F and H. *The Long-term Marriage*. World Books (1980)
- ² Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p.156



Teens and Depression

How you can help?

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

“There once was a happy little girl, bright and fair. . . . Her mother and father enjoyed her greatly and often told her how much they loved her. They told her other things that they wanted her to know as well. They told her about God, how He was loving and kind; He made her and she was precious to Him. . . . Then they gave her a book of God’s words and told her, ‘These words will tell you the best way to live, God’s way, the way to become your true and whole self.’

“The little girl loved to please her parents, and she tried hard to please God, too. Her heart was tender toward God and generous toward people. . . . But as she grew older and fairer still, she began to build a place inside her heart and surround it with walls. She made this secret place to keep her worries in—worries about her beauty, which was so great and attracted attention that made her uncomfortable. . . . She did not tell her mother and father about the secret place in her heart.

“As the girl continued to grow more lovely, she began to see herself in two mirrors. One mirror contained God’s words, His love, and her family’s love for her. The other mirror was held by someone she could not see. In this dark mirror . . . she felt sad. . . . She believed she had to make a choice between the two mirror doors. . . .

*“On the day that she was weakest, weariest, loneliest, she made a fatal choice. She created her own mirror-door. In it she put no altar, no things, no people, no places, only peace as she could imagine it, a rest from her struggles. And she walked through it.”—An excerpt from the prologue of the book *Goodbye Jeanine*, by Joyce Sackett, the mother of Jeanine. Jeanine was 20 years old when she died by suicide.¹*

Suicide has become a public health reality in all regions of the world.² More than 800,000 people die from suicide every year, and for every suicide that occurs, there are 20 more failed attempts. While suicide occurs throughout the life span, it is the third-leading cause of death for 10- to 14-year-olds and 15- to 24-year-olds, and the second-leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds globally.³ Undoubtedly, adolescents are considered to be at risk, and health professionals and parents alike are searching for ways in which to predict and prevent suicide.

Studies show that most teens who commit suicide have a mental health problem such as depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug abuse, or a behavior problem.⁴ Depression and other mood disorders (anxiety, bipolar disorder, etc.) have been most closely linked to adolescent suicide and suicidal ideation (thinking about killing one’s self). Depression is also linked to other risk behaviors that teens engage in, such as alcohol and drug use and sexual activity.

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Not all teens that engage in risk behaviors have depression or consider suicide; however, the risk of suicide is greater for those with depression and those who engage in risk behaviors. Teenage girls are twice as likely as boys to report being depressed, consider attempting suicide, or commit suicide.

When teens die from suicide, they most likely have been having problems for a long time. Once they decide that suicide is the best way to resolve these problems, they don't spend much time planning it; they just do it. Anything could trigger the decision: an argument with their parents, a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend, a mean Facebook post or tweet, or even receiving a bad grade.

Family Support

Parents and family play a crucial role in helping to prevent teen suicide. Recent findings suggest that protective factors such as authoritative (not authoritarian) parenting, setting healthy and age-appropriate boundaries, parental monitoring (knowing what's happening in your teen's life), family dinners, encouraging certain religious behaviors, and teaching and modeling healthy coping strategies are useful in reducing suicide risk. It's also important to be aware of the risk factors, such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, family or parental history of suicide, previous suicide attempts, parental alcoholism, sleep disorders, and accessible firearms.

Signs of Depression and Suicide

While there may be warning signs of a person's intention to commit suicide (see also p. 32), sometimes the clues are so disguised that even trained professionals may not recognize them. Nevertheless, here are some noticeable signs of depression and suicidal behavior that parents can look for in their teens:

- Feeling sad, down, or irritable.
- Feeling guilty, hopeless, or worthless.

- Noticeable changes in sleeping or eating habits.
- Isolating themselves from friends and family.
- Lack of interest in school, church, or favorite activities.
- Having less energy or having more difficulty concentrating.
- Talking or writing about death or loss.
- Hinting about their own death or suicide.
- Speculating about what life would be like if they were not around.

Fighting Stigma

Some cultural and religious interpretations have led to a stigma about suicide and have resulted in many families not being able to talk openly about their child's suicide. This can be detrimental to parents and family members because it deprives them of talking about their child and may cause them to become isolated from those who can provide support.

To help dispel some of the myths and stigma, many helping professionals are encouraging a change in terminology when speaking about suicide. Using such expressions as "died from suicide" or "death by suicide" conveys more sensitivity and compassion and less stigma and moves us away from the harshness of the phrase "committed suicide." The new terminology is also less offensive to the parents and families of those whose children have died from suicide.

If you have a child or loved one who has died from suicide or if you have suicidal thoughts, please reach out to your friends and loved ones and let them know how you feel. It's also important to seek the help of a qualified professional to find helpful ways to cope with the challenges you are facing. If you are unable to do this yourself, ask for help from someone you trust.

God's Unconditional Love

Rainbows are a wonderful reminder of God's covenant and unconditional love. Promises such as the one found in Isaiah 43:2-4 can bring hope and healing for any situation: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. . . . Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you" (ESV).⁵

Our prayer is that everyone can look up and see God's rainbow even through their darkest cloud.

Notes

- ¹ Joyce Sackett, *Goodbye Jeanine* (Colorado Springs, Colo., NavPress, 2005), pp. 9-11.
- ² World Health Organization (WHO): www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/.
- ³ Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-olds, according to WHO.
- ⁴ American Pediatric Association: healthychildren.org.
- ⁵ Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



2017
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

GROWING DISCIPLES

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



Parents as Role Models for their Children

PEDRO AND CECILIA IGLESIAS

Importance of Home Education

One of the greatest concerns of parents, is to give a good education to their children that is not only temporal but more importantly eternal.

What qualities and concerns must parents keep in mind to be successful with the education of their children? Today we present 'Parents as Role Models' as a significant notion. Whether they choose to or not, parents are role models for their children.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read the following:

HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD,
THE LORD IS ONE! YOU SHALL LOVE THE
LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL
YOUR STRENGTH. "AND THESE WORDS
WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL
BE IN YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH
THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN,
AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT
IN YOUR HOUSE, WHEN YOU WALK BY THE
WAY, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN
YOU RISE UP. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A

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SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE
AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU
SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF
YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES.
DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

This famous passage from the Old Testament is a clear testimony to God's sovereignty and is a command from God that should never be forgotten. Living out these commands is a commitment of loyalty to God, and a declaration of our faith.

This portion of scripture speaks to parents of the importance of passing on the sacred legacy of God from generation to generation, and the importance of obedience to God's directives. Just before presenting the Shemá, Moses shares the following with the children of Israel:

NOW THIS IS THE COMMANDMENT,
AND THESE ARE THE STATUTES AND
JUDGMENTS WHICH THE LORD YOUR
GOD HAS COMMANDED TO TEACH YOU,
THAT YOU MAY OBSERVE THEM IN THE
LAND WHICH YOU ARE CROSSING OVER
TO POSSESS, THAT YOU MAY FEAR THE
LORD YOUR GOD, TO KEEP ALL HIS
STATUTES AND HIS COMMANDMENTS
WHICH I COMMAND YOU, YOU AND
YOUR SON AND YOUR GRANDSON, ALL
THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, AND THAT YOUR
DAYS MAY BE PROLONGED.
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-2

Later on Moses tells the children of Israel that in order for these objectives to be achieved, these words had to be put into practice in their own lives. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart". (Deuteronomy 6:6). Before teaching the children to fear and serve the Lord, parents must aim to be excellent role models for them. Commenting on this order from God, Ellen G. White wrote:

NOT AS A DRY THEORY WERE THESE THINGS TO BE TAUGHT. THOSE WHO WOULD IMPART TRUTH MUST THEMSELVES PRACTICE ITS PRINCIPLES. ONLY BY REFLECTING THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN THE UPRIGHTNESS, NOBILITY, AND UNSELFISHNESS OF THEIR OWN LIVES CAN THEY IMPRESS OTHERS. WHITE, EDUCATION P. 41.1

After keeping these words in their hearts, parents must ensure that their children and grandchildren should also put them into practice. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

This beautiful statement from God is a clear invitation to all parents to be obedient and faithful adherers to God's Commandments and to be good role models for their children. By following this high calling, they would achieve the objective of the Shemá, which is how this passage from the Old Testament is called, and is organized, in the following way (Deuteronomy 6:4-9):

- Teach our children about God's loving character.
- Claim God's powerful protection over our families and our children.
- Unite our families around Faith and God's Word.
- Transmit our spiritual heritage from generation to generation:

WHEN YOUR SON ASKS YOU IN TIME TO COME, SAYING, 'WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE TESTIMONIES, THE STATUTES, AND THE JUDGMENTS WHICH THE LORD OUR GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU?' THEN YOU SHALL SAY TO YOUR SON: 'WE WERE SLAVES OF PHARAOH IN EGYPT, AND THE LORD BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT WITH A MIGHTY HAND; AND THE LORD SHOWED SIGNS AND WONDERS BEFORE OUR EYES, GREAT AND SEVERE, AGAINST EGYPT, PHARAOH, AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD. THEN HE BROUGHT US OUT FROM THERE, THAT HE MIGHT BRING US IN, TO GIVE US THE LAND OF WHICH HE SWORE TO OUR FATHERS. AND THE LORD COMMANDED US TO OBSERVE ALL THESE STATUTES, TO FEAR THE LORD OUR GOD, FOR OUR GOOD ALWAYS, THAT HE MIGHT PRESERVE US ALIVE, AS IT IS THIS DAY. THEN IT WILL BE RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR US, IF WE ARE CAREFUL TO OBSERVE ALL THESE COMMANDMENTS BEFORE THE LORD OUR GOD, AS HE HAS COMMANDED US. DEUTERONOMY 6:20-25

It is a challenge to be 'Role Models' for our children

John Sebastian, at 11 years of age, had decided for the first time to start saving. He wanted to buy an MP3 Player. The best way to purchase one was by saving what little money he received from random odd jobs he was given to do around the house. He was counting on his mom to save the money she promised. When he believed he had saved enough money saved to buy his MP3 Player, he asked his mom for the money. To John's surprise, his mom said she had not saved any money, and that he would have to wait until she got paid. Here is where we ask, how can parents expect their children to learn to manage their finances if they themselves don't know how to do so? The truth is, it is important for parents to learn to manage their money so they can teach their children to do the same.

Whether They Choose to or Not, Parents Are ‘Role Models’ for their Children

On this issue Ellen White offers the following:

CHILDREN IMITATE THEIR PARENTS; HENCE GREAT CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO GIVE THEM CORRECT MODELS. PARENTS WHO ARE KIND AND POLITE AT HOME, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE FIRM AND DECIDED, WILL SEE THE SAME TRAITS MANIFESTED IN THEIR CHILDREN. IF THEY ARE UPRIGHT, HONEST, AND HONORABLE, THEIR CHILDREN WILL BE QUITE LIKELY TO RESEMBLE THEM IN THESE PARTICULARS. IF THEY REVERENCE AND WORSHIP GOD, THEIR CHILDREN, TRAINED IN THE SAME WAY, WILL NOT FORGET TO SERVE HIM ALSO. WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 215.2

White also suggests that:

EVERY CHRISTIAN HOME SHOULD HAVE RULES; AND PARENTS SHOULD, IN THEIR WORDS AND IN THEIR DEPORTMENT TOWARD EACH OTHER, GIVE TO THE CHILDREN A PRECIOUS LIVING EXAMPLE OF WHAT THEY DESIRE THEM TO BE... WHITE, ADVENTIST HOME P. 305.3

How to be successful as ‘Role Models’

1. Parents must follow their own Role Model

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Here Paul is inviting his readers to imitate him, but in the same sentence, he declares that he is an imitator of Christ. Paul also tells the congregation at Ephesus: “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Role Model parents must focus on God in order to reflect His character.

Ellen White continues to say:

THEY SHOULD MAKE IT MANIFEST THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CONTROLLING THEM, BY

REPRESENTING TO THEIR CHILDREN THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST. WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 215.3

The daily study of the Bible will fill the life of mothers and fathers with its sacred message. This will be evident in their daily lives and relationships.

Meditating on the life of Christ will transform lives into blessings. On this subject Paul shares: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

2. Fathers and Mothers that would be models for their children must have a clear vision of what they want their children to see in them

God’s attributes must be reflected in the home. Ellen White suggests in her book *Education* that love, gratitude, confidence, tenderness, justice, and tolerance are traits of character parents should model in their home.

Ellen White further states that: “The child who by trust and submission and reverence toward his earthly protectors learns to trust and obey and reverence his God. He who imparts to child or pupil such a gift has endowed him with a treasure more precious than the wealth of all the ages—a treasure as enduring as eternity”. (White, *Education* p. 245).

3. Role Model Parents should live in a way that makes the Gospel attractive in the home

The joys and blessings that are experienced as a result of being a committed Christian should flourish and be enjoyed and shared in the home.

Children should see in their parents undeniable evidences that following Jesus is a joyful and worthwhile experience.

Answered prayers, miracles performed in our lives, stories of marvelous conversions, among other things, are testimonies of God’s mercies that should be brought to the children’s avid ears. It is very sad to note that sometimes what is discussed at home are negative things that occur in God’s Church such as mistakes members have made, or long-winded Sabbath sermons.

4. Role Model parents gladly obey God's Commandments

This is how the Psalmist viewed the Law and its obedience: "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant giving light to the eyes" (Psalm 19:7-8).

When we observe the Sabbath we need to approach it with gladness and praise to God and not portray this obedience to God as a burden. We need to make every effort to make the Sabbath observance a delight in our homes. Every opportunity should be taken to highlight and demonstrate the benefits of obeying God. In this regard, a well planned Sabbath day will be a powerful tool to strengthen the connection of our children. An enjoyable sundown worship, will leave an indelible mark on the impressionable minds of the children.

5. Role Model parents convey the joy of the gospel

Discipline administered on the basis of shouting, beatings and physical abuse terribly undermine the gospel's teachings on love, justice and respect.

6. Role Model parents are excellent witnesses of God's love

Take every opportunity in the home to reaffirm how great God's love is for His children.

The Psalmist David, rejoiced about God saying: "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

7. Role Model parents are thankful to God for the blessings they receive from Him

In many Adventist churches around the world, a part of the mid-week worship service is dedicated to allowing members to share testimonies about how good God has been to them. God's children should never forget to thank Him for all they receive from Him each day. Paul declares: "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessaloians 5:18).

When parents give thanks in their homes for food, clothing, health, shelter, and for all the things that they have received from God, they are teaching their children to do the same. This practice will also teach children to learn to be grateful for what their parents do for them.

8. Role Model parents are confident about representing the character of Christ

Parents should take advantage of every opportunity to respond positively to their children. Each of these occasions should be used to influence their children to be more like Jesus.

On this note, Ellen White shared the following "duties" of fathers and mothers in regards to role modeling:

- In the family, fathers and mothers should ever present before their children the example they wish to be imitated.
- Parents should show a tender respect in word, look, and action.
- Parents should demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is controlling them, by representing the character of Jesus Christ to their children.
- The powers of imitation are strong. And in childhood and youth, when this faculty is most active, a good pattern should be set before the young.
- Children should have confidence in their parents, and thus take in the lessons they should instill in them. (White, *Child Guidance* p. 215.3).

9. Role Model parents grow daily

Despite his supernatural conversion, his close walk with Jesus, and all that He was able to accomplish to advance the gospel, the Apostle Paul, recognized his need to grow even more. On this point he wrote: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

Illustration

Several years ago, a marriage retreat was held with almost 100 couples in attendance. As the meeting began, the guest speaker asked the couples among them, who had been married the longest. The older couple sitting at the front with silver hair on their heads and wrinkles on their faces, were the obvious choice. The older couple had one of their children with their spouse in attendance, who pointed at them in response to the speaker's question. There was applause from the group, as well as a special gift for the older couple when they shared they had been married for 65 years.

During the break, the older couple was asked about the secret of their longevity, and why a couple who had enjoyed 65 years of marriage was attending such a retreat. The wife answered: "Our children invited us. Besides, you can always learn something new in an event like this one."

Even after many years of experience as parents and as a married couple, we must always be on the lookout to learn something new. Children grow, and family dynamics change. So, parents need to be constantly adapting new ways of educating their children according to this reality. Praying, reading the Bible, as well as other good books, and attending parenting programs, may be of help in this growing experience.

10. Role Model parents toil for their character building and for that of their children

On this matter, Ellen White says the following:

IT IS ... BY A REPETITION OF ACTS
THAT HABITS ARE ESTABLISHED AND
CHARACTER CONFIRMED.
WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 199.2

Since character is closely related to good habits, the formation of good habits in our children should have prime importance. However, it is not an easy task to achieve this reality. Consistency, patience and perseverance are needed in order to establish good habits in our children. We must stay on task.

About this Ellen White says:

THE CHARACTER IS FORMED, TO A GREAT
EXTENT, IN EARLY YEARS. THE HABITS
THEN ESTABLISHED HAVE MORE INFLUENCE
THAN ANY NATURAL ENDOWMENT, IN
MAKING MEN EITHER GIANTS OR DWARFS
IN INTELLECT; FOR THE VERY BEST TALENTS
MAY, THROUGH WRONG HABITS, BECOME
WARPED AND ENFEEBLED.
WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 199.3

The earlier years are the right time to establish good habits in the lives of our children.

Illustration

An anguished mother came to a counselor requesting help for her son. Among other things, the son didn't want to work nor help with the house chores. He just spent time playing video games and watching TV. The counselor asked how old her son was, and she answered very sadly that he was 31 years old.

The task of establishing good habits must be started very early in life.

On this issue Ellen White says the following:

THE EARLIER IN LIFE ONE CONTRACTS
HURTFUL HABITS, THE MORE FIRMLY WILL
THEY HOLD THEIR VICTIM IN SLAVERY, AND
THE MORE CERTAINLY WILL THEY LOWER
HIS STANDARD OF SPIRITUALITY.
WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 199.3

Parents must pay careful attention to the negative behaviors small children practice. At times, parents are too indulgent and overlook negative behaviors and bad habits in their children. Bad actions should be corrected the very moment they occur. However it is a mistake to believe that children will eventually get rid of their bad habits.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF CORRECT AND
VIRTUOUS HABITS ARE FORMED IN YOUTH,
THEY WILL GENERALLY MARK THE COURSE
OF THE POSSESSOR THROUGH LIFE.
WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 199.3

11. Role Model parents live what they preach

Role Model parents don't do things they don't want their children to do.

Illustration

Some friends came to visit an old acquaintance in his home. As they approached the dwelling, they noticed that he was sitting under a tree about 130 feet from the house, and he was eating a snack. Playfully, his friends asked why he was eating in hiding away from his family. He responded he had been given some cookies, and didn't want his children to see him eating between meals.

12. Role Model parents ask for forgiveness when they make a mistake

Illustration

A mother noticed that a piece of dessert was missing. Without any proof, she accused the youngest son of taking it. He was the more avid eater of her two children. When she asked him, the boy said he had not taken it. But the mother didn't believe him. A few days later, the truth surfaced. Her older daughter had taken the piece of dessert.

This mother had made a mistake, just like many mothers and fathers do. The good thing, though, is that she had the integrity and courage to ask her son's forgiveness.

Two Models Role Model Parents Can Imitate

1. Christ. Parents should have Jesus Christ as their Model. They should love their children with unconditional love.

2. The Gardener, Ellen White speaks in the following quotation.

PARENTS, IN THE TRAINING OF YOUR CHILDREN, STUDY THE LESSONS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN IN NATURE. IF YOU WOULD TRAIN A PINK, OR ROSE, OR LILY, HOW WOULD YOU DO IT? ASK THE GARDENER BY WHAT PROCESS HE MAKES EVERY BRANCH AND LEAF TO FLOURISH SO BEAUTIFULLY,

AND TO DEVELOP IN SYMMETRY AND LOVELINESS. HE WILL TELL YOU THAT IT WAS BY NO RUDE TOUCH, NO VIOLENT EFFORT; FOR THIS WOULD ONLY BREAK THE DELICATE STEMS. IT WAS BY LITTLE ATTENTIONS, OFTEN REPEATED. HE MOISTENED THE SOIL AND PROTECTED THE GROWING PLANTS FROM THE FIERCE BLASTS AND FROM THE SCORCHING SUN, AND GOD CAUSED THEM TO FLOURISH AND TO BLOSSOM INTO LOVELINESS. IN DEALING WITH YOUR CHILDREN, FOLLOW THE METHOD OF THE GARDENER. BY GENTLE TOUCHES, BY LOVING MINISTRATIONS, SEEK TO FASHION THEIR CHARACTERS AFTER THE PATTERN OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST. WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE P. 36.3

Good Role Model parents will always have Christ as a Model and Inspiration. But, they also have clear in their minds that the Gardener's work is theirs.

Appeal

Invite all fathers and mothers to consecrate or reconsecrate their lives to God daily. Ask God for help to be model children of the Model Father. And, ask God to help all parents in attendance to be Role Models for their children.

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Parents Can Help Teens and Young Adults Say "No" to Drugs

ALINA BALTAZAR

The Text

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO; EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.
PROVERBS 22:6 ESV

Introduction

Illegal drug and alcohol use is a statistically normative process during late adolescence and young adulthood in the world today. About half of high school seniors in the U.S. have used an illicit drug once in their life. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the U.S. and worldwide (Monitoring the Future Survey, 2013a). A vast majority (80%) of college students in the U.S. have used alcohol in their lifetime (Monitoring the Future Report, 2013b). Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) youths have lower rates of participating in these behaviors, but they are not immune to the culture around them. In a survey of 11,481 6-12th graders attending SDA schools in the North American Division back in 2000, 25% reported using alcohol in the last year, 10% had used marijuana, and 13% reported binge drinking (Five drinks or more in one sitting) (Gane & Kijai, 2015).

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This seminar will take about 60-90 minutes. Anticipated audience are parents of teens and pre-teens.

Consequences of Adolescent Substance Use

There are three primary consequences to using substances. Most use is recreational, but there can be adverse health effects (even death) from one time or occasional use. Another consequence to recreational use is the tendency to have impaired judgement that leads to risky behaviors (e.g., driving while intoxicated, accidents, unsafe sex, and sexual assault). With prolonged substance abuse, research has found increased incidents of lung cancer, heart disease, liver disease, and breast cancer. With regular use there comes the risk of developing an addiction. With addiction the substance becomes one of the most important things in a person's life, causing problems at school, work, and with relationships. An addiction is hard to quit, even as consequences pile up (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016).

Impact of Substance Abuse on Adolescent Development

Teens are especially vulnerable to substance use consequences. Adolescence is a very important time in human development. It is a time when teens are gaining more independence, are mostly physically developed, but executive functioning which dictates ability to be aware of long-term

consequences, is the last to develop in the brain. Adolescents are more focused on pleasure and overestimate their ability to handle consequences. When youth start abusing drugs, it actually stunts their emotional and even cognitive development. The age at which they start also has an impact on their development. The earlier they start, the most likely they will be addicted and suffer long-term consequences (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016). With these alarming statistics, what can parents do during a time when they feel they are losing control of their children?

Parental Bonding as Prevention

The role a parent plays in preventing substance use starts in the very early stage. Bonding between parents and children begins at birth. It does not come naturally to all parents, but it has a significant relation to child development. Attachment is associated with the expression and recognition of emotions as well as interpersonal functioning (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Research has reported emotional regulation difficulties in substance use disorders and addiction has been considered an attachment disorder (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Bonding also helps improve behavioral outcomes. A close parent/child bond can help motivate the child to cooperate with their parent because they want to please their parent who they believe cares for them (Baltazar, 2015).

Parental Modeling

Whether or not we want them to, children watch what family members do. It is hard to say “do what I say, not what I do”. If parents, older siblings, or even grandparents use substances, youth are more likely to use them too (Cubbins & Klepinger, 2007). It becomes the normal thing to do, part of the family identity. Of course, the opposite is also true. In a study of SDA college students, using focus groups, this is what was reported: “If my parents didn’t use, I guess I won’t either” (Baltazar, 2015). When family members have used, having an honest conversation helps, especially regarding consequences (Baltazar, 2015).

Sibling Relationships

The sibling relationship is also potentially protective. Siblings offer one of the first and most important peer relationships in an individual’s life (Heppner, 2014). Children spend more time with their siblings than with their parents. Siblings’ bonds depend upon their culture. In some cultures siblings may have a close relationship, in other cultures it is not as important for a family unit (Heppner, 2014). According to the Harvard Study of Adult Development, the longer we can sustain close sibling relationships in adulthood, the more it can benefit and protect us emotionally (Heppner, 2014).

Extended Family

The importance of the extended family will vary from culture to culture. Grandparents and other family members such as aunts and uncles can play a significant role in both a family’s economic and social function. In every culture the extended family can provide a protective role in providing support to parents by assisting with the care of children, monitoring teenagers, being positive role models, passing on values, and showing love for children and youth in the family. Grandparent substance using norms were one of the strongest predictors of intention to use substances, in a population of American Indian youth (Martinez, Ayers, Kulis, & Brown, 2015).

Religious Upbringing

By raising children in a religious home, there are many protective factors that come into play. Youth raised in a home with a religious affiliation had lower rates of drug use (Cubbins & Klepinger, 2007). Research has found church attendance, close relationship with God, personal devotions, and being involved in church related activities decreased substance use (McBride, 2012). In addition, church is a good place to find positive peers who are less likely to use substances themselves, though not a guarantee.

Religion also teaches values that relate to minimizing or abstinence of substance use. Some religions teach about these values more than others. The Seventh-day Adventist church teaches the value of taking care of the body because it is the temple of the Lord. In a survey of Seventh-day Adventist college students, the statement, “God wants me to take care of my body by avoiding alcohol and drugs”, was reflected in the 25% of variance in last year alcohol use and actually decreased the chance of regular alcohol consumption by 60% (Baltazar, 2015).

Ways Parents Can Aid in Spiritual Development

According to Habenicht (1994) there are steps parents can take to strengthen their child’s relationship with the Lord.

- When there is a close bond between the parent and child, the child is more likely to believe in a loving heavenly Father.
- Similar to the benefits of role modeling temperance, modeling personal devotions, church attendance, and living a moral life are standards that children are likely to follow.
- When parents participate in religious communities it gives children a community they can lean on and a sense of security.
- Research has found many benefits to family worship. It is a time for families to spend time together, express their faith, and encourage spiritual development.
- Parents also should encourage individual religious practices in children (e.g. personal prayer and devotions).
- Since religion and spirituality can be complex concepts difficult for children to grasp, it is helpful to have an open dialogue to help answer any questions they may have.
- A great way for a parent to express their faith and help a child to internalize theirs is service to others.

Parental Monitoring

Monitoring is the parent being aware of where the child is, their activities when they

are out, and communication of these concerns to the child. The National Survey on Drug Abuse of 2008 reports parents who monitor their children’s behavior and help with their homework decrease illicit drug use by about 50%. Mother not knowing how I spend my spare time related to greater regular alcohol use among Seventh-day Adventist college students (Baltazar, 2015). For parental monitoring to be effective rules should be clearly stated, consistently enforced, and punishment reasonable, swift and sure.

Parental Involvement and Conflict

Positive involvement is the parent’s active participation in the child’s life when it comes to activities and school work. Parental involvement has been found to decrease substance use in adolescents and college age young adults. In a study of adolescents living in rural Idaho, USA, this answer: “If I had a personal problem I could ask my mom or dad for help,” was statistically related to lower substance use (Baltazar, et al., 2012). If positive parental involvement is preventative in adolescent substance use, then the opposite is also true. Family conflict was significantly associated with an increased risk of substance use disorders (Skeer, et al., 2009).

Communication

It is important to communicate clear expectations regarding substance use. Clear communication was the only statistically significant parental influence on adolescent alcohol use in one study (Miller-Day, 2010). In a survey of Adventist college students, feeling comfortable talking to mother about drugs and alcohol decreased regular alcohol use by 25% (Baltazar, 2015). A participant in a qualitative study of Adventist college students summarizes it best, “I think it comes down to, when parents give good reasons why we shouldn’t be doing it, not just enforcing a bunch of rules that don’t have any substance or background to them, so, actually having rationale for the rules, or the things that parents try to implement to their kids”.

Parenting Styles

Maccoby and Martin (1983) proposed there are four main parenting styles. Authoritative parenting is a more modern style of parenting commonly practiced in North American and European countries. Authoritative parents typically are nurturing, affectionate, set boundaries, and have open communication with their children. Authoritarian parenting is a more traditional parenting style where parents are strict, inflexible, and have high expectations for their children. Permissive parenting is also a more modern style where parents are nurturing, affectionate, but have few or inconsistent boundaries. Permissive parents prefer to take the role of “friend” with their children. Uninvolved parents are generally emotionally detached, self-absorbed, and have inconsistent or no boundaries.

Parenting Styles Influence on Substance Abuse

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Research has examined the role parenting styles has on youth substance use behavior. Children raised with authoritative parents usually grow up to be independent, socially successful, and respectful of authority. Though permissive parenting may help with parent/child bonding, teens follow easily into peer pressure of drug and alcohol abuse. They feel their parents do not care about their substance use. Authoritarian parenting style adolescents will give into peer pressure in order to gain positive validation, even if the adolescent is fully aware of the consequence (Wood et al., 2004 and American Academy of Pediatrics, 2015).

Family Meals

Traditionally family meals have been a part of all human cultures. Research consistently shows that having four or more family dinners per week significantly lower rates of substance abuse, sexual activity, violence and suicide ideation, victimization, obesity, and higher rates of safety behavior (e.g. wearing a helmet and seatbelt) (Matthews, et al., 2012).

How do family meals work? They can be faith building. For example when prayer/grace is said at the beginning of the meal. The meal is an opportunity for a parent to role modeling healthy eating styles and self-control. It also provides an opportunity to monitor a child’s daily activities and upcoming schedule. While families are eating they are also communicating between bites, which is a benefit that was mentioned earlier. The family meal is another way to stay involved in a child’s life and show their parent cares about them. However, family meals only work if the experience is pleasant.

International Perspective

There is some slight variation on the role parents play in preventing substance use around the world and among different cultural groups. The following are a sampling of such studies. Dutch and Norwegian parents feel it is their responsibility to be a good example and set rules regarding substance use (van der Sar, et al., 2014). Among rural African American adolescents having family members who did not use substances, being raised by parents, spending afternoons with parents after school, having parents who talk to youth about dangers of substance use, and having parents who disapprove of child using were considered protective factors (Myers, 2013). In a study of Mexican-American adolescents, having family obligation values is associated with less substance use (Telzer, et al., 2014). Though there are some differences, the role of modeling, parental involvement, setting rules, open and clear communication, and family bonding have been found to be a universal benefit.

Hope for Single Parents

Family forms have been changing in recent decades with 40% of children who will live in a home without two parents. Because of high divorce rates and children born out of wedlock, the nuclear family of two parents and children is no longer the norm. Children growing up in single parent households have higher rates of academic problems, more likely to become

sexually active, commit illegal acts, and use illegal drugs at young ages. This is probably due to disrupted parent/child bonding and overwhelmed single parents which leads to difficulties with communication, involvement, and supervision. Family disruption is particularly harmful during adolescent years (Antecol & Bedard, 2007)

When parents separate, children still need exactly what they needed before the separation. They need a secure emotional base, routine, protection, encouragement to learn, and the support of a trusting, loving parent. Successful single-parenting tips:

- Make time for one on one time with their children
- Show an interest in the lives of their children and their exhibited behavior and attitudes
- Make good use of family networks and mentoring programs
- Have a positive co-parenting relationship

Tips for Blended Families

Children don't necessarily stay in single parent households indefinitely. According to the 2000 census 67% of families are blended. There are many types of family that exists in today's society, each important to the upbringing of any children. Here are some successful blended family tips:

- Give it time – 4 years on average
- Take time to build relationships
- Be flexible with roles
- Start new traditions

Braithwaite, Baxter, & Harper (1998)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Drug use in teens frequently overlaps with mental health problems. These positive parenting strategies are also helpful in supporting good mental health. Sometimes it is hard to know which came first, the drug problem or the mental illness. Many use substances to self-medicate their symptoms of depression, mood swings, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety. Substance abuse itself can lead to mental illness,

symptoms of depression, insomnia, mood swings, and difficulty concentrating. Even when parents do everything they can, there is a strong genetic component to mental illness. Depression, anxiety, ADHD, bipolar, borderline personality disorder, and PTSD (trauma) are linked to substance abuse. If a child has symptoms of these disorders, seek professional help, your child's life may depend on it! Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website has a link to find resources near you. <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> Pediatricians and local community mental health centers are a resource as well.

In conclusion, research has found the following roles parents play in preventing substance use/abuse in adolescents:

- Positive attachment/bonding
- Role modeling
- Religious upbringing
- Monitoring/supervision
- Parental Involvement
- Clear and open communication
- Frequent family dinners
- Authoritative parenting

There are no guarantees, but these can decrease the chances.

Small Group Activity Application Questions (10-15 minutes)

- What do you believe your parents did that helped prevent your substance use?
- What could they have done better?
- What have you done as a parent to prevent your children from using?
- What could you do better as a parent?
- How can you be of support to other parents?

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Growing Characters for Eternity

KAREN HOLFORD

The Text

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE,
JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS,
GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS
GALATIANS 5: 22

Happy and simple ways to grow your child's character (as well as yours!). An interactive parenting seminar.

Spirit to work in the space between your words and the hearts of the listeners, so that each person hears what God wants him or her to hear today.

Introduction

We have often referred to character traits as if people are born with or without them, or as if we either have them, or we don't have them. It can be more helpful to describe character traits as 'strengths'. Then we can strengthen our characters, and the characters of our children. By finding ways to practice these different character strengths, develop them, and use them in different contexts, just as we would strengthen our muscles.

What are character strengths?

CHARACTER STRENGTHS ARE DURABLE,
FUNDAMENTAL QUALITIES THAT DESCRIBE
US AT OUR BEST.
EADES, 2008

Character strengths are positive qualities and values such as generosity, kindness, creativity, patience, humility, etc. It is encouraging to define character strengths as 'qualities that describe us at our best', because, when we think about our own characters, we often focus on the times when we have failed and messed up. So we tell ourselves: "I can't really describe myself as generous because of the time when I walked past a beggar in the

Materials needed:

- Bibles
- Flip chart paper or large sheets of paper
- Marker pens
- Pens or pencils for participants
- Copies of the Character Strength Bible Verse handout
- Copies of 'Exploring Character Strengths' worksheet – one per small group of 3-4 people
- Handouts of 'Creative ways to nurture your child's character' to give to parents at the end of the seminar

Prayer

Open with prayer, praising God for His infinitely wonderful character. Invite the Holy

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street and didn't give him any money.” We can easily use these challenging moments as evidence to disregard our character strengths, which can be discouraging. It is especially discouraging for children when we think and talk about them and their character strengths in this way.

But when we redefine character strengths as descriptions of ourselves at our best, and focus on what we have achieved in our most inspired and shining moments, then we can feel more encouraged to grow and nurture our strengths, and to become more like Jesus.

Exploring God's Character

We will start by focusing on God's character, because then we will discover the kinds of character strengths that we need to develop to become more like Him.

THERE ARE TWO CHOICES OF ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR GROUP EXPLORE GOD'S CHARACTER.

Choose the one that will work best for your group and context. If there are lots of children present they may enjoy God's character alphabet. If you have plenty of time you can read Psalm 145 as a scripture reading, list the characteristics in the chapter, and then do the alphabet activity as a large group or in smaller groups.

God's character revealed in the Bible

- Invite someone to read Psalm 145 aloud to the whole group, as people follow along in their own Bibles.
- Then invite people to work in small groups, or families and to list all the character strengths of God that are revealed in this chapter, and at least three other character strengths that are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.
- Give them some examples to help them get started, such as loving, kind, trustworthy, gracious, etc.

- Allow a few moments for them to make their lists.
- Then invite each group in turn to name 1-2 character strengths that they found in Psalm 145 and 1-2 character strengths from elsewhere in the Bible.
- If possible, write this list of character strengths on a flip chart for everyone to see.

God's Character Alphabet

- Give each group a large sheet of paper and a marker pen.
- Ask them to write the alphabet down the left side of the paper, one letter per line.
- Then invite them to use the alphabet as a prompt to help them list all the characteristics of God that they can think of. It is even possible to find some character strengths for the more challenging letters: for X use words beginning with eX, such as eXcellent, for Q - Quieting or Questioning, Z - Zealous, Y - Yearning, etc. (One group of children found more than 200 words to describe God's character!).
- Allow 5-10 minutes for the activity.
- Then invite feedback. If there is time, ask groups to call out one character strength for each letter, rotating through the groups. So group 1 would call out a characteristic of God beginning with A, group 2 would call out one beginning with B, group 3 C, and so on till you have one for each of the letters.
- Take a few moments to reflect on what the group has discovered about God's character as this activity often fills people with a sense of praise and wonder.

Developing character strengths

Let's look at what Peter says about developing character strengths in 2 Peter 1:5-8.

MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ADD TO YOUR FAITH, GOODNESS; AND TO GOODNESS, KNOWLEDGE; AND TO KNOWLEDGE, SELF-CONTROL; AND TO SELF-CONTROL, PERSEVERANCE; AND TO PERSEVERANCE, GODLINESS; AND TO GODLINESS, MUTUAL AFFECTION; AND TO MUTUAL AFFECTION, LOVE. FOR IF YOU POSSESS THESE QUALITIES IN INCREASING MEASURE, THEY WILL KEEP YOU FROM BEING INEFFECTIVE

AND UNPRODUCTIVE IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 2 PETER
1:5-8, NIV

**ASK: WHAT DO THESE VERSES
HELP US TO UNDERSTAND
ABOUT CHRISTIAN
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT?
(INVITE THE GROUP TO
REFLECT AND RESPOND WITH
2-3 IDEAS.)**

Reflecting on your own character strengths

We all have character strengths. Some of our strengths will be less developed than others, but we all have them to some degree.

- What do you think are some of your top character strengths? If you are not sure what they are, ask yourself what your spouse or child might describe as your top character strengths.
- Write down three of your main strengths, and then think about the different ways in which they have been strengthened in your life.

Perhaps they were strengthened by:

- Prayer
- Experiencing the transforming power of God in your life
- Everyday life experiences
- Unexpected and challenging life experiences
- The encouragement and nurture of other people
- Persevering towards your goals
- Other experiences...

What have you learnt about how your character has been strengthened that can help you to nurture other character strengths in yourself, and character strengths in children and others?

Nurturing your child's character

The main keys to nurturing your child's character strengths are giving your child small, fun and interesting opportunities to use their character strengths; exploring character strengths in family

conversations and worship times; noticing when your child is using one of their character strengths and responding positively to their actions; and having intentional conversations about character strengths.

Here are some ways you can put these into action:

- Create a list of character strengths. Use the list in the handout as a starting point, and add other strengths and values that you consider important.
- Once you are aware of a variety of character strengths you are more likely to create opportunities for your child to develop their strengths and to notice when they are using their character strengths. If you are not aware of these strengths then you could easily miss some useful opportunities to help you and your child to grow these strengths together.
- Help your child to choose one or two character strengths that they would like to work on. It's best to help them towards their goals rather than telling them what to work on.
- Pray that you and your child will grow more of this character strength.
- Use family worship to explore the character strengths in all kinds of ways. We will learn more about this later in the seminar.
- Help your child to make a list of things they could easily do at home, school, church and in your neighborhood to develop this character strength.

Nurturing character strengths through intentional conversations

It is also important to have intentional conversations about character strengths. It will help you and your child if you have these conversations regularly. Some families will do this every day and some will do it once a week.

Here is a sample outline for an intentional conversation about character strengths. Pick and choose different elements for variety, and to suit your child and your family context.

- Which character strengths did you use today?
- What happened when you chose to use your strength?
- Today I saw you use (name the strength) when

- (describe what happened). I was so proud of you for choosing to do that/working so hard/being so patient, etc.
- Today I worked on (name the character strength you worked on during the day). And this is what happened... (by sharing your experience you are encouraging your child, and showing that character development is a lifelong process.
 - Today I noticed (name a person) working on their (name a character strength). Who did you see working on their character strength today?
 - Tomorrow I would like to work on (name a character strength) because...
 - What character strength would you like to work on tomorrow?
- Design posters, bookmarks, and other objects that will encourage you all to use this character strength.
 - Share some of the things you make with other people, to inspire them to develop character strengths too.
 - Create a family journal together about the character strength. List the Bible verses and stories that inspired you, and the activities you did together. Include photos of some of your activities, and any themed artwork you have made.
 - Encourage other families to join you, so that you can create shared worships and activities that will help you to develop your characters.
 - In what other ways could character strengths be used to help you create positive themes in family worship?

Nurturing character strengths through family worship

Character strengths make interesting, practical and inspiring topics for family worship times. Here are some simple ideas you can use in your family worships:

- Choose a character strength that you would like to develop as a family.
- Pray for inspiration and ideas about how God wants to nurture this character strength in each one of you, and in your family.
- Think of the times when God and Jesus used this character strength.
- Wonder about the other characters in the Bible who demonstrated this character strength. Research their stories, looking for clues about how they developed and nurtured their character strength.
- Search for Bible verses that speak about this strength or give positive illustrations of it.
- Think of creative and interesting ways to learn some of these Bible verses together.
- Search for inspiring autobiographies, video clips and short stories about Christians who have developed this character strength, including stories of Christians from around the world today. Read the stories to your children and show them suitable video clips.
- Make a list of all the ways you could practice this character strength as a family. Then choose at least three activities to do together that will help you all nurture this character strength.

Exploring a character strength

We will explore some of the character strengths and create a rich resource of character strengthening ideas and activities for the families in our church and community.

- Form small groups of three to five people.
- Each group will be given a worksheet to help you explore a character strength, and to list ways to nurture this strength in children, young people and families.
- You will have 15 minutes to research, discuss and share ideas for nurturing your allocated character strengths through family worship activities, everyday experiences and practical family activities.
- Hand out the worksheets, and the list of character strengths and Bible texts.
- Allocate a different character strength to each group so that you receive a wider selection of ideas.
- Allow 15 minutes for group discussion and the gathering of ideas.
- Call the larger group together and invite each group to share their character strength and two to three of their best ideas.
- Gather all the worksheets together and find the best way to share the information with your wider group. Place them on a bulletin board, in a folder, or ask someone to type them up neatly so you can share the document.
- If there were some character strengths that were not explored by your group, you could

invite people to work on them at home and to return the ideas to you.

Optional family activities

If you have children at the seminar, you might like to organize some family activities that will help to nurture character strengths. Some ideas and instructions for a few of these have been provided in this seminar pack.

If you plan to use these activities you will need to copy a few instruction cards for each table and gather the simple supplies needed for each activity. Arrange each activity in a different area of the room, or at a different table depending on the size of your group.

Invite families to find an activity that interests them and to try it out together. Allow families 20-30 minutes to explore the activities.

When you call the group together after the activities, encourage people to share feedback on the activities – what they enjoyed and what they learned together. If you have time, leave the activities so that families can try them after the seminar, too.

Reflecting on the seminar

At the end of the seminar invite the participants to reflect prayerfully on their learning, asking God to show them what He would like them to take away from the seminar.

Then invite them to reflect on the following questions and to write down their answers for their private inspiration:

- The new things I have learned today about nurturing character strengths are...

- Three things I would like to do to nurture my own character strengths are...
- I will do this by...
- Three things I would like to do to nurture my child's/family's character strengths are...
- I will do this by...

Wrap up

Invite people to share some of their insights, ideas and goals in response to what they have learned and experienced during the seminar.

If there are any questions, encourage the group to help answer them with their ideas and experiences.

Closing prayer

Close with prayer, praying that each parent, child and family will nurture their character strengths and grow more like Jesus every day.

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Some Character Strengths And Related Bible Verses

Love	1 Corinthians 13:4-8
Kindness	Ephesians 4:32
Desire to learn	Proverbs 1:5
Humility	Matthew 23:12
Fairness	James 2:1
Thankfulness	1 Thessalonians 5:18
Forgiveness	Ephesians 4:32
Enthusiasm	Colossians: 3:23
Appreciating beauty everywhere	Psalms 104
Bravery	Joshua 1:9
Caution	Ephesians 5:15-17
Humor and laughter	Proverbs 17:22
Honesty	Philippians 4:8
Creativity	Ecclesiastes 8:10
Perseverance and patience	James 1:12
Self-control	Galatians 5:22-23
Friendliness	Proverbs 17:17
Spirituality	Micah 6:8
Teamwork and cooperation	Psalms 133:1
Wisdom	James 1:5
Generosity	2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Spaces for other character strengths

Exploring a Character Strength

Character strength:

Bible verses about the character strength:

Bible characters who demonstrated this character strength:

Contemporary examples of people using this character strength:

Creative ways to explore this character strength during family worship:

Practical opportunities and activities for developing this character strength in children and young people:

Creative ways to use this character strength as a family to share God's love with others:

Any other creative ideas or thoughts about this character strength?

HANDOUT #3

Creative Ways To Nurture Your Child's Character

Here is a list of different character strengths. Each one includes Bible verses, Bible stories and practical activities to nurture that character strength.

Appreciating beauty and experiencing wonder

This character strength enriches our lives, helps us to notice the amazing things that God has created, and inspires us to make beautiful things, too.

Bible verses: Psalm 104

Biblical character: Creator God, David

- Watch a sunset, gaze at the night sky, or explore a shell, a flower, a tree, or a seed-pod and ask children what they think is most beautiful or wonderful about it.
- Describe the most beautiful things you saw today. Or share photos of beautiful things that you have taken with your cell-phones.
- Go for walks in nature. Encourage your child to slow down and notice the beautiful things all around them. Take a simple camera so they can photograph the things they discover.
- Take your child to art galleries, old churches, parks, and places where they can see beautiful things that people have created, too.
- Send them on a 'wonder hunt' to find five amazing and natural things in the garden, the forest, or the park, etc.

CAUTION helps to keep us safe, and protects us from saying and doing things we'll regret later.

Bible verses: Ephesians 5:15-17

Bible character: Many of the prophets cautioned the people of God

- Teach your child how to look out for dangers and avoid them. Read books about keeping safe, and search for online games that help children identify and avoid dangers.
- Help your child learn how to avoid abuse, bullying and cyber-bullying by using age-appropriate materials available from local sources.

- When you are with your child in different settings make it a 'game' to stop, sit down, look around and identify as many potential dangers as possible. When you identify a danger (such as a dangerous road, or a fast-flowing river, or an overhead electricity cable) think about what you could do to stay safe.

COURAGE is facing up to difficult, challenging or frightening situations instead of avoiding them.

Bible verses: Joshua 1:9, Proverbs 3:5-6

Biblical examples: Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel and his friends, Esther

- Help your child learn how to pray every time they feel afraid, and to trust in God to keep them safe and strong. Along with the prayer encourage them to breathe deeply and slowly, as if they are blowing bubbles, which is a natural way to calm the body down.
- Give your child plenty of reassurance and support, especially when they are facing a challenge such as performing on the stage, visiting the dentist, or taking a test. Ask them what you can do to help them feel calm and brave.
- Make a bravery award poster and write a message on it every time you see your child being brave.

CREATIVITY is not just about being artistic. Creativity is having an open mind about how things can be made and used, having a vision for an end-product, and the determination to overcome the challenges of making it.

Bible verse: Ecclesiastes 9:10

Biblical examples: God creating the world and planting the garden of Eden; making the tabernacle; Solomon's temple; Jochebed making a waterproof basket to keep Moses safe; Mary using a manger for Jesus' bed

- Find an everyday object, such as a brick, a bed sheet, or a coat hanger and think of at least ten interesting and practical ways to use it.

- Let each child create a new kind of sandwich, a fruit smoothie using at least four fruits, or a different kind of topping for a pizza.
- Give each child a large cardboard box, some scissors and a set of chunky felt pens. Help them make their box into Noah's ark. Wonder how Noah arranged the inside of the ship to accommodate a wide range of animals and their needs.

ENTHUSIASM is doing things with energy and excitement rather than complaining.

Bible verse: Colossians 3:23

Biblical examples: Rebekah giving water to the camels; Joshua exploring the Promised Land

- Create your own family version of a 'high-five' – and use it to inspire enthusiasm when someone is tired and reluctant to get going.
- Encourage energy and enthusiasm by setting a time goal on a challenging task. Work together as a team to tidy up a room or to fold the laundry before a timer rings.
- Reward your child's positive enthusiasm by letting them know how much you appreciate their cheerful energy.

FAIRNESS is treating all people equally regardless of their differences.

Bible verses: James 2:1-5

Biblical examples: Jesus; Peter and his dream of the unclean animals being lowered in a sheet

- Play sharing games to help your child learn how to share generously and equally with others.
- Encourage your child to look around and find new and lonely children to include in their playground games.
- Make sure your family makes friends with other families from different cultures, and invite them to your home. Take the time to learn about their culture.
- Set a good example for your children by showing respect, courtesy and thoughtfulness to everyone you meet.

FORGIVENESS is being able to forgive those who hurt you, and knowing how to let go of your hurt and resentment.

Bible verse: Ephesians 4:32

Biblical example: Joseph, son of Jacob, forgiving his brothers; Jesus forgiving Peter and those who crucified Him

- Teach your child about God's complete forgiveness of them by using a symbolic act such as wiping chalk off a board, washing dirt off a stone, writing in a dish of salt and then shaking the dish so the words disappear forever.
- Teach your child that holding onto resentment and not forgiving someone is like holding onto something that is hurting their hand, like a stinging nettle, or a burning stick.
- Apologize to your child when you have hurt or upset them, and ask for their forgiveness. They will learn so much about forgiveness and apologies from your positive example.
- When your child has hurt someone else, or upset them, help them to say sorry and also to do something kind for the person they heard.

GRATITUDE is being thankful for gifts and blessings.

Bible verses: 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Psalm 136:1

Biblical examples: Paul is thankful in his letters; the leper who came back and said thank you to Jesus; Jesus' mother, Mary, when she sings her song of gratitude after the angel has told her she will be the mother of the Messiah

- Let your child write and decorate 'thank you' prayers to make laminated placemats for the dinner table.
- Make an alphabet of gratitude together. Write several things you are thankful for, beginning with each letter of the alphabet.
- Make thank you cards together, and cookies or bread, and take them to people to say thank you for the different things they have done for you, however small.

HONESTY is telling the truth, even when it's hard, and being genuine and authentic.

Bible verse: Philippians 4:8

Biblical examples: Elijah; Prophet Nathan and King David; Jeremiah

- Do your part to create a safe place for your child to tell the truth. Respond warmly and lovingly when children

are honest about the mistakes they have made so they don't learn that telling the truth leads to punishment.

- Teach them how to tell the truth lovingly and considerately, and how to speak kind and encouraging words.
- Create a positive attitude of giving more than required, rather than cutting corners, skimping and giving less than their best at work.
- Teach your child about returning a generous portion of tithes and offerings to God. Help them to discover the joy in supporting God's work with their finances.

HOPEFULNESS is believing that the best things happen when you trust in God and when you work to achieve your goals.

Bible verses: Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28

Biblical example: Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, Esther, Mary, Jesus, Paul

- Make a hope book and fill it with Bible verses, positive comments, goals and ideas that nurture your child's hopefulness.
- Make a model of the heavenly city out of scraps and construction toys, and talk about your hopes for heaven.
- Find Bible promises that give hope and write them on homemade cards to send to people facing challenges.
- Make a simple card game, matching Bible characters to the things they hoped for. Shuffle the cards and then match them in pairs. Or use the cards to play a memory pairs game, by laying them face down on the table and taking turns to pick up two cards. If the two cards include the Bible character and the thing they hoped for, then the player keeps the cards, and he or she has another turn.

GOOD HUMOUR is about people laughing with each other and not at each other.

Bible verse: Proverbs 17:22

Bible character: Solomon wrote some amusing proverbs

- Enjoy having fun with your child.
- Tell each other the funniest thing you saw, heard or did during the day.
- Watch the funny antics of the animals in the zoo.
- Do some unusual, surprising and funny things occasionally. Wear your clothes backwards for an hour; serve breakfast in the bath; arrange slices of fruit to make a funny face; and hide treats in their bed or

lunchbox. These little things make special memories that will bring a smile to their face.

KINDNESS is being thoughtful about what the other person's needs, and then putting their needs before your own.

Bible verses: Luke 6:35, Ephesians 4:32

Biblical examples: Rebekah, Ruth, Abigail, the boy who shared his lunch with Jesus, Mary who poured perfume over Jesus' feet

- Involve your child in acts of kindness – bake a cake for someone, fill a basket with goodies for a sick person, pack a shoebox of essentials for an overseas child. Let them have fun choosing the gifts and experiencing the joy of giving.
- Make a kindness kit for your child to take to school. Include packets of fun tissues, BandAids with interesting and funny designs, a tiny fun toy, healthy cereal bars, etc. Encourage them to share these little things with other children who are hurt, sad, or hungry.
- Encourage your child to notice when others are tired, ill or sad, and to find ways to be kind to their family, teachers and friends.

LOVE is the other character strengths experienced within a caring relationship.

Bible verses: Romans 12:9-21, 1 Corinthians 13

Biblical examples: Ruth, Jesus, the Good Samaritan, the father of the Prodigal son

- Ask your child when they feel especially loved by you. Find out how they like to be loved best with kind words, warm affection, thoughtful gifts and surprises, being helped and spending special time with you.
- Make a garland with a row of hearts cut from paper. Write and decorate a Bible verse about love on each heart, and hang the garland in your home.
- Find one way each week that your family can show love to someone else. Shop together for groceries for a hungry family; give needy children vouchers for a local toy-store; tidy up the garden for someone who can't manage it anymore, etc.

SELF-CONTROL is being able to wait for what you want, and to be disciplined about what you eat and what you buy etc.

Bible verse: Galatians 5:22-23

Biblical example: John the Baptist

- Teach your child to let others choose first, and make it fun for them to choose the smaller pieces of pie and cake by hiding little treats in them occasionally.
- Make it a game to see how who can wait the longest before eating a treat,
- Encourage your child to save up for something they really want, even if it takes a long time. It helps them to learn the value of money, hard work and patience.
- Plan a surprise for someone with your child and help them learn the self-control of keeping a secret.

SOCIABILITY is being aware of other people's feelings, as well as your own, and meeting other people's needs for comfort, encouragement, appreciation, hospitality, help, respect, etc.

Bible verses: Romans 12:9-21

Biblical examples: Abigail, Jesus, Martha

- Involve your child in welcoming guests to your home, and helping them to feel comfortable. Teach them by modelling, role-play, and your support, how to welcome people at the door, show them where to go, offer them refreshments, create a relaxing guest bedroom, etc.
- Sociability is being able to share in each other's feelings. Encourage your child to be sad with those who are sad, and to be happy with those who are happy!
- Some children prefer to be sociable with just one or two other children at a time, so let quieter children choose how they want to be sociable.

SPIRITUALITY is about believing that life has value, meaning and purpose. It includes helping children to learn about God and how to develop a positive relationship with Him.

Bible verse: Micah 6:8

Biblical example: Many Bible characters

- Learn about people who followed God. Discuss what helped them to stay faithful to God through the challenges they faced.
- Encourage your child to find enjoyable ways to pray, explore the Bible, and worship God. Provide the best resources you can afford to make the Bible interesting for your child's learning style. The more senses and actions

that are involved in their learning, the more likely they are to remember important truths, lessons and Bible verses.

- Children need to know that they are a gift from God to the world, that He loves them, and that He has special, exciting and happy plans for their lives.

TEAMWORK is being able to cooperate with other people in happy and supportive ways.

Bible verses: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12,
Psalm 133:1, Romans 12

Biblical examples: Noah and his family building the ark; the children of Israel building the tabernacle

- Find some projects that involve your whole family working together, such as camping, planning a picnic or barbecue meal with friends, flying kites, and being part of other team projects.
- Model teamwork by working alongside your child when they face challenging tasks like tidying their bedroom!
- Provide your child with plenty of opportunities to participate in group activities like sports, musical activities, Pathfinders, and group performances, depending on their interests.

WISDOM helps us to make good choices.

Bible verses: James 1:5; James 3:17,
Ephesians 5:15-16

Biblical examples: Solomon, Jesus, Paul

- Choose some of your favourite wise verses from the book of Proverbs. Write them neatly on plain index cards. Shuffle the cards, take one each, and then discuss what the proverb means and how it applies to our lives today.
- Discuss the wise and foolish decisions made by people in Bible stories, news stories, films and books. What helped people to be wise? How did they make their decisions? How can we apply their wisdom to our own lives?
- Describe a life dilemma and then discuss possible solutions. Make a list of your ideas and then evaluate each one for its 'wisdom' on a scale of 0-10.

Further reading

<https://kids.usa.gov/play-games/online-safety/>
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources>



2016
PLANBOOK



REACH THE WORLD

HEALTHY
FAMILIES FOR
ETERNITY

— WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER —



God's Plan for Parents and Children

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

The Text

HEAR, MY SON, AND RECEIVE MY SAYINGS,
AND THE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE WILL
BE MANY.
PROVERBS 4:10

Introduction

The Bible is like a road map. God gave us this map so we would have good directions and arrive safely at the destination He has prepared for us. That destination, on this earth, is a good, healthy family.

Jesus told us: “I have come that they (you) may have life, and that they (you) may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) (*emphasis ours*).

God is pleased to see that our family relationships are strong and healthy.

Yet, divorce still happens—even in the church.

Abuse still takes place—even in Adventist congregations.

Parents still face challenges with their children. There are parents who resort to abortion. And

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there are children who suffer from abuse. In some countries children file lawsuits against their parents, and we even read stories of children behaving aggressively toward their parents.

The apostle Paul refers to the condition of the world in the last days. He begins to set the time frame by saying, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

As we read this list, we might identify negative behaviors that define our relational world. “Proud, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unloving, unforgiving, headstrong.”

Isn't this what we see happening in many homes today?

And it is not just in the homes of people who don't know God. It happens in the homes of people who attend church on a regular basis. After Paul writes this list, describing people in the last days, he adds the following words: “Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:5).

He said that religious people, church people, would have these experiences in their midst.

That's why it's important not to be just religious, but spiritual.

A religious person is one who fulfills religious duties; but does so only outwardly. A spiritual person is one who believes from the heart and whose external expression of religion proceeds from inner convictions. And this becomes evident in how we relate to one another as parents and children.

To help us, as spiritual individuals, the Bible provides a number of *Relational Directives*¹. They are commands intended to help us create a basic framework, a basic pattern for living in relationship with others.

We find these *Relational Directives* scattered throughout the Bible and they can be grouped into several categories. Some are very generic and apply broadly to all relationships. Others are more specifically directed toward people in particular relationships, such as married couples, parents, children, neighbors, or friends.

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A good example of a generic relational directive is the golden rule: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12).

And there are several directives that apply to how parents and children relate to one another.

Let us consider four of those directives.

1. Children, honor your parents.

One of the best-known directives to children comes from the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue. It is found in the second half of the Decalogue, which addresses relationships. The first commandment in this second half says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12).

The apostle Paul makes the interesting comment that this is "the first commandment with a promise." (Ephesians 6:2)

Honor your father and your mother! What does it mean to honor your father and your mother? How do we do that? We honor our father and mother by being respectful in word and action and having an inward attitude of esteem for their position.

The Greek word for honor means "to revere, prize, and value."

[HERE YOU MAY TELL A STORY TO ILLUSTRATE THIS PRINCIPLE]

Again, how do we honor our father and our mother? Solomon, the wisest man, urged children to respect their parents. (Proverbs 1:8; 13:1; 30:17).

Although we may no longer be directly under our parents' authority, we can't outgrow God's command to honor them. Even Jesus, God the Son, submitted Himself to both His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) and His heavenly Father. (Matthew 26:39). We follow Christ's example when we treat our parents the way we would reverentially approach our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:9; Malachi 1:6).

Honor them with both actions and attitudes (Mark 7:6). Honor their unspoken as well as spoken wishes. "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." (Proverbs 13:1).

Ellen G. White comments about this commandment, "It is binding upon childhood and youth, upon the middle-aged and the aged. There is no period in life when children are excused from honoring their parents. This solemn obligation is binding upon every son and daughter and is one of the conditions to their prolonging their lives upon the land which the Lord will give the faithful." (White, 1952, p. 292).

As pastor Mark Driscoll shared in a sermon, "To honor means to respect, to defer, to submit. It means to have love, appreciation, and affection towards them. Honor is something that begins internally, and then it manifests itself externally. As you have honor in your heart, it comes out in your words." (Kumar, 2013).²

2. Children, obey your parents.

The second directive applies to how children should relate to their parents:

“CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD, FOR THIS IS RIGHT”
EPHESIANS 6:1

[HERE YOU CAN USE A STORY OF OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS]

Parents mean well for their children. They are not being arbitrary when they ask, or tell, their children to do something or when they forbid them from doing something.

Ellen White makes a very important declaration when she writes:

“ONE GREAT REASON WHY THERE IS SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD TODAY IS THAT PARENTS OCCUPY THEIR MINDS WITH OTHER THINGS THAN THAT WHICH IS ALL—IMPORTANT—HOW TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO THE WORK OF PATIENTLY AND KINDLY TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN THE WAY OF THE LORD. IF THE CURTAIN COULD BE DRAWN ASIDE, WE SHOULD SEE THAT MANY, MANY CHILDREN WHO HAVE GONE ASTRAY HAVE BEEN LOST TO GOOD INFLUENCES THROUGH THIS NEGLECT. PARENTS, CAN YOU AFFORD TO HAVE IT SO IN YOUR EXPERIENCE? YOU SHOULD HAVE NO WORK SO IMPORTANT THAT IT WILL PREVENT YOU FROM GIVING TO YOUR CHILDREN ALL THE TIME THAT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO OBEY AND TRUST THE LORD FULLY.”
WHITE, 1952

The nature and results of obedience to parents is so important that the Bible lists them. Among them we find:

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN ALL THINGS, FOR THIS PLEASES THE LORD.
COLOSSIANS 3:20 (ESV)

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD, FOR THIS IS RIGHT.
EPHESIANS 6:1 (ESV)

HEAR, MY SON, YOUR FATHER’S INSTRUCTION, AND FORSAKE NOT YOUR MOTHER’S TEACHING.
PROVERBS 1:8 (ESV)

The first two directives give us clear guidelines on how children should relate their parents. Honor them, and obey them, are the overarching principles in these two directives.

3. Parents, train your children.

But the Bible does not provide directives only in one direction — how children should relate toward their parents. The Bible also has directives to parents so they know how to relate to their children.

The third directive we will consider today is found in the Old Testament.

“TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO, EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.”
PROVERBS 22:6

This text has brought confusion and misunderstanding to parents at times.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary shares interesting insights:

MANY PARENTS HAVE TAKEN THIS VERSE AS SANCTION FOR FORCING A CHILD TO FOLLOW THE PROFESSION OR TRADE THEY THINK HE OUGHT TO. THUS THEY HAVE BROUGHT SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT UPON THEMSELVES, FOR THE CHILD, ON GROWING UP, OFTEN GOES AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY. THE VERSE RATHER COUNSELS PARENTS TO LEARN THE WAY IN WHICH THEIR PARTICULAR CHILD CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE OF MOST SERVICE TO HIMSELF AND OTHERS, AND IN WHICH HE WILL FIND MOST HAPPINESS. THE SPECIFIC STATION IN LIFE APPOINTED FOR A MAN IS DETERMINED BY HIS CAPABILITIES. TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL GOD HAS ASSIGNED A PLACE IN HIS GREAT PLAN. GOD HAS EQUIPPED MAN WITH THE CAPABILITIES NEEDED TO FILL THIS SPECIAL PLACE. THEREFORE THE CHOICE OF A LIFEWORSHIP SHOULD BE IN LINE WITH THE NATURAL BENT. THE EFFORTS OF

THE PARENTS AND THE CHILD SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARD DISCOVERING THE KIND OF WORK HEAVEN HAS ALREADY DETERMINED. INSPIRATION DECLARES THAT THIS VERSE ENJOINS PARENTS TO “DIRECT, EDUCATE, DEVELOP,” BUT THAT TO DO THIS “THEY MUST THEMSELVES UNDERSTAND THE ‘WAY’ THE CHILD SHOULD GO.”

NICHOL, 1977

Sometimes parents want their children to follow in their footsteps. A teacher wants his son to be a teacher, a lawyer wants her daughter to be a lawyer, a physician wants her son to be a physician, and a carpenter wants his son to be a carpenter. Parents can push their children to be what they had hoped to be but were not able to do.

But in the process, they can be quenching their own children’s dreams and wishes for their future. Because children have different personalities and talents, their interests may not be the same as their parents; they may end up frustrated because they can’t pursue their own interests.

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As parents we need to understand that our first and most important responsibility is to lead them to God. This must be our focus rather than pushing our children on a specific career path.

The following passage of scripture is the Shema which is recited morning and evening by Jews to the present.

“HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. AND THESE WORDS, WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7

The apostle Paul adds: “Fathers... bring them (children) up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4).

Train your child, through your example. Like a train has an engine and the cars follow it, your children will follow you, wherever you lead them, so lead them with a good example.

Train them with patience, tenderness, and lots of love.

Train them with the thought continually before your eyes that their soul is the first thing to be considered.

Train them to have a good knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

Train them to make of prayer a daily habit.

Train them to attend church services regularly and to be engaged in the life and ministry of the church. Train them to support the church with their time, their talents, and with their treasure.

Train them to learn and rely on faith as the key that unlocks heaven’s gates.

Train them to be obedient, to God and to their parents.

Train them to speak truthfully.

Train them to know God, to trust God, to love God, to serve God, to share God, to live for God.

4. Parents, don’t exasperate your children

In the New Testament we will find the last of the directives we will consider today.

“FATHERS, DO NOT EXASPERATE YOUR CHILDREN, SO THAT THEY WILL NOT LOSE HEART.”

COLOSSIANS 3:21

Paul wrote those words to the church in Colossae, but he also wrote similar words to the church in Ephesus: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4).

In that masterful compilation of Ellen White’s writings about children—Child Guidance—she

makes some very important points about this biblical directive:

Referring to the words used by Paul to the Ephesians, Ellen White gives an example of how a parent provokes her child:

“OFTEN WE DO MORE TO PROVOKE THAN TO WIN. I HAVE SEEN A MOTHER SNATCH FROM THE HAND OF HER CHILD SOMETHING THAT WAS GIVING IT SPECIAL PLEASURE. THE CHILD DID NOT KNOW THE REASON FOR THIS, AND NATURALLY FELT ABUSED. THEN FOLLOWED A QUARREL BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD, AND A SHARP CHASTISEMENT ENDED THE SCENE AS FAR AS OUTWARD APPEARANCE WAS CONCERNED; BUT THAT BATTLE LEFT AN IMPRESSION ON THE TENDER MIND THAT WOULD NOT BE EASILY EFFACED. THIS MOTHER ACTED UNWISELY. SHE DID NOT REASON FROM CAUSE TO EFFECT. HER HARSH, INJUDICIOUS ACTION STIRRED THE WORST PASSIONS IN THE HEART OF HER CHILD, AND ON EVERY SIMILAR OCCASION THESE PASSIONS WOULD BE AROUSED AND STRENGTHENED.”

WHITE, 1954

Sometimes parents devote too much time finding fault in their children for everything they do. Listen to these words:

“YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BRING A GLOOMY CLOUD OVER THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR CHILDREN BY FAULTFINDING OR SEVERE CENSURE FOR TRIFLING MISTAKES. ACTUAL WRONG SHOULD BE MADE TO APPEAR JUST AS SINFUL AS IT IS, AND A FIRM, DECIDED COURSE SHOULD BE PURSUED TO PREVENT ITS RECURRENCE; YET CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE LEFT IN A HOPELESS STATE OF MIND, BUT WITH A DEGREE OF COURAGE THAT THEY CAN IMPROVE AND GAIN YOUR CONFIDENCE AND APPROVAL. CHILDREN MAY WISH TO DO RIGHT, THEY MAY PURPOSE IN THEIR HEARTS TO BE OBEDIENT; BUT THEY NEED HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT.”

WHITE, 1954, P. 279

I love those words at the end: “Children may wish to do right, they may purpose in their hearts to be obedient; but they need help and encouragement.”

We encourage you to spend time reading the 48th chapter of that book where Ellen White tells us as parents not to be too harsh in the way we discipline our children, not to continually censure our children, not to be arbitrary with our course of action, and much more.

Conclusion

There are many more directives in the Bible to teach us how we should relate to one another as parents and children.

Today we only looked at four.

To children, the Bible says: “Honor your father and your mother,” and “obey your parents.”

To parents, the Bible says: “Train your children,” and “Don’t exasperate them.”

God desires that we may have good, healthy, positive relationships with our children. He wants us to reflect the relationship we have with Him.

[YOU CAN USE A STORY OF YOUR OWN OR THE FOLLOWING ONE TO CONCLUDE THIS SERMON]

A story is told of a man who came home from work late, tired and irritated, to find his 5-year old son waiting for him at the door. Their conversation went like this:

SON: “Daddy, may I ask you a question?”

DAD: “Yeah sure, what is it?” replied the man.

SON: “Daddy, how much do you make an hour?”

DAD: “That’s none of your business. Why do you ask such a thing?” the man said angrily.

SON: “I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?”

DAD: “If you must know, I make 30 dollars an hour.”

SON: “Oh,” the little boy replied, with his head down.

SON: “Daddy, may I please borrow a dollar?”

The father was furious and with anger in his voice he told his boy, “If the only reason you asked that is so you can borrow some money to buy a silly toy or some other nonsense, then you march yourself straight to your room right this moment.”

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door.

After the man had calmed down he started to think. Maybe there was something his little boy really needed to buy with that dollar. . . and he really didn't ask for money very often.

The man went to the door of his little boy's room and opened the door.

"Are you asleep, son?" He asked.

"No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy. "I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier" said the man. Here's the dollar you asked for."

The little boy sat straight up, smiling.

"Oh, thank you daddy!" He yelled.

Then, reaching under his pillow he pulled out some crumpled up bills.

When the father saw that the boy already had money he started to get angry again.

The little boy slowly counted out his money, and then looked up at his father.

"Why do you want more money if you already have some?" the father grumbled."

"Because I didn't have enough, but now I do," the little boy replied.

"Daddy, I have 30 dollars now. . . Can I buy an hour of your time? Please come home early tomorrow. I would like to have dinner with you."

The father was crushed.

He put his arms around his little son, and he begged for his forgiveness.³

Parents, love your children, train your children, and don't irritate your children.

Children of any and all ages, love your parents, honor your parents, and obey your parents.

And may your relationship be always one of mutual respect, mutual admiration, and mutual learning.

Amen.

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Sex, Drugs, and Alcohol: What Adventist College Students Say About the Role of Parents and Religion

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AND KATHRYN CONOPIO

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The college years often involve experimentation with alcohol and other drugs that can start in the adolescent years and extend during the college years (Misch, 2010). Such behaviors are influenced by decreased parental supervision along with increased interaction with a larger number and variety of peers (Misch, 2010). Three-fourths (75.6%) of U.S. college-age youth have consumed alcohol in the past year, with 57.9% who admit to being drunk over that same time period, one-third meeting the criteria for binge drinking in the previous month (Johnston et al., 2014). Many college students believe heavy drinking is a normal part of their college experience (Luquis, Garcia, & Ashford, 2003). While alcohol is the most commonly used substance, it is not the only substance being used on campuses. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug on college campuses in the U.S., with about one-third (35.5%) of college students reporting marijuana use in the last year (Johnston et al., 2014).

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A large majority of those who are college age in the United States are sexually active; approximately 65% had sex in the last 12 months (American College Health Association, 2011). There are a number of problems associated with various forms of sexual activity, these include multiple sex partners and unprotected sexual activity that can lead to transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies (Centers for Disease Control, 2009).

Research has looked at a number of variables that may influence sexual behavior. Religiosity does not appear to substantially reduce sexual activity; 80% of 18-29 year old unmarried evangelical Christians participate in sexual activity (Albert, 2009). This rate is similar to unmarried adults of the same age at about 88% in their lifetime (Albert, 2009). The use of alcohol and other drugs has been found to increase sexual risk taking among college students (Klein, Geaghan, & MacDonald, 2007).

Research affirms that parents influence their children's' drugs, sex, and alcohol behavior in a variety of ways. Close parental monitoring through the adolescent years has been associated with less alcohol and drug use which then indirectly curbs high-risk drinking in the college years (Arria et al., 2008). During the college years, the family makeup and certain characteristics of the students' family during the adolescent years influence later beliefs and behaviors.

Davidson and colleagues (2008) found that intact families, where spouses have remained together and are affectionate towards each other, had a stronger impact on sexual risk behaviors than religiosity.

Andrews University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution located in Michigan, USA, conducts a youth health risk and protective factors survey about every five years since 1990. Researchers report that the results from the latest survey conducted in 2012 are similar to the last few surveys conducted in 2005 and 1999. Results showed much lower participation in drug and alcohol use and premarital sex than the general college population (Helm et al., 2009; Hopkins et al., 2004; Helm et al., 2009; Baltazar, VanderWaal, & McBride, 2012). Data analysis has shown that such variables as religious belief and participation in religious activities close family bonds, and relationships with other adults accounts for lower rates of drug and alcohol use and premarital sex.

Data analysis from the 2012 study show there are particular areas where religion and parents have the biggest impact on alcohol, the most commonly consumed substance on campus. The strongest religion variable was to believe that ‘God wants me to take care of my body by avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and drugs’; in other words, believing that ‘my body is the temple of God’ appears to be a safeguard against alcohol use. Those who strongly agreed with this question were 61% less likely to consume alcohol in the last week. The strongest parenting variable was to believe you can ‘talk to your mother about sensitive issues like drugs, sex, and alcohol’, which resulted in being 30% less likely to consume alcohol in the last week.

For sexual behavior, some of the same variables had similar relationships, with some differences between men and women. Females who are comfortable talking to their mothers about drugs, sex, and alcohol, attend church regularly, read their Bible frequently, or believe God wants them to take care of their bodies are significantly less likely to have multiple sexual partners in their lifetimes. For males, frequency of attending church, reading the Bible, or knowing he can turn to God because he enjoys spending time with Him resulted in being significantly less likely to have multiple sexual partners in a lifetime.

While this information is useful and encouraging, it is important that we tell the rest of the story; hearing from the young people themselves about what they think of drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior with a particular emphasis on the role religion and parents play. Focus group research was conducted during winter of 2013 to better understand the results of the survey.

Andrews University students’ leaders recruited students from psychology, sociology, and family studies classes to participate in one of six focus groups. All participants were undergraduate students of Andrews University. To participate in the study they had to be between the ages of 18-25 and unmarried. Students were asked a list of semi-structured, open-ended questions that explored the reasons why students engaged in specific health risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, and sexual behavior. There were a total of 53 participants with 57% females and 43% males. Ethnic composition was 43% White, 25% Black, 15% Latino/a, 11% Asian, and 6% Asian/White.

The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed and common themes were identified and processed. The most common identified themes will be reported here, in order of frequency. A few quotes from the participants have been included for clarification purposes.

When students were asked what they think of alcohol and drug use they reported:

- It is something done at parties or social occasions.
- It is considered a normal part of the college experience.
- Use varies, with some students totally abstaining to others using substances regularly.
- Many of the students reported that they believe that alcohol and drug use is wrong. “I think because around here, it’s taboo.”

When students were asked what influences substance use among college students they reported:

- It is a way of coping with stress, helping them sleep, and a way to escape their problems. “It relieves stress.”
- They reported it is easy to find friends who use or don’t use substance. They denied there was

peer pressure, but they said when students do use substances they are usually with their peers at social occasions.

- There is a certain amount of curiosity in relation to trying substances and they think it is a way to have fun. “You’re tired of being calm and doing things people tell you, and you want to be a bit different and do something bad.”

When group members reflected on why students may binge drink (defined as 5+ drinks in one sitting) they responded:

- It may be accidental because they may not have been aware of how many drinks they have consumed already.
- The person may have an addiction to alcohol.
- It could be a way to escape their problems and numb emotional pain.

When asked what role they felt religion played the most common themes identified were:

- Religion sets moral standards that influence behavior. “I think religion plays a role in that it tempers most religious people from going into drinking or binge drinking.”
- They believe the body is the temple of the Lord so shouldn’t consume harmful substances. “That saying about your body is a temple of God.”
- Religious influence varies depending if the young person has internalized the values that have been taught to them.

The roles parents play include:

- Parents who model not using substances are a good influence on their children. Parents that use substances can model what not to do, especially if the child perceives that their parent’s substance use has been detrimental to them.
- Group members felt parents shouldn’t be too strict or lenient. They felt if parents are too strict then the child might want to rebel, but if they are too permissive, their children may think their parents don’t care if they use substances. When parents implement more authoritative parenting where there is more interaction between the parent and the child regarding rules this also aids in more open communication. “I think it comes down to, when parents give good reasons why they shouldn’t be doing it, not just enforcing a bunch of rules that don’t have any substance

or background to them, so actually having a rationale for the rules, or the things that parents try to implement to their kids.”

- A child’s relationship with their parent was also viewed as important. If you have a close relationship with your parent then you don’t want to disappoint them by doing something you know they don’t want you to do.

There was more variety in the responses to the participants’ perception of sexual behaviors among Adventist college students.

- Sex is considered a taboo subject on campus.
- There is great variation in beliefs about sexual behaviors, from those who will not even kiss before their wedding to those who think casual sex is perfectly fine.
- Students believe there is not enough information regarding foreplay standards. At what point is it going too far?
- There is a double standard where it is more acceptable for males to have sex than females, which showed gender bias since both genders are equally involved.
- Females often feel pressured to have sex in order to keep their boyfriend.
- Group members generally believe that sex is meant for marriage- “That you [should] wait until marriage.”
- Students have difficulties dealing with sexual urges. “Even though they know that it is not right, maybe, they’ve convinced themselves differently.”
- There are some who struggle with masturbation and pornography.
- They are aware that sex can hurt their relationships and their mental health.

Participants identified factors that influenced their perceptions of sex:

- Peers who encourage them to have sex. “I mean, you listen to your peers right? And if they have something to say about it, you’ll listen to it.”
- Media and music that normalizes sex.
- If the couple has been together for a while there is more pressure to have sex.

There are specific ways religion has an influence on sexual behaviors:

- Religious values teach that sex is for marriage. “Cause since I’m a religious person, I understand why God wants you to wait until you are married.”

- If you have religious faith it gives you strength to resist sexual urges that you know are meant for the marriage relationship.
- Participants felt the Bible was not very clear in regards to premarital sex. They don't feel there is a verse that explicitly says, 'Thou shalt not have premarital sex.' The students reported there are plenty of stories where Bible heroes had premarital sex so this sends a mixed message.

Parents play a similar role in influencing sexual behavior as they do in substance use behavior.

- If you have a close relationship with your parents you are not going to want to disappoint them, particularly if you know they want you to wait to have sex until you are married. "There's obviously correlations between the relationship with your parents, and actually with waiting."
- If parents waited until they got married to have sex, it sets a standard and sends a message to their children that if their parents were able to wait, then they can wait.
- It helps if parents send very clear messages regarding their standards regarding sexual behavior. "If your parents don't talk to you about it at all, and just kinda get educated by your peers, almost guarantee that's gonna be worse indication than if your parents discussed it with you."

In conclusion, there are many factors that influence whether young people will use substances or have premarital sex. Our research shows that young people struggle with urges to use substances and have sex and need to learn healthier ways of coping and having fun. The biggest sexual struggles are with masturbation and pornography; how to manage a relationship that progresses to where sexual urges seem overwhelming, and when there is pressure for the female to give in to her boyfriend's desire to have sex or lose the relationship.

Young people believe the Bible sets standards regarding their behavior. The most powerful Biblical message against substance use is believing the body is the temple of the Lord, as shown in the survey and follow-up focus groups. This shows the power of the health message among Adventist youth. Sexual involvement is more complicated. Although the message from the church is that sex should wait for

marriage is clear to them, they feel the Bible isn't explicit on this issue. This means that parents and mentors need to reinforce this message through clear communication and modeling.

Relationships with peers, parents, and God make a difference in the behavior choices of youth. If a young person spends time with peers who don't use substances and are planning to wait until they get married to have sex, they are less likely to engage in these behaviors. In addition, if the youth has a close relationship with parents who clearly state their standards regarding substance use and premarital sex, they are less likely to practice these behaviors. Finally, when the young person has a close relationship with God, they are more likely to care about the religious standards such as, the body is God's temple and sex is for marriage.

Recommendations for family ministry leaders:

- Maintain clear standards while recognizing that youth make mistakes.
- Reinforce the life-affirming value of SDA health principles.
- Encourage a personal relationship with Christ.
- Focus on prevention and minimizing the impact of risky choices.
- Practice love and acceptance for those who struggle in these areas.
- Teach parents the importance of:
 - Nurturing close relationships through family dinners, special outings, and establishing traditions.
 - Early, clear, and repeated communication regarding substance use and premarital sex.
 - Positive parenting where the child has input and understanding of established rules.
 - Modeling the behavior you want in your children.
 - Monitoring media and peer relationships to make sure they are reinforcing the messages you are teaching.

Acknowledgements:

Funding for the focus groups came from Andrews University Faculty Research Grant and the General Conference Office of Archives Statistics and Research.

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REVIVAL & REFORMATION

BUILDING FAMILY MEMORIES

— ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER —



The Marshmallow Test

PAMELA CONSUEGRA

A psychological experiment known as “The Marshmallow Test” (University of Pennsylvania, 2013) has captured the public’s imagination as a marker of self-control and even as a predictor of future success in children. This was a test that measured self-control in children as well as their ability to practice delayed gratification.

in relationships—even decades after they took the test. They were, in short, better at life. In short, the marshmallow test changed the way educators and psychologists thought about success: The lesson learned was that it’s not just intelligence that matters, but self-control, patience and being able to tame one’s impulses through delayed gratification.

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In the classic marshmallow test, researchers gave children a choice between one or two marshmallows. After the children enthusiastically choose two, the experimenter says that they need to leave the room for “a little while.” The children are also told that, if they can hold off eating the one marshmallow that is placed in front of them until the researcher returns, they can have the two marshmallows they prefer. With the children left alone in the room, hidden cameras tracked how long they were able to, or if, they were able to resist the temptation. Most of the children tested tried to wait but ended up caving in within a few minutes.

The kids’ responses seem illogical to us as adults. After all, if you have decided to wait in the first place, why wouldn’t you wait the whole way through in order to get a bigger reward? Delayed gratification! It’s something that we all struggle with from time to time. But, let’s be honest. Even as adults, when we want it, we want it now!

Tracking the kids over time, researchers concluded that the ability to hold out in this seemingly trivial exercise had real and profound consequences. As they matured and became adults, the kids who had shown the ability to wait got better grades, were healthier, enjoyed greater professional success, and proved better at staying

The question that this raises is truly one for us, as parents, as we teach Christian stewardship principles to our children. Teaching is best achieved by modeling the same behavior that we want our children to emulate. Are we using all of our resources (time, talents, and treasures) for God’s glory? Is it a common practice in our homes to lay before God all of our wants and needs? Do our children see us, as parents, satisfying all of our heart’s desires, or, do they see us kneeling before God asking Him to help us get our priorities in line with His will for our lives?

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Consider this important counsel, “Teach your children from the cradle to practice self-denial and self-control. Bring them up to have

sound constitutions and good morals. Impress upon their tender minds the truth that God does not design that we shall live for present gratification merely, but for our ultimate good. These lessons will be as seed sown in fertile soil, and they will bear fruit that will make your hearts glad” (White, 1954, pp 113). Those are powerful words, written many years ago, that still ring true today. The lessons that we teach our children from the cradle will bear fruit throughout their entire lifetime, and indeed, into eternity.

If, as indicated by research and divine counsel, delayed gratification or self control influences so many aspects of our children’s future, how can we, as parents teach this important life skill to our children?

1. Be a Positive Christian Role Model: This is the most important way to teach self control and delayed gratification. How do we handle our own money? Do we have a budget? A savings account? Do our children witness us saving to purchase what we plan to acquire? Do they hear us praying for wisdom regarding our financial decisions? After all, this really is an issue of practicing Christian stewardship principles.

2. Teach Waiting: Many parents have their child save only a portion of the money needed to purchase a “want.” They then take the rest of the needed money out of their own wallets to “make up the difference.” Instead, if that same child would have been required to save up all the money for the desired object, you might be amazed at how many times they would decide not to get it as soon as they have the money.

3. Teach the Value of a Penny: Look for opportunities to reinforce the point that by spending money on seemingly small things (ice cream, soda, arcade games) for immediate gratification, they are not in a position to buy something significant they really want. The small purchase might have only seemed like pennies at the time, but those pennies add up.

4. Teach Consequences: When they buy something, make a point to ask them a week (for smaller children) or a month later if they think it was a smart choice. Was it worth their money? What if you placed that item or items on the table in front of the child along with the cash that equaled the purchase price? Which would they pick today? You may be surprised to see how many children admit that they made a poor decision and would rather have the money in their pockets.

5. Teach Saving: Set up a savings account for them. Sit down and go over the account with them so that they can see the progress they are making month after month and year after year. This is an opportunity to teach valuable lessons about compound interest and seeing how saving is built up over time.

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The Most Important Thing You Need To Know About Parenting

DONNA HABENICHT

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The evening meal was the most important one of the day in Maria and Jorge's home, the only time they ate together as a family. Nothing was allowed to interfere with this cherished family time - no newspapers, no books, no TV, no iPads, no computers, no cell phones and the landline automatically went to the answering machine. Their kids, from four-year-old Yomarie to thirteen-year-old Pedro, eagerly anticipated this special time with their father. They knew he was very busy ministering to the people in the church and the community, but at this special time of the day, Dad was theirs - no interruptions allowed.

Sometimes Dad even got home a little early and they could play a quick game of catch-the-ball or look at an interesting new web site before eating. Occasionally a serious emergency came up and Dad didn't make it home for the evening meal, but the kids understood. Their father - the minister - must respond to a real emergency. Sometimes he was out of town on important business.

After mealtime, Jorge and Maria worshiped God as a family before going about their evening activities. Jorge generally visited church families, studied the Bible with interested families or attended committee meetings while

Maria helped the kids with their homework assignments and tucked the younger ones into bed. Jorge tried to get home by 9:30 p.m., in time to have a quiet conversation with one of the older kids and with Maria after the kids were in bed.

Things were quite different in Elena and Eduardo's home. Elena served a delicious evening meal, but she and the kids generally ate alone. Usually Eduardo thought he was too busy to come home to eat, so most evenings he grabbed some fast food and continued working on his sermon, helping a needy member of the congregation, or attending a committee until long after the children had gone to sleep. When he did make it home for the evening meal, he answered the cell phone repeatedly and often ate hurriedly, running out the door to an "emergency." Rarely was there time to play ball with the kids or hear about their day and generally Elena had worship with the kids without him. Eduardo's kids barely knew him.

Elena yearned for support with child rearing, but Eduardo thought he was too busy to be involved. Most of the time she had to deal with school assignments, misbehavior, worship with the kids, decisions about everyday issues, friends, sports, the Sabbath School Bible study guide, and much more. The list seemed endless. Sometimes Eduardo would get involved if there were a serious discipline problem. He was very strict, not inclined to listen to the child's point

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of view, and favored severe punishment.

Fast-forward fifteen years. What are the children from these two pastoral families doing? Do they love the Lord and are they serving Him? Or have they wandered away from God and want nothing to do with the church?

The best predictor of the parenting outcome of these two families is their parenting behavior, generally called parenting style. Hundreds of studies, beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 21st century, have explored the relationship between different parenting behaviors and many different outcomes in the lives of children.^{1,2}

Parenting style - the big picture of child rearing - is described by two main aspects of the parent-child relationship: Support (responsiveness to the child's needs) and control (demandingness, teaching, and discipline). The way parents support and control their children affects the atmosphere of the home and the emotional tone of family interaction, which influences everything else that happens in the family.

Support

On the diagram of the parenting styles the vertical line represents support which can range from very strong support at the upper end to an almost total lack at the other extreme (see Figure 1).

Supportive Parenting

Supportive parents are child-centered and responsive to their children's needs. They show much love, kindness, and tenderness to their children, hug and cuddle together, say "I love you" frequently, and use their child's love language often. They also notice when their child has had a difficult day and needs an extra dose of love by stopping what they're doing to "tune in" and listen. These parents eat, play, work, and pray with their children every day.

In a supportive home parents and children talk with each other a lot. Both know how the other feels, and the children understand the reasons for the family's standards. Parents respect and listen to their child's viewpoint

and show patience with childish mistakes and inconsistencies. They are tactful, sympathetic, understanding, and merciful with their children. An atmosphere of respect for each family member pervades the home. Independence and individuality are encouraged. Supportive parents are messengers of God's love to all their children.

Nonsupportive Parenting

Nonsupportive parents are generally centered on their own needs. Adult-centered parents give little consideration to the needs of the children - daily survival or parental power are what matter. The kids are rarely allowed to express an opinion because the parents are afraid of losing control or don't make time to listen. The parents don't show much sympathy and can be unpleasant, cold, and harsh with their children. They aren't very interested or involved in their kids' lives. Put-downs are common. Independence and individuality are taboo.

Emotional Climate of the Home

The support dimension of the parenting style and how the parents get along with each other create the emotional climate of the home, either a general atmosphere of warmth and caring or one of coldness and hostility. The emotional climate colors everything that happens in the home, giving family life an aura of joy and happiness or repression and sadness. It plays a significant role in whether children will accept or reject the religion and values of their parents.

Control

Control describes who's in charge of the family - the parents or the children. Control can vary from demanding, directive, high in control parenting to undemanding, low in control permissive parenting (see figure 1). Control also plays a role in acceptance or rejection of parental religion and values.

High Control Parenting

Directive, demanding parents establish limits for their children's behavior, explain the limits clearly, and answer any questions the kids may have. Then they consistently enforce these limits. They teach their kids to reason

and make age-appropriate decisions, and the kids get plenty of practice in decision-making. While these parents are firm and teach clear values to their family, they're reasonable and don't expect their kids to be perfect, even if they are the pastor's kids!

Self-control cuts both ways - parents must also be self-controlled. If they can't maintain their cool and calmly deal with the situation, they simply say, "We'll deal with this later." Then exit to pray for calmness and wisdom.

Who's in charge of the family? The parents.

Low Control Parenting

Indulgent, undemanding parents don't think kids need limits and guidance. "The kids need to express themselves" is a favorite line. Generally any behavior is OK. The limits they do try to establish are usually inconsistently enforced. The household has few rules and generally doesn't function on a schedule. Bedtime and mealtime are whenever the children want them. The parents make only weak or unpredictable attempts to teach the kids self-control, decision-making, or planning skills.

Who's in charge of the family? The kids.

Parenting Styles

The intersecting support and control dimensions identify four quadrants which define the four parenting styles: Authoritative-Communicative, Authoritarian, Permissive-Indulgent, and Indifferent-Neglectful. Each style is described by the quality and amount of support and control in the parent-child relationship. Let's begin with the best.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative-communicative parents are seeking to follow God's model for parenting: Unconditional love and grace, clear guidelines for moral values and behavior, disciplinary action when needed.³

Authoritative-communicative parents have a warm relationship with their children and are

considerate and attentive to their needs. Parents are firm, patient, loving, and reasonable. They teach their children to reason and make decisions.

The rights of both parents and children are respected. John, the pastor of a multi-church district, explained clearly to his children why the members of all his churches want to see his family at their church. It's important for the kids to sometimes go with him to each church. Most of the time they can stay at "their church" because the kids need to feel they belong and want to be with their friends.

The pastoral parents set clear standards and expect mature behavior. The limits are consistently enforced, so children know where the boundaries are. When punishment is needed, it is reasonable and well understood by their child. They don't expect cookie-cutter kids, after somebody's model of the "perfect pastor's kid". The children have choices, and independence and individuality are encouraged.

Authoritative-communicative parents are interested and involved in their children's lives. They know their kids' whereabouts, activities, and associates when away from home and they keep up with what is happening at school. Parents and children converse daily. The children know that their parents will listen, consider, and value their opinions.

The kids are securely bonded to their parents. Their moral development is strong and firm. They are confident, friendly, happy and cooperative, and enjoy personal self-respect and self-esteem. Usually they do well academically and are achievement-oriented and successful. Responsible and independent, they often show leadership skills.

Usually they choose to embrace the values and the religion of the pastoral family they grew up in. A strong, reasonable conscience enables them to generally have the strength to resist peer pressure and do what they know is right. Their God is the perfect blend of mercy and justice, a God who continually loves them and draws them closer to Himself.³

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parents are adult-centered, power-assertive, demanding and controlling, as well as rejecting, unresponsive, and non-communicative. They tend to rely too much on force and physical punishment. Communication between parents and children is usually one way - parents to children in stern commands the children are expected to obey without questioning. Parents rarely explain the reasons for their commands or allow their children to make decisions for themselves. They don't teach decision-making skills. There's very little loving support of the children.

Unfortunately, the authoritarian style is quite common among conservative religious families who justify their own actions by hiding behind a misconception of God's authority. It's easy for the pastoral family to unintentionally fall into this way of parenting. After all, isn't the minister the "voice of God" for the parishioners? It's quicker to command than to explain, teach, and dialog with the kids. In a too busy life, it's easy to become self-centered and take out one's frustrations on the family.

The children of authoritarian parents usually react in one of two ways: They either rebel against the values of their parents and get out of the home as soon as possible, or they become weak-willed, indecisive individuals incapable of dealing with difficult moral decisions. They don't have a strong conscience and are apt to embrace the negative values around them, or they may try to be "perfect," hoping to earn God's favor through their good works. Their God focuses on justice. Mercy and grace are not part of the picture.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive-indulgent parents have a warm relationship with their children and are very interested in their activities, but they are overly responsive to their children's needs. They are their children's friends, not their parents, so the kids develop their own values without parental guidance. Because the kids usually can do what they want, when they want, they become impulsive and egocentric.

They've never learned self-control, so moral and conscience development are weak. They have difficulty facing problems and working through tough situations. They prefer to do their "own thing." Their God is an accepting, loving God who looks the other way when humans misbehave. Sin isn't a major problem in the universe.

Indifferent-Neglectful Parenting

Indifferent-neglectful parents make few attempts to guide their children and basically ignore them. They're not committed to child rearing and have little interest in their child's needs. They may be physically abusive to their children and may not provide for their physical needs. Other parents may provide well for the physical needs of their children, but are too busy or too disinterested to be involved emotionally with their children or guide them.

Busy families with two professional careers can easily fall into this style. Often their children are given excessive freedom and unsupervised time too soon (premature autonomy). Recent research shows that remaining connected with families, especially father-youth connectedness, through middle school reduces substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, delinquency, and other problem behaviors during adolescence.⁴

The children of indifferent-neglectful parents are more likely to accept the negative values of society because their moral and spiritual development is weak. They tend to be delinquent and often have deep emotional problems related to the neglect they have experienced. Their God is a distant ruler of the universe who doesn't really care what happens on earth.

Successful Parenting

What is the secret to successful parenting? **Demonstrate the maximum amount of love with the right balance between independence and control.** Authoritative-communicative parenting is the model most resembling God's parenting style and is the most successful, according to decades of research.

Does authoritative parenting yield similar results in different cultures? The positive effects of authoritative, directive parenting are strong for every cultural group studied. Responsiveness or emotional closeness have cultural specific components. Children understand how their culture expresses closeness between parent and child. “Regardless of how specific cultural groups define and express responsiveness, the fundamental premise of the authoritative model that children need to feel loved, respected, and firmly guided while they are maturing into adults seems to be true for all children.”⁵

The parenting style used by their parents tends to influence people throughout life. Remembering their parents as authoritative is associated with a positive adjustment even with middle-aged and older adults.⁶

Parenting is learned behavior - we tend to parent like we were parented. The good news is that, with God’s help, parenting style can be changed. Many families I know are living proof that change is possible. The results of authoritative-communicative parenting are so superior to any other style that it is worth the effort. The future of your children and your grandchildren is at stake.

Notes

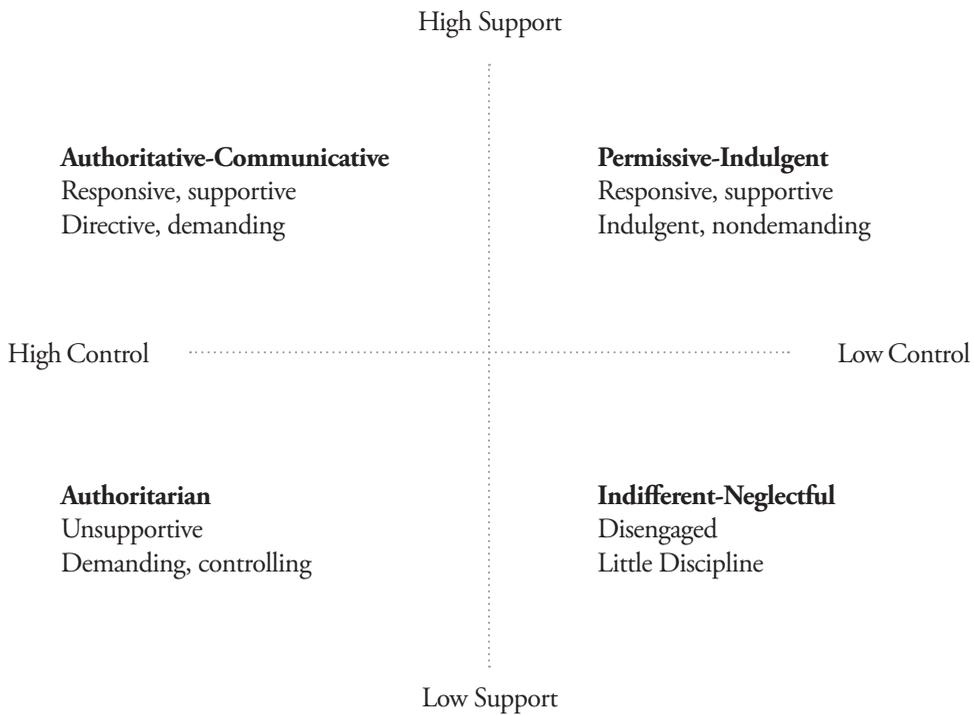
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- ² From antiquity God has described Himself as a parent, most often as a Father, but sometimes as a Mother. God’s “parenting style,” as described in Scripture, could be the model for the best of the parenting styles described in the contemporary research. Long before the parenting research began, Ellen White described parenting styles, using different names, but identifying the same parenting behaviors and their results in children’s character and spirituality. For starters, see Genesis 18:19; Psalm 103; Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:1, 13:24, 15:1, 15:5, 19:18,22:6, 22:15, and 29:15,17; Isaiah 49:13, 54:13 and 66:12,13; Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20- 21; Hebrews 12:5-11; *The Adventist Home*, chapter 52 & p. 439:4; *Child Guidance*, chapters 41-49; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 155:2; Education, pp. 283, 287-297; *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 384:2, 391-392; *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 130-134; *Desire of Ages*, chapter 56; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 390-405; vol. 3, pp. 131-135, 531-532; vol. 4, pp. 362-363.
- ³ Holly Catherton Allen, et al (2012). Sungwon Kim concludes, from her meta-analysis of research on parenting styles from the last several decades, that “the authoritative parenting style, one that combines a supportive, responsive approach with a directive, even demanding approach, is associated more frequently with healthy spiritual development than are other parenting styles. This style exhibits both loving support and strong boundaries and discipline for children.” How Parents Nurture the Spiritual Development of their Children: Insights from Recent Qualitative Research in Kevin E. Lawson (Ed.), *Understanding Children’s Spirituality: Theology, Research, and Practice*, p. 204. Cascade Books.
- ⁴ G. M. Fosco, E. A. Stormshack, T. J. Dishion and C. E. Winter (2012). Family relationships and parental monitoring during middle school as predictors of early adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 41, 202-213.
- ⁵ Robert E. Larzelere, Amanda Sheffield Morris and Amanda W. Harrist, Editors (2013). *Authoritative Parenting: Synthesizing Nurture and Discipline for Optimal Child Development*, 130. American Psychological Association. Chapter 5 reviews the research on parenting styles in different cultures.
- ⁶ Carol A Sigelman and Elizabeth A. Rider (2012). *Life-Span Human Development*, 7th edition, p. 491. Wadsworth.

PARENTING STYLES

Figure 1



Adapted from Maccoby & Martin (1983), Parke & Buriel (1998, 2006), Allen et al (2012), and Larzelere et al (2013).

Guiding Principles For Sabbath Observance

MAY-ELLEN COLON

The principles below are based on God's character, and they provide a foundation for our Sabbath rules/practices. God will help us to reflect and live His character as we translate these principles into actions. What better day to reflect on His nature than on Sabbath—the day above all days!

Principle 2: Resting

Sabbath keeping means resting from work, life's burdens, and secular concerns and distractions—one of the purposes for which God gave us the gift of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:28-30; 20:9-10; 23:12; 34:21; Nehemiah 13:15-22; Jeremiah 17:27; Luke 23:54-56).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 2 is based:

God is the epitome of rest. "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Psalm 62:1, NIV). Through Jesus, God offers rest to all who come to Him (see Matthew 11:28). Jesus Himself rested on Sabbath after He worked all week creating the earth (see Genesis 2:1).

Principle 3: Renewing

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in a manner that renews us physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially since our loving Creator provided the Sabbath vacation for our welfare (Mark 2:27). This produces a sense of well-being that lowers stress (Matthew 11:29-30).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 3 is based:

God is a restorer of our being—"He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:3, NIV) He exudes renewal, (see Psalm 103:5; Matthew 11:29-30; Isaiah 40:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

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Principle 1: Preparing

Sabbath keeping means preparing for this special day so we can enjoy its benefits (see Hebrews 4:11; Exodus 16:28-30; Luke 23:54-56).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 1 is based:

God is a preparer. He prepared the beautiful Garden of Eden and the plan of salvation before He created humankind and the Sabbath (see Genesis 1-2; Proverbs 8:27-31; 1 Peter 1:20); He has prepared an inheritance for the redeemed, the kingdom prepared since creation (see Matthew 25:34); He has prepared a place for us—a custom-made home in heaven (see John 14:1-3); He will prepare the Holy City as a bride adorned for her husband (see Revelation 21:2).

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Principle 4: Healing

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in such a way as to foster healing, relief, release, liberation, and refreshment. Any action that hurts oneself or others is Sabbath-breaking. (Isaiah 58; Matthew 12:9-15; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; and John 9).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 4 is based:

God is a healer (see Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:3; 147:3; Matthew 4:23; Acts 10:38). He has “healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2, NKJV). God the Son announced that His mission is to restore sight to the blind and to release the oppressed (see Isaiah 61; Luke 4:18, 19).

Principle 5: Celebrating

Sabbath keeping means celebrating the creation, or birthday, of the world (see Genesis 2:1-3), and of our redemption (see Deuteronomy 5:15). So its atmosphere should be one of celebration, joy, and delight (see Psalm 92; Isaiah 58:13).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 5 is based:

God celebrates and rejoices. He celebrated creation (see Genesis 2:1-3; Proverbs 8:27-31). He rejoices when people come to him (see Deuteronomy 30:9; Isaiah 62:5; Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 15). He will celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-9). He is a source of joy (see Psalm 43:4). Speaking of God, David said, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11, NKJV). “ ‘You will find your joy in the LORD’ ” (Isaiah 58:14, NIV).

Principle 6: Sanctifying

Sabbath-keeping means keeping the Sabbath day holy—setting it apart for a special focus on God, His Word, and His agenda, to seek intimacy with Him, embrace Him wholly, and nurture a love relationship with Him that makes us holy.

(see Exodus 20:8; 31:13; Isaiah 58:13; Ezekiel 20:12). This nurtures our “vertical” relationship—our relationship with God.

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 6 is based:

God is holy (see Leviticus 11:44; 19:2), personal and loving (see 1 John 4:8), and He seeks intimacy and special time with His family (see John 15:15; Revelation 3:20). He sanctifies, or makes holy, the Sabbath and His people (see Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:13).

Principle 7: Remembering

Sabbath keeping means remembering, reflecting, and rejoicing about the Creation of the world (see Exodus 20:11), redemption from sin (see Deuteronomy 5:15; Luke 4:16-19), and Christ's second coming and the creation of the new earth (see Isaiah 66:22, 23).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 7 is based:

God remembers and reflects on important happenings. For example, He paused to reflect on His accomplishments at creation (see Genesis 1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11). He remembers His covenants with humanity (see Genesis 9:15, 16; Leviticus 26:42, 45).

Principle 8: Worshipping

Sabbath keeping means participating in corporate, focused worship of God with our church family (see Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 56:1-8; 66:22, 23; Mark 1:21; 3:1-4; Luke 4:16; 13:10; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 14:7). This nurtures both our “vertical” and our “horizontal” relationships—those with God and with our fellow human beings.

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 8 is based:

God desires corporate worship (see Isaiah 66:22, 23). Jesus attended and led out in worship services while on earth (see Luke 4:16).

Principle 9: Basking

Sabbath keeping means enjoying, studying, experiencing, and basking in the world God made, rather than working at maintaining it (see Psalms 92:4, 5; 111:2-4; compare Romans 1:20).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 9 is based:

God is Creator, and He appreciates His creation—He considered it all “very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV). At creation, God was filled with satisfaction, rejoicing “in his whole world and delighting in mankind” (Proverbs 8:31, NIV).

Principle 10: Responding

Sabbath-keeping is a joyful human response to God's grace in obedience to His loving command to remember Him and His Sabbath gift (see John 14:15). It is not meant to be a means of earning our salvation (see Romans 3:20; Hebrews 4:9, 10). We respond to God's gift of rest by working for Him in His strength and for His glory (see Exodus 20:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Hebrews 13:20, 21).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 10 is based:

Love motivated Jesus' keeping of His Father's commandments (see John 15:10).

Principle 11: Trusting

Sabbath-keeping means trusting God to take care of what we leave undone during the hours of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:14-30; 20:10; Psalm 5:11, 12; Matthew 6:33). It means learning to depend on God rather than on ourselves.

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 11 is based:

Jesus trusted His Father no matter how much Satan tempted Him to do otherwise (see Luke 4:1-13). He demonstrated this trusting attitude as He suffered for our Salvation (see Matthew 26:39; Luke 23:46).

Principle 12: Fellowshiping

Sabbath-keeping means nurturing our relationships with family and friends (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1). In the gift of the Sabbath, God provides time for focused fellowship with the whole family—even the family animals (see Exodus 20:8-11). Sabbath and family go together (see Genesis 1:1-2:25; Leviticus 19:3). This nurtures our “horizontal” relationships—those with our fellow human beings.

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 12 is based:

The members of the Godhead are relational (see John 15:15). God's relationship with us is the foundation of our relationship with each other (see John 13:34, 35; 17:20-23). Jesus fellowshiped with others on Sabbath (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1).

Principle 13: Affirming

Sabbath-keeping means rightly representing the atmosphere of the Sabbath by a spirit of acceptance, love, and affirmation rather than a spirit of judgment and criticism (see John 7:24).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 13 is based:

God is accepting, loving, and affirming (see Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:3-10; Revelation 22:17).

Principle 14: Serving

Sabbath-keeping means serving other people in love and witnessing lovingly for God (see Isaiah 58: 7-10; Matthew 12:12; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 13:12, 16).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 14 is based:

Jesus is a Servant and Proclaimer of the Good News (see Luke 4:18-21; Philippians 2:5-11). He went about doing good (see Acts 10:38).

Principle 15: Caring

Sabbath-keeping means caring for necessary physical needs on Sabbath; no creature—animal or human—should be allowed to suffer on this day (see Exodus 23:12; Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:27).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 15 is based:

God supplies all our needs, all the time (see Exodus 16:26, 35; Joshua 5:12; Matthew 6:25-33; John 5:16, 17; Philippians 4:19), and He advocates that we care for the needs of all His creatures (Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5).

THOUGHT QUESTION:

A principle is a standard that may be applied to more than one type of situation. What rules for

Sabbath practices can you derive from the above guiding principles?

TEACH ME YOUR WAYS, O LORD,
THAT I MAY LIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR
TRUTH! GRANT ME PURITY OF HEART,
THAT I MAY HONOR YOU. WITH ALL MY
HEART I WILL PRAISE YOU, O LORD,
MY GOD. I WILL GIVE GLORY TO YOUR
NAME FOREVER, FOR YOUR LOVE FOR
ME IS VERY GREAT
Ps 86:11-13 (NLT)

Reference

Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *Right from Wrong: What You Need to Know to Help Youth Make Right Choices*. (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 1994), p. 96.

Keeping our Teens Safe from Themselves

by Alina M. Baltazar

Theme

Parents play an important role in steering their teens away from dangerous activities such as substance use and suicide.

Introduction

Parenting is the most wonderful and difficult task God has given to us. Even though teens are independent in many ways and act like they do not need us, they actually need parents during this time more than ever. It is a time when they are questioning what they have been taught by their parents, extended family, teachers and church leaders. Experimentation is a common part of the adolescent years as they form their individual identity. Even though Seventh-day Adventist beliefs teach temperance and abstinence from alcohol and substances, it still happens among our young people. What we want to do as parents is to limit that experimentation and reign in any potentially dangerous behavior that it could lead to.

The adolescent years are not only a time for experimentation, but also a time for many physical changes, social challenges of trying to “fit in” and pressure to succeed academically. Increases in hormones, accelerated physical growth, and its associated awkwardness can be an emotional challenge for some youth. Teens increasingly are drawn to their peers for approval, which can be fraught with emotional ups and downs. The high school years are also a time of increasing pressure to excel academically in order to get into the “right” college and qualify for scholarships in order to pay for increasingly expensive yet necessary college education. These multiple stressors of physical changes, social challenges, pressure to succeed, along with any other problems in their family and/or community can lead to suicidal thinking as a way to cope with the seemingly unbearable problems that can take place during these years.

With our teens pulling away from us how can we reach out to them during this potentially troubling time?

Small Group Activity

Reflect on the following scenarios: What fears do these scenarios bring out in you as parents? Are there things that you can do to decrease the chance your teenagers end up in such horrible circumstances?

- (1) Best friends since kindergarten, Jessica and Laura were inseparable. They experimented with makeup, dyeing each other's hair, and having fun. Years later they experimented with something else. On a night of clubbing and drinking, that experimentation and fun turned deadly while driving home. Jessica says, from prison, she will have to live with the fact she killed her best friend for the rest of her life (ABC news, 2006).
 - (2) Ray Brown wishes he had done more to save his bullied son Devlin. Ray knew of at least two incidents when his 13-year-old son was bullied in middle school, but he listened to his son's tearful pleas not to get involved. Devlin killed himself in his own room after a bullying incident at school at the end of a seemingly normal evening at home (Ledger-Enquirer, 2013).
 - (3) Jeff is a police officer in a dangerous town known for drugs and gang activity. He and his wife would ask their two teenage boys on a weekly basis if they used drugs, making them promise that they wouldn't, thinking he was doing everything he can to keep his boys safe. Jeff likes building computers. One he was re-building was quite dusty so he bought a three can pack of Dust Off. Dust Off is a can of compressed air often used to clean dust out of computers. When he went to go use it, soon after buying it, those three cans were empty. His kids admitted they had used it on their computers and for having fun. Jeff yelled at his boys for wasting money and then went out and bought a jumbo can. The next morning his wife went to wake up their fourteen-year-old son Kyle. She found him sitting up in his bed with his head leaning forward. He had the straw from the Dust Off can in his mouth and he was pale white. He had died sometime between midnight and 1 a.m. that night. Jeff was never aware of the dangers of "huffing", ingesting inhalants from household products (Rense, 2005).
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Summing Up

Teenagers are in a potentially dangerous time in their lives as they start to venture outside of the nest. It is a scary time for parents, and we may feel that we do not make a difference. We can make a difference! The foundation we have laid as parents when our children were young will help tremendously with this transition. Proverbs 22:6 states it well: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Have courage to face this challenging time knowing God is on your side. Keep reaching out to your teen, even when you think they want nothing to do with you.

This resource will guide you through the steps you need to take in order to decrease the chance that your adolescent will get involved in substance use and give you the tools you need in order to prevent suicide. In addition, you will be made aware of resources that are available to help you in this journey, even when you fear all hope is gone. There will be individual and group activities to help you apply what you have learned. Also, relevant handouts will be made available that you can take home to help you remember what you have learned and so you can share with others

Small Group Activity

Reflect on the three scenarios in the beginning. What may have gone wrong? Are there things the parents could have done different? What would you do to prevent these tragic outcomes? Break into groups and discuss these questions.

Substance Use Rates

Though Seventh-day Adventist youth participate in significantly less substance use, it still occurs. Here is the reality of the situation. Among the general high school student population:

- A vast majority have tried alcohol with 90% of college students binge drinking,
- Almost half of teens have used marijuana, with 25% using it in the last month,
- About a quarter have used prescription drugs not prescribed to them, and
- About 10% have used inhalants in their lifetime.

Though many of these rates have actually been decreasing in recent years, marijuana has increased slightly, mainly due to medical marijuana legalization in some states. Many of our youth have gotten the message that these substances are dangerous. Marijuana is not considered as dangerous because there is a perception that it helps sick people. We need to continue to share the message about the dangers of drugs and set a good example ourselves. Many college students still think that drinking alcohol is part of their college experience. Not only can parents teach about the dangers, but also share clear messages about our expectations regarding our teen's behavior. We will now explore how to communicate to our teens about alcohol and substance use.

Individual Activity

Allow participants 1-2 minutes to think individually about the substance use statistics, then ask for volunteers to share their answer. Are the numbers higher or lower than they thought? How do the numbers make them feel?

The Power of Communication

There are three ways communication is powerful in protecting our children. First, communication is a way to stay involved in our teen's lives and to show we care about them. Knowing that we care about them and what matters to them is very important. Research has shown that parental involvement decreases teen substance use. Second, communication is also a way to educate our teens on dangers of substance use. Third, communication is necessary to clarify what behavior we expect from our children when they are away from us with peers or at school in regards to substance use.

Even though your teen may give one-syllable answers to your prodding questions, by reaching out to them you are still showing your teen you care about their life. There are certain times that are better to communicate than others. Right after school they are probably tired and need some time to recover from the stress of the day. That is when you will most likely get one-word answers. Family meals are a great way to facilitate communication. Research has found that regular family meals decrease youth substance use by around 60%. Family meals are not the time to lecture or criticize. It is a time to show interest, care and support. If you can't make a family dinner, evening times or car rides can work as well. If your teen feels cared about they will be less likely to want to disappoint you with their behavior.

There are certain ways to communicate with your teen that work better than others. Whenever your teen verbalizes complaints about anything that is also a good time to gently prod them to find out what is troubling them. Listening is a powerful part of communicating. It will help you understand your teen and for your teen to feel understood. They live in a very different world than when you were a teen. Your child is your guide into this strange new world of 24-hour social media from an adolescent perspective. Here are some general communication tips to keep in mind:

- Stop whatever you are doing and listen whenever they talk to you.
- Try to soften strong reactions.
- If you appear angry or judgmental they will tune you out.
- You may have to agree to disagree about certain subjects.
- Listen to their point of view.

By the time your child hits their teen years your child has probably already heard about the dangers of alcohol and drugs, but now they probably actually know kids who use substances, have friends who drive or drive themselves, and they may even know where to get them. It is important to reiterate your concerns about use of alcohol and drugs. Whenever you become aware of actual stories of teens who get in trouble with substances make your teen aware of them. These stories help teens know what may actually happen, though they often think it won't happen to them. There are legal issues, including jail time and fines, in regards to substance use that your teen may not be aware of. In addition, someone could get seriously injured or killed.

When you know your teen will be out socializing with friends and there may be limited adult supervision, make it very clear what your expectations are regarding their behavior. This is especially important when they go away to college. Consider establishing a written or verbal contract, especially in their use of the car. You can promise to pick them up, at any time,

if they do not feel safe driving home with someone who has been drinking or using drugs. If you become aware of risky behavior with their friends you can ground them from their friends or their use of the car.

Role Play Activity

- Pair up with someone else, one taking the role of a parent and the other a teen. Remember to actively listen to the teen's concerns. Then switch roles with your partner. Practice what you would say regarding:
 - Your concerns about the dangers of alcohol and drugs and why you don't want them to use them.
 - What behavior you expect from them regarding substance use and what will happen if they break the rules.
 - How they can resist peer pressure.
-

Parental Monitoring

Research has consistently found that parental monitoring is very important in reducing adolescent substance use. Monitoring your teen does not mean being with them every minute of the day. Monitoring involves knowing about your teen's schedule, what they are involved in and how they are doing in school. In addition, monitoring includes knowing who your teen's friends are and what reputation those friends have. Get to know your teen's friend's parents. That can help you get to know your kid's friends and their family better and the parents can help you with the monitoring. If your teen is close friends with someone using substances, then your child is more likely to use.

Even if you feel that your child and their friends are good kids, when youth are together unsupervised they are more likely to engage in risky behavior. If you are not available to supervise your teen and their friends, try to make arrangements with another parent, family member or family friend to provide supervision. Whenever your child goes to a school, church or community-sponsored event make sure there is appropriate adult supervision.

There is also a practical side to monitoring. Just like baby proofing the house when your children were young, you will need to teen proof your home from substances. Monitor use of substances like alcohol, over the counter drugs, prescription drugs, and household cleaning products. If you notice these substances in their room when you know they should not be there or you suddenly notice large amounts missing, talk to your teen about your concerns. You may have to keep these substances locked up if you are worried or as a preventative measure.

If teens know they will get caught, they are less likely to engage in problematic behavior, especially if they don't like what the punishment will be.

Discussion Question

What have you done or will you do to monitor your teen's behavior?

Religion

Involvement in religion has also been found by research to decrease teen substance use involvement. Religion teaches morals and gives us a guide on how to behave. Among Seventh-day Adventist youth, the verse found in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," is often mentioned as a reason they feel the Lord does not want them to use substances. In addition, religion can also help improve self-esteem knowing they are unconditionally loved by a loving God. The church also gives youth a caring adult community where they can find positive mentors, an outlet to help others, and activities geared towards youth to help keep them busy and out of trouble.

Unfortunately, during the teen years youth often start to question their faith. There are things you can do to help them stay on the right path. Here are some practical tips:

- Keep taking them to church.
- Encourage them to get involved in the youth group and volunteer for the church.
- Have open discussions about religion and faith.
- Let their faith grow in its own way. Be patient; let the Lord work within them.
- Have family worships, pray, and read the Bible together.
- Set a good example yourself in regards to faith.
- Encourage your teen to read their Bible on their own and to pray regularly to God about their praises and problems.

Discussion Question

What helped your religious development during the teen years? What have you or could you do to support your teen's religious development?

Summing Up

Parents do have an important role to play in protecting their teens from substance use. Communicating support, information about the dangers of substance use, and guidelines is a very important element. Monitoring your teen's behavior is just as important to their safety as when they were young. Supporting their religious involvement by setting a good example and encouraging certain positive religious behaviors are all things that parents can do to

keep their teens safe from substance use. No parents are perfect; you are bound to make mistakes. Just keep trying to show love to your teens, it makes all the difference. Do keep in mind that even if you do all of the right things, your teen may still experiment or end up in trouble. They often learn best by experience. Adjust the plan as needed and know the Lord is watching over his children. For Jesus states in Luke 12:6-7, “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Suicide

Suicide strikes fear in the hearts of many parents of teens. You hear the stories about youth killing themselves because they were bullied, couldn't handle the breakup of a relationship, or their depression overwhelmed them and they saw no way out. These fears are legitimate. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers and the second leading cause of death among college aged students in the U.S. and many developed countries. For every suicide there are 20 more suicide attempts that can eventually be completed or cause permanent damage. In fact, these rates have been increasing in recent years. There are youth who are more at risk than others (World Health Organization, 2003).

Risk Factors

Below are known risk factors for suicide:

- Family history of suicide
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Substance use, many substances lower inhibition and a teen may kill themselves while high or drunk when they normally wouldn't.
- Impulsiveness, they may not realize the long-term consequences of their actions.
- Females are more likely to attempt as a cry for help; males are more likely to succeed because they are more likely to use guns.
- Anxious attachment to parents – linked to neglect and abuse by parents
- Being sexually abused can be an emotional challenge to many youth
- Lack of supportive friends to provide encouragement during difficult times
- Overwhelming loss or stress where they feel they cannot cope
- Access to a firearm or lethal means where they can actually follow through on plans to commit suicide, especially when they are high on drugs or drunk

Bullying

There have been many stories of late where youth end their life as a result of being bullied. With youth being drawn into 24-hour social media the bullying doesn't end when the school bell rings; it can continue on through the night and grows like wildfire. How can we protect our children? Much of the negative interactions between students our children can handle and we should let them develop those interpersonal skills. When bullying gets mean and vindictive or your child is being repeatedly victimized, adults need to step in.

Schools have set up bully prevention policies. Check with your child's school to see what their policy is and make recommendations if you think those policies are lacking. If you are concerned about a situation with your teen approach your child's teacher who may be aware of what is going on, if you feel that does not lead to a satisfying outcome, or if it is serious then approach the principal. You may even need to get the police involved if the bullying is in the form of an assault. Bullies have often been bullied themselves, have underlying emotional issues, and/or have problems at home so they need intervention.

Warning Signs

Listing warning signs is a common tool for those who want to know how to prevent suicide. Remember, not all suicidal youth will show any of these signs or they may be so subtle they won't be noticed.

- Talking about suicide or death in general
- Giving hints they may not want to be around anymore
- Talking about feeling hopeless or feeling guilty about something
- Isolating themselves away from friends and family
- Writing poems, songs, or letters about loss, death, or separation
- Giving away treasured possessions
- Losing the desire to participate in favorite activities
- Having trouble concentrating or thinking clearly
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Engaging in risk-taking behaviors – they don't care if they live or die
- Losing interest in school or sports

There are many reasons why youth may have some of these symptoms. That is why communication is so important. Many of these symptoms are a sign of depression. Professional help is available if you are concerned. There are resources; you are not alone.

Communication

When you know what the risk factors are and what to watch for, you can then realize there is something that can be done about them. It is not a lost cause. If your teen has any of these risk factors it is all the more important to talk to them about suicide. Sometimes suicide can be like the elephant in the room no one wants to talk about. Sometimes parents think by talking about it will magically make it happen; nothing is farther from the truth. Talking to your teen about suicide is similar in talking to them about substance use. Here are some general tips:

- Choose the right time when they are more likely to pay attention.
- Think ahead of time about what you will say.
- Be honest with their questions, especially if there were family or friends who committed suicide. It is better for them to know the facts than to use their imagination.
- Ask for your child's response. They may not respond right away, but keep the door open.
- Listen to what they have to say. If you are open in your approach they may share more with you.

- Don't overreact or under react. You don't want to scare them off or act like you don't care.
 - Revisit the topic as needed. You can't just give them the talk once and think you are done with it. They will continue to struggle with emotions for many years throughout their teen and young adult years.
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Role Play Activity

Similar to the role-play about substance use, practice what you would say to your teen about suicide then switch roles. What circumstance might prompt you to talk to your teen about this topic?

Coping

Experts believe part of the reason suicide has increased over the last years, is the increasing lack of the ability to cope with the elevated stresses put upon our youth. We as parents try to protect our children from the stresses of life and want to give them the very best to help them thrive. Unfortunately, if children are not faced with difficulties they are less likely to develop the skills to cope with problems that will inevitably arise. Here is where parents come in. There are ways parents can help improve their teen's coping skills.

Be supportive and understanding of your teen. Showing your teen the benefits of reaching out to someone when they are discouraged will most likely motivate them to do so when they are experiencing personal problems.

Encourage your teen to be physically active. Physical activity releases endorphins that lead to positive feelings. Being physically fit also helps increase self-esteem. It can be as simple as playing catch, walking the dog or going for a bike ride. Look for ways to incorporate physical activity, especially if it can be done as a family.

Encourage social activity. Isolation only makes depression worse. Even if they do not feel like going out, encourage them to do so. They will feel better going out than staying in. Offer to take your teen out with some friends to an activity you know they are more likely to enjoy.

Allow them to suffer the consequences of their own actions. Don't shield them from everything. It is better for them to get suspended now than to get arrested for a felony in the future.

Educate yourself about depression and suicide. You can then educate your teens to help them understand their feelings and how best to cope with them.

Be a good example of healthy coping yourself. Showing them how you cope with life's ups and downs can give them a guide to possibly follow.

Link them with professional help as needed and stay involved in their treatment.

The Health Message

Ellen White's health message still applies today in helping our youth get through this time in their lives. Today's researchers support the inspired messages Mrs. White received over 100 years ago, which included getting plenty of:

- Exercise
- Sleep
- Water
- A healthy diet
- Avoiding smoking, caffeine and other toxic substances
- Positive thinking helps the mind and body stay strong.

"Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right" (2003, p. 346).

Individual Activity

Have the group think about what they do to cope with life's stresses for a few minutes. Have some volunteers share with the class.

Safety

Similar to monitoring in regards to substance use, there are things you can do to improve your child's safety, especially if you are concerned about suicidal tendencies. Remember, you do not have to do this on your own. Because firearms are the most common and lethal means of suicide they should be locked up or even better yet, get them out of the house. Make sure wherever your teen goes they do not have easy access to one either. Any other substances that are potentially lethal should be locked up also.

Razor blades are commonly used to slit wrists. Those should be discarded or locked up. Many youth cut themselves as a way to cope with overwhelming feelings, not necessarily wanting to die. This inability to cope with feelings could eventually lead to a suicide attempt. If you find your teen is self-mutilating, they need professional help in order to find other ways to cope besides cutting themselves.

In general, when you are concerned about your teen you should keep an eye on them. Check the text messages on their phone, their Facebook accounts or other social media outlets, and talk to their friends and teachers. These can give you hints to what is going on. It may save a life.

You do not have to do it alone. Reach out to a mental health professional for assistance. Most health insurances provide mental health coverage. Check with your insurance carrier for preferred providers. Typically insurance approves licensed mental health counselors, licensed psychologists, or licensed clinical social workers. Make sure they have a specialty

in working with teens. Try to find one your child is able to connect with. Sometimes it takes time for a teen to open up. The counselor may want to involve the family as part of the counseling. If your teen needs medication, their counselor or medical doctor may refer them to a psychiatrist who specializes in working with children and adolescents. Medication may be necessary, especially for moderate to severe depression.

If you believe your teen is a danger to themselves or others you can have them placed in an in-patient psychiatric facility for teens, for their safety. If they have a psychiatrist, you can make arrangements with them for admission. Depending on what state you live in you can take your child directly to your local in-patient psychiatric hospital that takes teens, if you can't do that then take your teen to the local emergency room where the doctor will rule out other causes for their behavior and determine if hospitalization is necessary and where they can be placed. If your teen does not cooperate you can sign them in against their will, and if they refuse to go with you then you can call 911 in an emergency. The police and an ambulance will typically come to take your teen to the local hospital safely. Insurance typically pays for this type of hospitalization. If you do not have insurance, state aid may be available if the hospitalization has been approved by your local community mental health agency as part of the admission process.

Summary

Though these topics and their relevant statistics can be overwhelming and scary, have heart that your teen will most likely get through this time just fine. Most children thrive during their teen years and it can be an exciting time of growth and self-discovery. Someday you will look back at these times and have positive memories. This can be a difficult time for parents, but you can get through it with support from others and God. Most parents' life satisfaction goes up when their teen leaves the nest, so it does get better. Enjoy the young man or woman your teen is becoming and relish in this opportunity to have such a powerful impact.

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Resources Handout

Substance Use

National Institute on Drug Abuse <http://www.drugabuse.gov/>. This website provides update to date research and general information about substance use. There is also specific information to educate teens.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/>. This website provides links to find substance abuse treatment centers and mental health treatment as well.

Suicide

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide <http://www.sptsusa.org/>. This is a site that helps you learn more about youth suicide prevention.

Bullying

Stop Bullying Now <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>. This site is put maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It has information and resources on various topics related to bullying.

Handout 1
Communication Tips with Teens

- Wait for the right time to talk, evenings, or car rides are good, but it will vary.
- Have open and enjoyable conversations over family meals.
- Stop whatever you are doing and listen whenever they talk to you.
- Actively listen, unconditionally, don't give unsolicited advice unless necessary.
- Ask questions as appropriate to help you understand your teen.
- Try to soften strong reactions. If you appear angry or judgmental they will tune you out.
- Listen to their point of view.
- You may have to agree to disagree about certain subjects.
- Give them some space and independence as appropriate. It shows you have confidence in their abilities.

Handout 2 Suicide Risk Factors

- Family history of suicide
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Substance use. Many substances lower inhibition and a teen may kill themselves when high or drunk when they normally wouldn't.
- Impulsiveness. They may not realize the long-term consequences of their actions.
- Females are more likely to attempt as a cry for help; males are more likely to succeed because are more likely to use guns.
- Anxious attachment to parents – linked to neglect and abuse by parents
- Being sexually abused can be an emotional challenge to many youth.
- Lack of supportive friends to provide encouragement during difficult times.
- Overwhelming loss or stress where they feel they cannot cope.
- Access to a firearm or lethal means where they can actually follow through on plans to commit suicide, especially when they are high on drugs or drunk.

Suicide Warning Signs

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- Losing the desire to participate in favorite activities
- Having trouble concentrating or thinking clearly
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Engaging in risk-taking behaviors – not caring if they live or die
- Losing interest in school or sports

Handout 3

Coping Tools

- Be supportive and understanding of your teen
- Encourage your teen to be physically active
- Get plenty of sleep
- Learn relaxation/meditation skills
- Prayer
- Water
- Eat a healthy diet
- Encourage positive, rational thinking
- Encourage social activity
- Avoid smoking, caffeine and other substances to cope
- Developing a hobby can be an emotional outlet, a way to develop skills and increase self-esteem
- Support positive friendships
- Encourage their spirituality
- Be a good example of healthy coping yourself