

infuse

SPRING 2007

Features

03 **GOD'S PRECIOUS CHILDREN** *In all that parents do they must be godly examples by word and deed.*

05 **THE FOUNDATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP** *How to talk about your faith w/that perfect guy/gal.*

06 **GOD THE FATHER** *Know the one true God so that you may follow His perfect example.*

11 **NURTURING THE FUTURE LEADERS OF TOMORROW** *Create a godly home for your children.*

13 **CHICKEN SALAD** *How God's natural laws order the disorder.*

17 **COMBATING THE MEDIA'S INFLUENCE** *Practical principles for raising spiritually healthy kids.*

19 **"BUT MOM, I'M NOT READY!"** *One mother prepares to send her daughter to college.*

Highlights

04 **LEARNING FROM THE MASTER** *Raising boys and girls who will be in the Kingdom of God.*

07 **FATHER'S ODE** *Poetry by Drew DeJarnette.*

09 **HANNAH AND HER CHILDREN** *Could you make a really big sacrifice for God?*

12 **SEEING GOD THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD** *"Mommy, where did God come from?"*

15 **GOD PARENTS CHILDREN** *Pass on the Word of God as the Israelites did so it won't be forgotten.*

16 **PARENTING IN A CHANGING SOCIETY** *What God says about physically disciplining your child.*

18 **KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH** *Are defiant teens lost forever?*

INFUSE EVENTS! see page 10 for details



Parenting is a huge topic. Within the pages of this magazine we have only scratched the surface. There is no doubt in my mind that parenting today is a greater challenge than in the past. In a society that can't define right from wrong and makes decisions based on what is politically correct, parents are sadly no longer the authority figure in the lives of their children.

God has given society principles to live by. The first principle is God is the ultimate authority, "For the Lord Most High is awe-inspiring; He is a great King over all the earth" (Psalm 47:2). God created governments, parents and marriage and it is God who holds parents responsible for instructing and disciplining their children.

Christian parents must not use the values of society to dictate how they should instruct and discipline their children. Choosing Biblical truths is the best choice when deciding how to shape the lives of one's children. I admonish every parent not to conform to the anti-parent wickedness and lies of the world in exchange for God's truth, "insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents..." (Romans 1:30). When parental authority disintegrates, the family unit falls apart and ultimately society as a whole becomes dysfunctional.

Noni

Noni McVey
Editor in Chief

When reflecting on my style of parenting, I realized my focus was on developing strong character in my children. I wanted them to grow up to be kind, generous and responsible adults. The goal was to mold and shape two women who realized that while their lives mattered the world did not revolve around them. My desire for them was to live productive satisfying lives not self-centered, selfish lives. While I did not always parent perfectly, following God's standard of being an authoritative parent helped to achieve the goal.

With authority, reasoning, fairness and love, God disciplines each of us. Following God's example, we should do the same with our children; create and define the rules, consistently enforce them firmly, have a zero tolerance for disrespectful behavior and realize you are not perfect.

With great care God has chosen you to take care of your children. "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just..." (Genesis 18:19). Following God's standard you will rear godly children and be greatly blessed for it.

PUBLISHED BY

The Church of God International

YOUTH MINISTER Loren M. Chamberlain

INFUSE MINISTER Mike James

EDITOR IN CHIEF Noni McVey

ISSN 1932-118X

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tyler Barnett, Jeremy A. Brown, Loren M. Chamberlain, Drew DeJarnette, Emmanuel Donkor, Dianna Hobbs, Mike James, Ruth Kerr, Jeff Reed, Rory Ries, June Rush, Anika Sandy Hanson

COPY EDITOR Elizabeth McVey

PROOF EDITOR Patricia Chamberlain

COVER ARTWORK Vicki Smith and Caine Wilkes

DESIGN/LAYOUT Jordana McVey

VISIT US ONLINE AT INFUSE.CGI.ORG

God's Precious Children

By Loren M. Chamberlain

CHILDREN NEED GODLY PARENTS

In all that parents do they must be godly examples by word and deed. There is a very famous passage in the Bible that provides the central theme in the book of Deuteronomy. This particular passage helps us set a pattern that will enable us to relate the Word of God in our daily life to our children, and if it takes a lot of "Playtime" with our children, it will be well worth it to get this Godly message across.

Throughout the Scriptures, God emphasizes the important responsibility parents have in teaching the Bible to their children. Parents cannot pass the responsibility of teaching and parenting their children off to the Church and Christian schools. Eternal truths are learned best in the loving environment of a God-fearing home.

The Hebrew people were extremely successful at making their religion the heart and soul of life. One of the most important reasons for their success was that religious education was "life oriented" not "information oriented." Within the context of daily life they taught their children about God. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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" (Deuteronomy

ate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Parents should care gently for their children, even if the children are disobedient at times and unpleasant. Of course, ideally Christian parents and their children will relate and respond to one another with thoughtfulness and love. For some families it is a difficult lesson to learn, but submission to one another is a very important feature of family life. This will take place though if both parents and children learn to put the interests of each other above their own.

No doubt, parental discipline is important for the purpose of helping children grow and develop pleasing character traits, and certainly not to exasperate and provoke them to anger or discouragement. "Fathers, do not embitter [aggravate] your children, or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). The command for children to obey does not give parents license for harsh treatment. Children must be handled with care. They need firm discipline administered in love.

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). Parenting is not always easy it takes a great deal of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring way. But frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Parents should act in love, treating their children as they would want Jesus to treat them and as Jesus treats the people He loves. This becomes a very vital point in the development of children. It is also important to their understanding of what Christ is like in His relationship with children. "He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:2-5).

continued on page 08

I tried to teach my child with books. He only gave me puzzled looks. I tried to teach my child with words. They passed him by, often unheard. Despairingly, I turned aside, "How shall I teach this child?" I cried. "Come," said he, "Play with Me!"

6:6,7). Here in these verses lies the key to teaching our children to love God. If we want our children to follow God, we must make God the most important part of our daily experiences. We must take the time to reveal and show God to our children in each and every aspect of life, not just in our church-related experiences.

CHILDREN NEED PATIENT PARENTS

Our faith in Jesus Christ must be real, and if it is, it will usually prove itself at home in our relationship with those who know us best, our children. It is not easy to fool a child. "Fathers, do not exasper-



Learning from the Master

By Anika Sandy Hanson

Perhaps we must start with the end in mind to figure out how children should be raised. As Christians, our ultimate goal should be to raise both boys and girls who will end up in God's Kingdom. As far as the Bible tells us, the qualifications for entry are gender neutral; for instance Ananias and Sapphira were struck down separately for their individual roles in lying about their offering (Acts 5:1-10). In fact, while Jesus was alive, he gave many admonitions. These were universal commands such as caring for our fellow human beings, not substituting men's traditions for God's laws, and ensuring that our main focus is on salvation. These commands and Jesus' many other instructions are principles that should be taught by parents; mothers and fathers.

After teaching children to put their spiritual lives in the hands of God and Jesus, as their top priority, parents should again take their example from the Master and his disciples. An integral part of raising our children is to ensure they maximize on the mental and physical gifts given to them by God. As they grow and mature, they should be using these gifts to help contribute to others. One important way for them to achieve this is to develop a skill, trade, or specialized knowledge that can provide them with income (Romans 12:11). The importance of being able to earn a living is seen throughout the New Testament. The apostles worked so they could practice their ultimate career; spreading the gospel. Parents should be prepared to instill a strong work ethic; teaching children, "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

A third important role is to teach children to develop all the gifts and talents God has given them. We find support for this in the parable of the

talents (Matthew 25:14-30). When Jesus gave His message, this word primarily meant a denomination of money; however, this story is equally applicable when thinking about what God wants from his children. Society often attempts to dictate what gifts and talents should be developed in whom and by whom. This has been practiced in every field from teaching to preaching. Yet, parents should expose their children to many hobbies, types of careers, and experiences. Only by experiencing different things can we know what we like and dislike and what we are good at and not so good at. Then both children and parents are able to identify and grow the talents given by God. An important part of the parable was the fact that the master not only gave initial talents, but he then gave the honorable servant a second set of talents. This reward was for growing what the servant first received and should serve as an important lesson about the type of servants our Father is seeking.

Parents who use these three steps should be well on their way to raising children who are focused on growing spiritually (including the practice of Jesus' compassion for and focus

on helping others), skilled and able to contribute to society and the financial well-being of their family, and prepared to work hard and give their best to every task they encounter. It is important to remember that just as children have special talents, so do parents. Although both parents should discipline and instruct children, one spouse is usually more skilled at achieving the desired results, sometimes it may be the father, sometimes it's the mother. Likewise, studies have shown that children who practice healthy habits as a family are more likely to maintain healthy lifestyles as adults. So, while dad might throw the baseball with Johnny and Mom might help Sally with dance practice, the entire family should play a game of ball, get together and dance from time to time, and play a part in getting a healthy, tasty dinner to the table. Of course, we can't leave relationships untouched; we must prepare children for the earthly union that symbolizes the spiritual one with God...marriage. A healthy respect and opinion of themselves and the opposite gender lays the foundation for a successful continuation of what the parent(s) have started. i

Teaching Tools

Free resources for teaching your children including the SKY Newsletter and Sabbath School lessons are available online at www.cgi.org/ptr

The Foundations of a *CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP*

By Tyler Barnett

What happens when the time comes for you to talk about your faith with that perfect guy or gal you just met? This can be quite a delicate situation as religion, much like politics, is one of those topics that can be very sensitive to people. It is, however, the perfect opportunity to share one's faith as well as learn something about the other person's faith. Here are a few guidelines and important considerations when the conversation pops up.

FIRST AND FOREMOST

Pray! Ideally, we should be praying about that special someone long before we even meet him/her. Ask God to reveal the type of potential mate He wants for you so when you meet him/her, you will know. Ask that you, rather than your mate, be transformed into the person God desires. When we realize submission to God's plan may not coincide with our plan, we can accept the little hurdles that are present. He may design someone lacking the traits you desire, or He may not call you to be married at that time. Put simple—make God's plan, your plan.

Our prayers should be those of change and understanding:

- Pray that God may change you to be the complete man or woman of God He wants you to be.
- Pray that God will soften both you and your potential mate's hearts so you might better understand each other's faith.
- Pray that your potential mate **JUST GETS IT!** We know we do not have all the answers, however we live according to what we believe to be true. The truth is self-evident in believers; you are the evidence of your faith.
- Pray that God will give you understanding so you can rejoice in each person's differences and uniqueness.

REVEAL YOURSELF, BUT NOT ALL OF YOURSELF

The first step in developing an intimate relationship is to reveal oneself. If the relationship has progressed to dating, this is a good time to reveal some of the deeper traits of your personality. Just like any aspect of your personality, it is important to share

your faith at your comfort level. Once you feel you can trust the person with what is on your heart, do so cautiously. As it is written in Proverbs 4:23, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Opening oneself up to the other person is a big step and creates a situation of vulnerability. Vulnerability has its place and time as the relationship progresses so remember to guard your heart in the mean time.

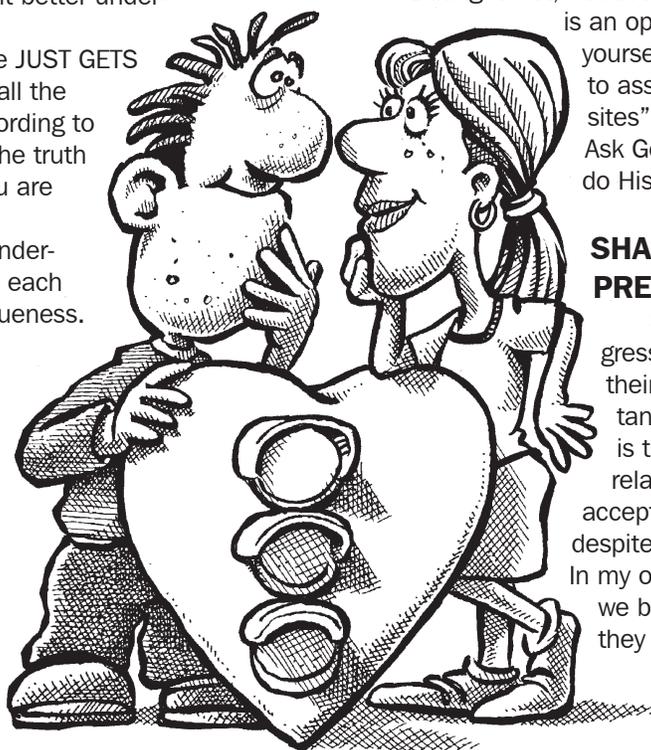
Think of the word intimacy in this way, "Into Me See." The act of sharing our beliefs with a potential mate reveals a very important piece of our personality and in affect, progresses the relationship. The first step is a delicate one so it is important to share only those things about your personality that are appropriate. My relationship with my fiancé is a great example. Considering that I was attending a non-denominational Christian church at the time, my fiancé knew if she had revealed all about the Church on our first date; all about the Holy Days, the Sabbath, the dietary laws... I would have thought she was crazy! She instead shared how important the Church was to her. I cannot help but respect this woman! As the relationship progressed, she revealed more and more of herself, and the resulting affect was that I saw more of God by her example. I now keep the Sabbath and God's Holy Days. Worshiping God on these important days is not done because she required it of me but because He requires it of me.

Dating is not, however, the time to "flirt to convert." It is an opportunity to share a little bit about yourself. We are not given the opportunity to assert "requirements" or "prerequisites" of the other person's religious faith. Ask God to reveal the truth and let Him do His work.

SHARE YOUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Once the relationship has progressed and both people have revealed their beliefs, a certain degree of acceptance must be reached. Acceptance is the second step towards an intimate relationship and is personified when we accept the other person for who they are, despite what we may see as good or bad. In my own relationship with my fiancé, we both revealed our beliefs, however they were not entirely copacetic. De-

continued on page 08



God the Father

By Rory Ries

Being a father has not always been easy and there were many times, especially in the beginning, when situations did come up that were not always easy to resolve. Mistakes have been made and it took some time to realize there is a perfect example a frustrated parent can turn to for help and guidance. Also, our children can see just how human we are as parents and that is not always a bad thing.

We have the perfect example to follow and He is always there for us. We call Him Father and we can have a loving and caring relationship with Him. It is every parent's responsibility to teach their children the commandments, statutes, and judgments that come from the Father. It is the child's responsibility to have a teachable and compliant heart to where he is willing to listen to what the parent has to say. Unfortunately, it hasn't always been this way.

One of the many responsibilities Christ had when he walked the earth as a human was to reveal the Father whom the world has not known (Matthew 11:27). Christ came down from heaven as the Son to do the will of the Father who sent him (John 6:38). This plan was prepared long before the world came into existence (1 Peter 1:20, Ephesians 1:4, and Revelation 13:8). The Son and the Father have a relationship that every child and parent should try to inspire to during their lifetime.

God created humans to have a relationship with them because He is family oriented. We call Him Father and we are His children. It began with Adam and Eve. When they chose to become like God on their terms they chose to go down a different path (Genesis 3:5). Satan, who deceived Eve, got her to think like he thought when he tried to exalt his throne above God and the stars (Isaiah 14:13).

This vanity and prideful thinking is not of God. Man may think he knows God but the Bible says he will be destroyed for lack of knowledge of who God is (Hosea 4:6). Solomon wrote about man hating the knowledge of God the Father (Proverbs 1:29). Not too long after the flood, once again, mankind decided they wanted to be like God so they built a tower to make a great name for themselves. They could also rule over others from the heavens (Genesis 11:1-4). They were quickly scattered abroad and the tower was never built.

Even still today, man, overall, has chosen to reject

God and do what is right in their own eyes (Proverbs 12:15). Mainstream Christianity believes in the Trinity Doctrine and they look at God and Christ as being one God and yet the scriptures are very clear God is the Father and Jesus Christ is His Son. What is really exciting is the true followers of Christ are also called sons. One of God's names or titles is Elohim that is plural and it means gods (Genesis 1:1). God is reproducing Himself in you and me and Christ is preparing all of God's children to enter into His great and glorious Kingdom.

Sadly, the Trinity Doctrine separates and divides the Father from His children. This doctrine existed back in Babylon and began with the worship of Nimrod. Years later, it was incorporated into Christianity in 325AD at the Council of Nicea. This false doctrine claims God is one being in three persons. It forms a triangle with God being at one head, Christ being at one head, and the Holy Spirit, as a person, being at the third head, Three heads in one. The rest of us are outside this triangle looking in and we cannot partake of the glory that will be bestowed upon us.

There are many other false gods being worshipped in this world and the belief of being a child of the Heavenly Father does not exist in those forms of worship. We can see there is confusion about whom God is and why Jesus Christ had to come to reveal the Father to the world. These man-made doctrines and beliefs have caused nothing but doubt and unbelief in many over the years. We have to be willing to seek Him out to see who He really is and we have to come out of these false teachings and ideas and leave them behind (Deuteronomy 4:29). The Father says to seek Him out and live (Amos 5:4).

Christ said there was only one who was good and we are to obey Him (Luke 18:18). He also said we are to love the Father with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind (Matthew 22:37). Christ was quoting a scripture found in Deuteronomy, chapter 6. You can read it for yourself. The instructions from Christ are simple, "Hear, O Israel: The Eternal is our Elohim, the Eternal is alone! You shall love the Eternal, your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Our sins have separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2), however, God says He is willing to sit down with you and

ther

reason together (Isaiah 1:18). We have to be willing to repent and wash ourselves clean (Isaiah 1:16). We repent and put away the evil of our doings and cease to follow the worldly traditions and false practices. Even though our sins may be as red as crimson, God can make them white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). We have to be willing and we are to be obedient.

Christ said some very interesting things to his disciples after they had partaken of the bread and wine at the New Testament Passover. He told them, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also." He also says, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:7-11). This word "seen" means discern so we who follow Christ in everything can have the knowledge of who Christ really is, along with who the Father really is. There is no misconception or false images of God the Father.

There is only one throne in the Northern Heavens and the Father rules from that throne with the Son sitting at His right hand (Hebrews 12:2 and Acts 7:55). No man has ever seen Him (John 1:18). The glory that shines from His face would literally destroy a man. The good news is those who are His and truly follow Christ wherever he goes will become like the Son and the Father (Romans 8:30). Those who are led of the spirit, which is simply the power of God, are truly sons of God (Romans 8:14). If we are then sons of God, then we are heirs of God along with being joint heirs with Christ.

Those who truly know the Father and are willing to obey Him in all things will come in glory as Christ brings them to the Father and presents each individual as a perfect son-of-God (Hebrews. 2:10). The Father will then tabernacle with those who are His and we shall see Him face to face (Revelation 21:2-4 and Revelations

FATHER'S ODE

By Drew DeJarnette

When he cry's I cry.
When he laughs, my tears dissipate.
One look into his eyes,
Can cause the world to simply pass by.

When I sneeze he startles.
In his nightmares he screams out.
But each time I am there,
To turn his bitter eyes into sparkles.

In complete awe I see.
He grows stronger with every breath.
Each day is a new challenge,
Filled with glee and misery.

What I see is me.
Staring down, my eyes reflect upon themselves.
In perpetual hope I pray,
That he ends up a better man than me.

22:4). This awesome God we call Father is filled with love and compassion. He is the perfect parent and He has commands and statutes for us to honor and obey because we are to learn obedience while we are still alive, here on this earth. He is the Father and we are His children.

God is seeking Godly offspring (Malachi 2:15). It is our responsibility to come to know who the Father is, just like any child wanting to know his biological father. Normally, children climb up on their father's lap or they want their father to pick them up and hug them. Maybe they go for a walk with their father. The bonding between a child and his father is special and it should be strong. Every child needs a father. That special bond can have a great influence in the child's life.

The unfortunate reality is there are many false gods and false messiahs in this world. The Father is there to be found, even though we live in a world that has been held captive in darkness. The Son came to reveal the Father. Will you be able to see the Father, our Elohim, as being the one true Eternal God? The opportunity is there for the taking and the time is now to seek Him out. Our Lord and Savior made it all possible by his ultimate sacrifice and now you can have direct access to your one and only true Father. **i**

continued from page 03

CHILDREN NEED LOVING SUPPORT

Though they may not say so, children learn at a very young age that they are completely dependent upon their parents. Therefore, they need to know that their parents are unconditionally committed to caring for them for life. Children need to know they are important and loved by Mother and Dad, today, tomorrow and forever.

We as adults know this is the kind of commitment our Father in heaven has for us, therefore, we need to emulate God and express this same kind of loving commitment to our children. Everyone makes mistakes, as we well know, and that includes our children. They need to know, just as we do, that no matter what kind of troubles come their way Mom and Dad will not abandon them, but will help them through their trials. This does not mean parents should remove every trial, for that may not be best for them. But children do need to know they are loved and that no situation or trial can separate them from the love of their parents.

Harshness and angry lecturing is seldom effective when attempting to reach the heart of children. It usually sends the wrong signal. Whether perceived correctly or incorrectly it usually communicates to children they are of little value and in some cases worthless. Sometimes the subconscious conclusion teens draw from this kind of lecturing is that if they meant anything to their parents their parents would not be so mean to them. Most of the time, the calming effect of loving tenderness in the home will have the most positive effect and will go a long way in helping children understand the right and wrong of their behavior.

Jesus welcomed little children because they have the kind of faith and trust needed to enter God's Kingdom. One of the most important and loving things we can do for our children is to introduce them to Jesus as soon as possible. Parents must also approach Him with childlike attitudes of acceptance, faith and trust.

Happy will those parents be who can say, "Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me" (Isaiah 8:18). **i**

continued from page 05

spite what we seemed to expect, arguments were not effective means of softening each other's hearts. We instead accepted each other through prayer, the example of her family and communication. We communicated our beliefs but not before we communicated how important they were to us.

If the time has come that the relationship has progressed and there is no acceptance, a decision must be made. Do you:

- A. Accept them for who they are and proceed?
- B. Accept them for who they are and end it?

The decision is entirely yours. Notice there are no other options; we must accept them for who they are. Huge issues arise when we think we can "change" our potential mate. There comes a time when we learn all there is to know about a person, but we simply cannot reconcile our differences. No one is perfect, however in a faith-based relationship a congruent faith should be a prerequisite. God desires for you and your mate to know the truth and it takes time to develop understanding of that truth. Should harmony exist, each mate must be willing to accept the little differences and character quirks that are evident in all relationships.

There comes a time when marriage may be discussed. It was on my mind the moment I met my fiancé but it may come many years later for others. Here are some keys topics to discuss:

- Money: Who is responsible for earning? And in what portions?
- Career: What are the career goals?
- Kids? How many?
- Who will stay home with the kids?
- What role does family play?

EMBRACE YOUR MATE

The third step towards an intimate relationship is to embrace. We know our mate, they know us, we accept them, and finally we like them for who they are. There is no room for, "Well they don't really like that I keep the Sabbath, but other than that, our relationship is great!" If the Sabbath is important to you, it will be important to your mate. As I mentioned before, every relationship has flaws and disagreements, however there are certain topics that should be agreed upon.

Finally, an intimate relationship shows an assumption of goodwill. Simply put, we think favorably upon the person no matter what. This is the stage where we realize the other person is more like us than unlike us. His or her faults are no different or profound than ours. His or her triumphs and achievements are no greater than our own. We realize we are alike, despite our differences. Those fortunate enough to be in an intimate relationship have grown more and more alike, not because they have abandoned their beliefs, but because they share the same ideals of faith. This is why a foundation of self-revelation, acceptance, embrace, and assumption of goodwill is important to a lasting Christian marriage. **i**

Hannah and Her Children

By Ruth Kerr

If there was something really big that you wanted to do for God—a huge personal sacrifice—could you do it? Would you do it even though God provided no guarantee that He'd see you through it?

The Bible talks about a woman who made a sacrifice few of us would consider. It was a sacrifice that, in the end, blessed a family and a nation.

WHAT HANNAH DID

In 1 Samuel 1-2, we read about Hannah, a childless woman who was desperate to have a baby. Her husband, Elkanah, loved her deeply, but he had a second wife who was able to bear him several children. Of course, this other wife grew contemptuous of Hannah and rubbed it in her face as often as she could.

Hannah must have felt like a failure; a childless woman had very little value in that society. Sometimes she became so

distressed she could not eat (1 Samuel 1:8).

But one year she had enough. When the family traveled to Shiloh for the yearly sacrifice, Hannah went to the temple and poured her heart out to God in prayer. She made a bargain with Him: if God gave her a son, she would dedicate him to the temple (1 Samuel 1:11).

Hannah didn't know she would have other children. As far as she knew, she would only ever have one son. But she was determined to keep her word.

God heard her prayer, and in due time she gave birth to a son (1 Samuel 1:20). Finally, a son! She named him Samuel, meaning, "heard by God". And when Samuel was three years old, Hannah took him to the temple to live and train full time under the high priest.

We might think Hannah was a little crazy. Here was a woman who wanted a child more than anything else, and when God answered her prayers, she gave the boy away. This precious boy for whom she wept and begged God—and here she was, relegated to seeing him only once a year (1 Samuel 2:19).

What was she thinking?

WHAT HANNAH COULD HAVE DONE

Hannah could have chosen differently. She could have "forgotten" her promise to God. She could have kept Samuel and used him to get back at Elkanah's other wife. She could have fought to make Samuel the sole heir to the estate. She could have driven

the other wife and her children from that house.

She could have done that. But she didn't, because she knew God.

WHAT HANNAH KNEW

As painful as it may have been to give up her beloved son, Hannah knew what she was doing. By dedicating Samuel to the temple, she also dedicated him to her nation. According to The New Bible Dictionary, Samuel was considered to be the last and greatest judge of Israel. Samuel anointed Israel's first two kings and taught a nation about God. When he died, there was a tremendous outpouring of grief (1 Samuel 28:3).

Samuel was able to achieve all this because an ordinary woman had extraordinary faith. She did not attend a seminary, nor was she a member of the educated classes. But when you read Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, a remarkable portrait of our Creator emerges. For example, Hannah knew God; resurrects the dead, is a creator, deliverer and provider, and avenges the poor and oppressed.

God blessed this remarkable and insightful woman by giving her three more sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:21).

COULD YOU?

Could any one of us make a really big sacrifice for God? No one is suggesting we give our firstborn child away, but could we make everyday sacrifices for God? Can we bite our tongues the next time someone lashes out at us? Could we give a favorite sweater to a needy person? Would we offer to help someone we don't like?

Sometimes these small sacrifices seem pretty big. But they won't go unnoticed by God, who sees in secret and rewards openly (Matthew 6:4). Like Hannah, we don't know the good our sacrifices will produce—the results could be astounding. **i**

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF BABIES

Priscilla Dunstan, a mom from Australia says she has unlocked the secret language of babies. Priscilla has a photographic memory for sound. At age 4, she could hear a Mozart concert on the piano and play it back note for note. When Priscilla had her own baby she was able to pick out patterns in his cries and remember them. She then realized other babies had the same cries. After testing 1,000 infants around the world with her baby language theory, Priscilla discovered there are five words all babies 0-3 months old say, regardless of race and culture:

- Neh="I'm hungry"
- Owh="I'm sleepy"
- Heh="I'm experiencing discomfort"
- Eair="I have lower gas"
- Eh="I need to burp"

Those "words" are sound reflexes. If parents don't respond to the sound reflexes, the baby will eventually stop using them. Priscilla recommends parents listen for the words in a baby's pre-cry.

If you would like to learn more about the secret language of babies visit www.dunstanbaby.com. November 13, 2006, Oprah, The Secret Language of Babies, The Dunstan Baby Language DVD

2007 INFUSE EVENTS

RETREAT

Increasing Your Relationship with God

June 15-17
Fayetteville, AR

CGI Fayetteville
3499 West 6th Street

Hotel: Comfort Inn
735 South Shiloh Dr.
(479) 695-2121

Call before June 1 and mention the
Church of God International/Mike
James to receive the group rate.

Time: The retreat begins Friday
night, June 15th at 7PM and ends
around noon on Sunday, June 17th.

Please contact Mike James at (301)
916-6767 or (240) 304-6798 to
register.

**For complete information
about all of these
events visit
infuse.cgi.org
or contact Mike James at
(301) 916-6767,
(240) 304-6798 or
mhjames6043@yahoo.com.**

FEAST OF

Relationships

September 27-October 4
North Myrtle Beach, SC

Bay Watch Resort
2701 South Ocean Blvd
(800) 845-9100
www.baywatchresort.com

The Church of God Big Sandy and the
Church of God International will co-host
the 2007 Feast site. We are looking
forward to observing the Feast together,
realizing that these Festivals belong to
God, and not any one organization.

Call Bay Watch Resort before August
27th and mention the Church of God
Big Sandy to receive the group rate.

Complete information is available at
infuse.cgi.org.

CAMPING

Camp for 5 days in August at the
beautiful Golden Gate Canyon State
Park in Colorado. Hike through the
trails and draw closer to God.

Complete details are being arranged.
Please contact Mike James at (301)
916-6767 or (240) 304-6798 if you
are interested.

TABERNACLES

Nurturing The Future *LEADERS OF TOMORROW*

By Emmanuel Donkor

I recently visited the Natural History Museum in the heart of the city of London as part of a sightseeing weekend. It was a fascinating experience as I was exposed to the various flora and fauna that constituted the earth's population. A visit to the popular section; the land of the dinosaurs was particularly interesting as it gave me insight into the world of these monstrous animals; animals, that according to scientists, had existed millions of years before, though not yet proven.

At the human biology section, my attention was particularly drawn to a couple and their two children who had also come to enjoy the sunny but chilly Saturday afternoon at the museum. And by every indication, the children were enjoying the experience as much as the parents. As I observed this family, I was shocked, nonetheless, delighted to hear the father explain to his children the processes by which babies were formed in a mother's womb.

Growing up as a teenager, I cannot recall having such conversations with my parents. Maybe because 'sensitive' topics such as sex, were often considered taboo and were avoided altogether.

On the other hand, I was delighted the parents took the opportunity to 'educate' their children on such an important topic. What struck me about this particular family was the way in which they interacted with their children in such a loving way. I was even tempted to find out what their secret formula was.

Looking back, I often wonder whether they were Christians. One thing was for sure; there was a standard that was set by this family; one every Christian parent needs to consider when bringing up his or her children.

For Christian parents, God has placed on them the responsibility of

"training a child in a way he should go and when he is old, he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Like the people of Israel, we are also the chosen people of God. This means whatever we do must conform to His will as written in the Bible.

He has also given parents the role of bringing up their children in line with God's word so, "the Lord will bring about for them what He had promised them" (Genesis 18:19).

When we consider children as a gift from God, it is only natural for parents to become the channel of love and moral authority to them. But for many parents, the question that often comes to mind is how they can bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. Also, under what circumstances can they teach their children the ways of the Lord?

In a world that is often characterized by consumerism as well as media manipulation, it can be difficult for parents to raise up Godly children. Not forgetting they also have their fair share of problems to deal with, one wonders how they could bring up their children the way God intends for them to be raised?

In the book of Judges, Sampson's parents asked God to give them grace to raise up their child. It is also important that parents ask the same for their children.

GOD'S WAY – THE RIGHT WAY

It is very easy for parents, particularly Christian parents to be caught up in the cares of the world. And considering the period in which we live; with much emphasis on media, fashion and self-centeredness, we are reminded once again that the values we place emphasis on and the one which would be the foundation for our children's growth should be based on God's

Word. It is imperative for parents to place a lot of emphasis on raising their children in a Godly way.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God appeals to the Israelites to 'implant' His commands and statutes in their children. This was a guarantee for a better life. The Word of God has been the cornerstone of civilization for many centuries as is still the case today. A life patterned after the principles gleaned from God's word is one sure way to a better life.

THE SURE WAY TO DO IT

We have often heard how difficult it has become to raise children, especially when parents try to raise up Godly children. In a rapidly technologically advanced world, a world in which parents struggle to catch up, children often get 'sapped' into it very quickly. And for most of the time, the information and morals portrayed by the media is diametrically opposed to the Word of God.

These days, pre-marital sex, lying, infidelity and greed are gradually replacing the tenets of morality. However, God reminds parents to inculcate into their children good moral values out of reverence for Him. Values such as respect for the elderly, acknowledging God in our day-to-day lives, honouring our parents are fundamental to active Christian living. When parents imbibe these and other fundamental Christian values into their children who are the future leaders of tomorrow, we would be assured of God's blessings on humanity and the world would become a much better place to live in. Teaching them the ways of God also includes pointing to them and correcting them any time they fall short.

continued on page 14

SEEING GOD

Through the Eyes of a Child

By June Rush

Every Christian mother knows what it feels like when her child looks up at her and asks, “Mommy, Where did God come from?”

When my son was small, he was taught about God. He would listen very intently to every word I read him from the Bible or his Bible study lessons from church.

One day while we were going through one of his lessons, he asked me that question, the question about God’s existence, that I really didn’t have an answer for.

He said, “Mommy, if God made me and you and Daddy, then who made God?” I told him that God had always existed. “But how?” He wanted to know. It gets to the point that we as parents have to admit that we don’t have all the answers for our children. We don’t know how He came into existence. He has always been there since before the beginning of time.

God doesn’t expect us as His children to know all things. All He expects of us is to become like little children. Children look to their parents as a god to them, until they reach a certain age of understanding. They expect us to give them protection, heal their wounds, and take care of their every need, to feed them when they are hungry, and give them a drink when they are thirsty.

The Bible tells us in Mark 10:13-16, “People were bringing little children to Him to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’ ‘I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like

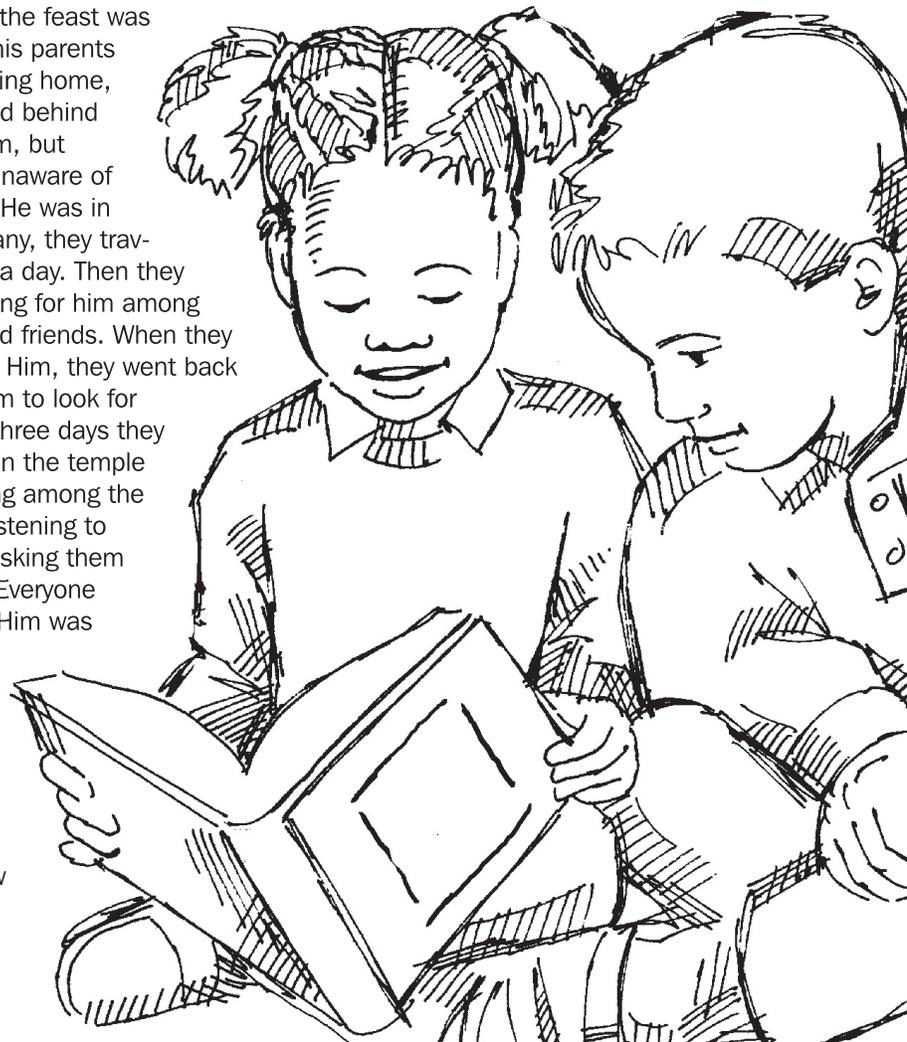
a little child will never inherit it.’ And He took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”

The Bible tells us, unless we become like little children, we will never inherit the Kingdom of God. Children are teachable and begin learning from a very young age that will mold them into what God wants them to be. To see God as a little child is the beginning of our spiritual walk with God.

Luke 2:41-52, we “Every year his parents went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old they went up to the feast (according to the custom). After the feast was over while his parents were returning home, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking He was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among relatives and friends. When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers. When His parents saw Him, they

were astonished. His mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us like this?’ Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. ‘Why were you searching for me, he asked?’ ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’”

When a child is learning to walk he is unstable and falls over and over again. He never stays where he falls, but picks himself up and starts all over again. After awhile the falls become less and less. The same is true with us as parents. We fall in our spiritual lives, but instead of quitting, we have to start



anew.

Luke 2:52, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.”

We, as parents, are to set the right example for our children, teaching them the right Godly principles with love and compassion, teaching them to put others’ needs before their own and to love everyone, regardless of who he may be or what church he attends. The fathers need to be there while their children are growing up to set an example of how the children should treat their mother and show respect for her, as she does him. Then when they grow up they will treat their own mates with love and respect. Pray together as a family, live, laugh and love each other. Think of the others’ needs before your own.

God promises us He will never leave or forsake us. Are

you as a child of God growing in knowledge of His Word and teaching it to your children? The Bible says to, “train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” He may go out when he is young and become part of the world, but he will always return to the basics of what his father and mother have taught him. Are you as parents putting all your trust in the Lord, just as your little child does in you? Or are you falling short of this responsibility that God has given you? Our children are on loan to us, they really belong to God.

Learn to love and trust in God as your little child trusts in you. Become a reflection of Him, so your child can be a reflection of you. After all God is the greatest parent that will ever exist. **i**

CHICKEN SALAD

By Jeff Reed

I was making chicken salad this morning and noticed something interesting in the process. It was made using a mixture of celery, pecans, grapes, apples, mayonnaise, and of course chicken. I placed each of the ingredients into the mixing bowl, one at a time, and began to mix them together with a spatula. Then I noticed something I already knew. Actually, it is a common sense thing that everyone knows. The more I mixed the ingredients in the bowl, the more uniformly distributed the ingredients became. For some reason this fascinated me. I know that might make me sound like a simpleton. But please, let me explain.

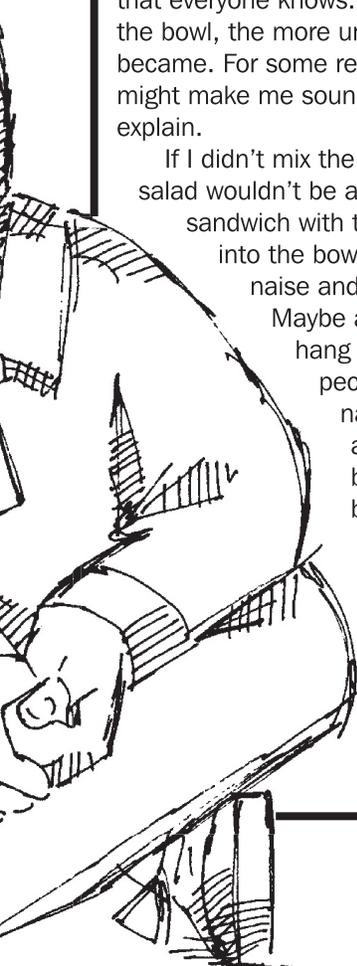
If I didn’t mix the ingredients in the bowl, the chicken salad wouldn’t be all that good. Imagine if I made a sandwich with that. I would use a spoon to reach into the bowl and pull out a huge glob of mayonnaise and place it between two slices of bread. Maybe a chunk of chicken or two would hang out the side and a random celery or pecan piece would cling to the mayonnaise membrane. There wouldn’t be any apples or grapes on my sandwich, because they would still be in the bottom of the bowl. If I mixed it just a little bit, it might turn out a little better. But there still would be a good chance of getting too much of some ingredients and not enough of the others. Fortunately, I’m a very good chicken salad maker. I put a lot of effort into mixing it and it was quite tasty.

It started out as a chaotic mess of ingredients. With applied effort it became an ordered system of delicious chicken salad. That is when I realized that basically the entire universe God created is like the chicken salad. God created things with a certain amount of disorder so that man could rely on God’s natural laws to put them in order. A forest of trees is a beautiful thing. But man, with applied effort can create houses, pianos, furniture, baseball bats, and numerous other things with those trees. Microchips don’t spontaneously generate. By applying God’s natural laws man makes billions of them. God told man in Genesis 1:28 to, “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”

But more importantly, this concept applies socially. Romans 13:1 states, “Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority but of God; the authorities that exist are ordained by God.” The authorities of this world “ordained” by God serve an important purpose. Governments create order out of chaos. They provide their citizens with laws and create a stable environment for families to function. This is why it is important for us to be obedient to laws of our native countries. It can be argued that the worst dictatorship is better for society than anarchy. A world without government would be a world in utter chaos.

This authority from God extends to the family. “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). The authority given by God to parents over their children is absolute as witnessed by scripture, “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen

continued on page 14



continued from page 11

This also means smacking them out of love when the need be. Correction involves the use of 'the rod of correction' in training the children for the "rod of correction imparts wisdom but a child left to himself disgraces his mother" (Proverbs 29:15).

Christian parents must also set good examples for their children. This is because as their guardians, they are largely responsible for shaping the world view of their children. Thus, when the parents do not have a healthy world view, the children are most likely to have a distorted world view too.

PARENTS NEED TO CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Children are the primary responsibility of parents and this cannot be over emphasized. Parents shape their children's actions, attitudes and association. When they are inconsistent in delivering godly instruction and wisdom to their children, they practice ineffective parenting. When they place unreasonable demands by abusing their authority, they practice ineffective parenting.

That is the reason why parents must be seen to be creating the environment where the children become the centre of attraction after God; where the children are loved as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. The children should be able to respect their parents so whatever they are taught is seen as important to their growth. This can be achieved when the parents are first and foremost consecrated to God.

Parents should draw nearer to God as He draws nearer to them and gives them the grace and wisdom to raise their children in His way. When parents create a stable, Godly and loving home, the children would learn to put God first in their day-to-day life. Their future would then be guaranteed to be like the tree that is planted by the banks of the river, bearing fruit in its season (Psalm 1:3).

It is possible to raise up Godly children in the mist of a chaotic world when as parents, we learn to prioritize our lives. When we build a stable home; a Godly home, our children would grow to become God's ambassadors on earth. **i**

continued from page 13

to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid" (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). This punishment may seem unreasonable to a modern reader of the Bible. It is actually a last resort for an adult child who had become an extreme danger to that society. It shows that God places the ultimate authority of children with the parents. It is not authority to be abused, but to be used by parents to train their children in God's Law. Just as it takes work to mix good chicken salad, it takes applied effort for parents to raise good children. They have the opportunity to create order in their lives.

If parents don't do their jobs, their children will have chaotic lives. An extreme example of this can be witnessed in the documented cases of feral children we have in history. In rare cases, very young children have been lost or abandoned by their parents and raised in the wild by dogs, wolves, or even monkeys. When found by society it is almost impossible for these children to adapt. They have incredible trouble learning language, walking upright, or even using simple tools. They have little or no interest in the humans around them. In essence they behave like the animals that raised them.

God did not create mankind to live like animals. He put the authorities in place of government and family so we could have the opportunity to be like Him. If children are raised to respect their parent's authority, it will be natural for them to realize the importance of their Heavenly Father's authority over their life because God's goal for man is to make us into something more than flesh and blood. He has designed within each of us the opportunity to be just like Him. **i**

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

1. Meet his/her teacher at the beginning of the year.
2. Attend Back to School Night, parent/teacher conferences, Open House, as well as any other special events.
3. Each day after school ask your child how his/her day was.
4. Ask your child what he/she learned at school.
5. Meet your child's friends and the friends' parents.
6. Read the teacher's newsletters and emails.
7. Make sure your child does his/her homework.
8. Check your child's homework.
9. Have your child read everyday.
10. Send your child to school prepared and ready to learn. Make sure he/she has the right materials needed and has eaten breakfast.
11. Set aside a special, quiet place in your house for your child to do his/her homework.
12. Tell your child you are proud of him/her.
13. Don't discuss your child's weaknesses in front of him/her.
14. Volunteer in the classroom and get involved with school-sponsored activities.
15. Stay in communication with your child's teacher.
16. Take interest in what your child is learning and how he/she is doing at school.

GOD PARENTS CHILDREN

By Loren Chamberlain

“These commandments that I give today are to be upon 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.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Moses, after recalling for his audience the awesome meeting they had with God when they actually heard his voice, turned to the present, emphasizing the significance of these events for the present and the future. Responding to God’s instruction was the way for them to possess and enjoy the riches of the land promised to them.

Moses was directly commissioned to teach the Israelites so, they would, “walk in all the way the Lord God has commanded [them]” (Deuteronomy 5:33) and that they and their children, “may fear the Lord [their] God” (Deuteronomy 6:2) and “be careful to obey” (Deuteronomy 6:3).

TEACHING CHILDREN

Not only were the Israelites to “walk, fear, and be careful to obey” they were also to teach their children to do the same, thereby passing along all the commandments of God to the next generation. If parents fail to pass on the Word of God to their children the truth of God can be lost in that generation. When my wife and I had young children we would encourage them to write out every verse the minister men-

tioned during the sermon. Not only did this keep them busy, they also learned God’s Word in two ways, by hearing and by writing. At home we would have a contest to see who could recite the most Bible verses by using flash cards. It was great fun to beat Mom or Dad!

With God given authority, Moses proclaimed to all Israel, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” These words express the unity of Israel’s God in contrast to the belief in “gods many and lords many.” This verse has been called the keynote of the Jewish faith, and should be understood by Christians as well (Deuteronomy 6:4).

HEART SOUL MIGHT

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). It is to be found that these words are central to the Book of Deuteronomy and are the core of God’s entire revelation through Moses to the Israelites. Jesus Himself taught, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

Loving God is the greatest of human acts. God’s laws are never burdensome and they can be reduced to two simple principles, love God and others. When you love God completely and care for others as you care for yourself, then you have fulfilled the intent of the Ten Commandments and the other Old Testament laws. According to Jesus, these two commandments summarize all of God’s laws. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second

is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

GOD’S EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8). From the previous scriptures we have read it is clear that God expects us to be good role models for the children of the family and there is no better place to model good behavior than in the home. Children learn values, morals, and priorities by observing how their parents act and react everyday to life experiences. By applying godly principles to everyday life we show children how to make life-oriented decisions using God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 6 sets a pattern that helps us relate the Word of God to our daily lives. We are to love God, think constantly about His commandments, teach His commandments to our children, and live each day by the guidelines of His word.

As we go about our daily tasks, we must remember, God is working in our life in ways we may not even notice. While it may seem to us that our children are not absorbing much in the way of God’s Word we must be patient and be aware God is our partner. We must never stop sowing the seed of God’s Word in the lives of our children. We must not close the door on what God can do in the lives of our children. Events do not occur by luck or coincidence. We should have faith that God is directing our life and the lives of our children through His Word and for His purpose.

As parents, we must make a commitment to love each child in a warm, affectionate, and supportive way and establish clearly defined and understood rules in the home; limits the children know they cannot violate without some consequence. By doing these things we will have fulfilled God’s instructions in Deuteronomy 6. ■

Parenting in a *Changing Society*

By Jeremy A. Brown

My how the times have changed since I was a child; our society is trying to redefine family as the uniting of a man and man or woman and woman. We have more split families, with stepparents and with grandparents raising their grandchildren. The change in family values of many Americans—from close-knit to distant families—has negatively affected American society, causing a rise in teen pregnancy, family violence, grandparents raising their grandkids, and a redefining of the American family from a mother and father to a possible father and father or mother and mother. We have gone from families sitting down together at the dinner table and discussing the day's work and school experiences to individual family members eating dinner alone on the sofa and watching the "junk box". Does the word "family" in America still have the same definition it used to have; a place of comfort, safety, reassurance, and companionship? We all have seen the drastic changes that have taken place within the family and the consequences of God being taken out of our society. It is particularly evident in the increase of violence in the home and teen pregnancy. This also pertains to our church family.

American family values of the past were centered on building a great foundation for the children, which included God. The foundation for children also consisted of healthy, responsible, capable, functional, loving, and attentive parents and grandparents who worked to instill such principles as fidelity, responsibility, delayed gratification,

altruism, religious piety, and respect for others in their children at an early age. The past generation understood you can't build a family without the orientation of God, the family can't survive in our society and we can see it in today's society. Here are some of the things that are happening in families: father's molesting their daughters and sons, a grandson shot his grandmother for telling him what to do, a father killed by his son over a slice of pie, a mother raped by her son because he had a fight with his brother, teachers having sex with students, and we have heard many terrible things that are happening in families.

Many parents fear spanking a child for a fear of being reported to the government and having their children taken away. Do not misunderstand me; I am by no means advocating child abuse. A child should never be disciplined physically to a point of physical bruising and severe pain. According to the Bible, the appropriate and restrained physical discipline of children is a good thing, and contributes to the health and welfare of the child. Many scriptures in the Bible encourage the physical disciplining of children. "Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them, they will scream and holler, but we as parents must understand physical discipline is needed sometimes to correct a child...Physical discipline may well save them from death." There are other verses in the Bible that support physical discipline of a child (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, and 20:30).

Children who aren't disciplined grow up rebellious, have no respect for authority, and as a result obviously will

not be readily willing to obey and follow God. God uses discipline to correct us and lead us down the right path, and to also encourage repentance for our actions (Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 1:7, 6:23, 12:1, 13:1, 15:5; Isaiah 38:16; Hebrews 12:9). These are a few verses describing the good of discipline. Many parents are either too passive or aggressive when it comes to raising their children. "To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child" (Proverbs 29:15). Discipline is used to correct and train people to go in the right way. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11). God's discipline loves, as it should be between parent and child. Spanking should never be used to cause lasting physical harm or pain, but a quick swat (on the bottom where there is the most padding) to teach the child that what he did was wrong and is unacceptable. Never should it be used to vent our anger and frustrations, or be uncontrolled.

"And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Raising a child in the "discipline and instruction approved by the Lord" includes restrained, corrective, and yes loving, physical discipline.

"For the lack of discipline in our children there is a steady demise of the family unit in these modern time of Sodom and Gomorrah", as stated by Jeremy Brown. **i**



Combating the Media's Influence

By Dianna Hobbs

This is not your typical parenting article that shares “survival tips,” or the best DVD’s and activities to fight boredom. Rather, I’m going to share practical principles and techniques for raising spiritually, mentally and emotionally healthy children. The neat thing is that you have complete control over the effectiveness of the techniques, they cost you nothing, and you can test them out in the comfort of your own home. Sound good? Then, keep reading.

Did you know the U.S. media landscape is dominated by a core group of giant corporations that, through a history of mergers and acquisitions, have gained control over much of what we see, hear and read? In many cases these giant companies are integrated, manufacturing everything from books, movies, music and more.

Listen to this, the Columbia Journalism Review reports that the same company that owns and controls the programming for “MTV” and “BET”, is also responsible for “Nickelodeon”, “Nick Jr.”, and “Noggin”. (Source: Columbia Journalism Review, www.cjr.org)

Think about it. A popular trend has emerged, where the music careers of young stars are launched on Disney Channel and Nickelodeon. The songs and videos usually start out innocently enough. Then what happens? We see them transition to MTV, where the songs become a little more risqué and the lyrics become a lot less innocent. By then, however, our children have already fallen in love with these young stars. So, what can you do?

Does this mean that you should ban all of your children’s favorite television shows? No. I’m not suggesting that you toss the television out the window, although that may be a good idea. Instead, I want to provoke you to consider how important it is to be prayerful, diligent and informed in order to shield your children from negative influences that can harm their spiritual, mental and emotional well-being.

Here are a few ways you can become more involved in their daily activities. When your children are viewing certain programs, take time to watch. You may be surprised at the types of things you see. As you observe, ask yourself, “What is being depicted in this cartoon or movie? What are the characters wearing, saying and doing?” Sometimes sexual

innuendo, rebellion against authority, and other inappropriate behavior is being portrayed. These subtle, yet unhealthy influences send subliminal messages to your children and mold their subconscious mind.

If a movie is rated PG-13, even if it’s animated and has received rave reviews from the critics, still ask yourself “Is this appropriate for my child?” Think about it. Animated movies gross millions of dollars at the box office, because children’s entertainment is big business. The goal now is to entertain both the parents and the children; as a result, the children are influenced by sexually explicit content, vulgarity, profanity and violence, all cloaked as “entertainment that’s fun for the whole family.”

Remember, everything planted inside your children is a seed, and seeds grow, whether bad or good. Children are like sponges, soaking up everything around them. As a parent, you act as the sanitizing agent, filtering out anything that will defile and harm them. Don’t be afraid to turn the television off, or ban particular programs from being viewed in your home. These decisions are not always easy or popular, but they are necessary to protect the innocence of your children.

Be warned. Family and friends will not always smile upon your decision to sterilize your children’s environment. You will sometimes be perceived as “overly protective” and “a little over the top.” I know it’s no fun to be viewed as a prude, and few parents enjoy being labeled “strict,” but if you go the extra mile to provide your children with discipline and boundaries, you will build Godly character in them that will pay off in the long run. You must make the decision that Joshua made and declare that, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Think about this. You don’t have a long time to remain the primary influence in your children’s lives. Pretty soon, they’ll leave home. This is when they’ll depend on what you taught them in their formative years to make the right decisions. Do you really want television shows, video games and pop culture icons to be the strongest influences on their choices?

God chose you specifically as the steward over your precious children. Remain prayerful, submitted, and open to God’s will. Trust Him, and He will equip you with all the necessary tools to raise Holy, happy and healthy kids. “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:6). **i**

“You can’t put someone else into the Kingdom of God.”

By Mike James

Some parents are concerned about their teenagers not being interested in the church or God. Many worry it is their responsibility to get their kids converted and if they don’t, they worry the kids may be lost because they have had a “knowledge of the truth.” This article will investigate this idea and also address why teens become defiant. We will finally look at ways to overcome the defiance of teens.

One thing you must remember in this is that each of us must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. You can’t put someone else into the Kingdom of God. Getting into the Kingdom is between the individual and God. Oh yes, you can help influence and guide people, but in the end people are responsible for themselves. I also think it is important to understand, just because someone is told about God’s truth does not mean he is then held accountable at that particular time and through the rest of his life. I believe you have to be committed to God’s truth before you can be held accountable for it. This is a controversial topic that we will not fully address in this short article, but I believe scripture can help us get a better handle on this topic.

In Hebrews 10:26-27 we read that those who deliberately keep on sinning after they have accepted God’s truth are in danger of the raging fire of hell. The key point here is they would have had to accept God’s truth and then later rejected it. Telling someone that the Sabbath is the seventh day and should be observed does not make that person accountable for that information. They would have had to agree that what you tell them is true and been committed to it.

It’s hard to tell what a teenager is committed to. He is just beginning to figure out what he believes in and why he believes it. Hebrews 6:4-6 is even more explicit on this point. Here we read that only those who have been enlightened and then fall away are in danger of never being brought back to repentance. I believe we can assume from this that those who have not been enlightened can still obtain repentance. Is a teen that is taught a “Church of God” belief

system enlightened to those beliefs? That’s hard to say. Only God and that individual know for sure. I believe many are not. I believe each individual has to be able to prove their beliefs in their own mind before we can say they are enlightened.

Just speaking from my own experience as a teen, I never took the time to understand what all the doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church were. I knew what many of the beliefs were, but I never got around to looking into them until about age 17. Then it took me until my early 20’s to make a choice about what I really believed. Everyone’s experience of God and beliefs varies. It’s important that parents are not too hard on their teens for failure to buy into the doctrines of the church during their teen years. This is a time when teens are only beginning to understand themselves and the world around them. Let them know what you believe and why. You should also encourage and support them. But don’t force anything on them as this may lead them to turn away from your beliefs.

Parents need to understand that being rebellious is a natural stage for a teenager. In fact some rebellion can be healthy. What I mean by this is, as a teen develops he needs to start taking on more responsibility for himself. If the parents are too controlling they may quash this natural need of the teen to make independent decisions.

All parents are bound to make some mistakes in raising their children that could be harmful to the relationship. If you have made mistakes in your parenting there is always a chance for redemption. The first thing to do is to acknowledge the mistakes. Talk to your teen and let them know what you have discovered. Ask them about their perception of the relationship. Being open and honest with your teens will allow them the freedom to feel more at ease about talking. When you feel more at ease to talk, the opportunity to talk about almost anything opens up. When the opportunities to discuss God and His truth present themselves, seize them. Those opportunities will only be there if the relationship is strong. **i**

“But Mom, I’m Not Ready!”

By June Rush

It is that time of year again, time to set the alarm clock and get the children out of bed to get ready for school. A very trying time for us as parents.

This is my daughter’s senior year in high school. It is one of the most important times in her life as well, and she is waiting with anticipation to finally graduate from a place she has spent most of her life. It is a time to begin making choices on her own; whether or not to attend college, or find a job.

I think to myself, “How fast she has grown to this important time in her life when she will be leaving home for the most part and trying her wings at the things she has dreamed about all of her teenage years.” How hard it is for me as a parent to let her go and fend for herself in the world, for you see, to me, she is still mommy’s little girl.

I take out the family albums, and we start looking through the pictures of her through the years as she was growing up, and we have to laugh at some of the comical-looking ones from the grade school years. We found a picture of her first bath after arriving home from the hospital. She was so tiny and innocent then. I think to myself, “Why couldn’t she always remain this small?” Why do our children have to grow up and leave us when we need them the most? She still looks the same as she did as a small child, but her body has taken on the shape of a woman.

I come upon a picture of her first day of kindergarten, and the tears begin to fall. I ask, “please, Lord, don’t let her see the tears in my eyes.” As I remember all of the wonderful and fun things we have done together as mother and daughter. “Lord, please help me to trust in you to guide her in the right direction, and let her remember to pray and love and stay close to you no matter what kind of peer pressure she is under at school.”

Suddenly I am shaken back to reality when she yells, “Mom, I have to go now, I missed the bus, may I borrow the car?” Oh, no, I think to myself, she is old enough to drive now and thinks she is too old to ride the bus anymore. She bends over and pecks me on the cheek, waving goodbye, and yelling, “I love you Mom.”

I think back to the time when she was younger and everyday I would have to keep waking her and reminding her it was time to eat breakfast and dress and get ready to catch the bus. She would always yell back, “But, Mom, I am not ready yet, the bus will just have to wait.”

The Ten Commandments

- 1 You shall have no other gods before me.
 - 2 You shall not make for yourself an idol...
 - 3 You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God...
 - 4 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy....
 - 5 Honor your father and your mother...
 - 6 You shall not murder.
 - 7 You shall not commit adultery.
 - 8 You shall not steal.
 - 9 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
 - 10 You shall not covet your neighbor’s house...
- Exodus 20*

We who have children are so blessed because they teach us so many things, such as, patience, kindness, outgoing concern for other people’s children, as they have many friends who spend years in our homes while growing up, so in reality we are letting go of more than our own children.

Those parents who still have little ones at home, please learn to treasure every moment you have with them, because before you realize it, they are grown and out on their own, making lives for themselves.

I for one used to dread the beginning of another school year, because along with it, came the responsibility of getting into a new schedule, taking them to activities at school, band practice, choir, or sports, getting out of bed earlier to make certain they were up and ready to go when the school bus arrived.

I have made up my mind to treasure this last year of my daughter’s schooling, and to enjoy every precious moment we have together because next year when she moves out or starts college or looks for a job and moves away, this home will be empty of the laughter of teenagers, and every time I walk into her room, I will think of all the good times, talks, and laughs we had together as mother and daughter.

Maybe somewhere down the road she will find the man of her dreams, marry and have children of her own, and this house will become a home once again, and I will hear someone say, “But, grandma, I am not ready yet.”

When it comes to parenting, what’s your definition of success? “A home in the suburbs, a family vacation at the beach every summer, a college saving account for each child?”

It is not what we provide physically for our children, but what we leave in them that counts the most. Have we as parents imbedded the Ten Commandments from the Lord into our children’s minds so they will never forget them, and how they will be blessed if they keep them? If your answer to this is, “No” then now is the time to start. **i**

