

PSYCHOLOGY FOR
LIVING

MAY-JUNE 1998

**"PLEASE
COME
HOME!"**

**PRAYER FOR
A CHILDLESS
MOTHER**

**FATHERING:
COMMITMENT
TO BEING A
SPIRITUAL LEADER**

**PLAY
WEDDINGS**

**EVERY HOME
A KINGDOM**

**GRAMMA'S
MUSIC**

by Clyde M. Narramore

GETTING THE WRONG MESSAGES IN CHILDHOOD

WHEN I FIRST BECAME A PSYCHOLOGIST I saw a film which said, "Childhood misinterpretations and fears carry over into adulthood and are often the cause of serious problems later in life."

Yet, many adults fail to recognize the connection between current problems and childhood experiences.

Typical Negative Impressions

1. *"I'm no good."* Among the most common causes for this feeling is a lack of compliments and encouragement during childhood. One of our basic emotional needs is to feel we are making progress. But if parents and others do not compliment and encourage a child, he tends to feel like a failure. When that child becomes an adult, this feeling of being "no good" may still permeate many of his attitudes.

2. *"I can't do anything right."* Many parents don't think about the impact of their accusations. Often they are struggling with frustrations in their own lives. Because they are already upset, they are low on patience, so they react to a child's mistakes by saying, "Can't you do anything right? You always mess things up." To hear this a few times is one thing, but hearing it time and again, year after year can have an enduring effect. Even after the child is well into adulthood, he still keeps hearing that same recording.

3. *"People don't like me."* A basic emotional need is to sense that those in your environment affirm and appreciate you. Parents and teachers may say, "People won't like you if you do that." As parents we may not like what a child has done, but we should differentiate between the action and the person. God doesn't like our wrongdoings, but He sent His Son to die for us so we could spend eternity with Him. Many people feel that others don't really care for them. What a handicap!

4. *"I'm stupid!"* I was talking with a lady in her fifties who had made an unwise decision. When asked why she did it, she snapped back, "Because I'm stupid!" This woman is actually very bright, but her ears are still ringing with



statements from childhood: "Why do you have to be so stupid?" A person's feelings about his or her sharpness and intellect does not always depend simply upon his brain power, but rather on how he was often portrayed by some maladjusted person in his childhood.

5. *"I'm no match for my brother or sister."* The influences of siblings must also be considered, especially if a child is compared unfavorably to them. Parents in their frustrations may say to a child, "Why can't you be like your brother (or your sister)?" It's amazing how many men and women harbor resentment because of perpetual unfavorable comparisons with a sibling that the parents perceived as being more mature, more talented, or more cooperative.

6. *"I'll never amount to anything."* "My folks never gave me any recognition," a pastor told me, "and one phrase which I must have heard a thousand times was, *You'll never amount to a hill of beans!*" Even though this pastor was a fine man of God, down deep he felt that he was unable to achieve worthwhile goals in life. He had been programmed for mediocrity.

7. *"People aren't interested in what I think or say."* Many children go through childhood never being listened to. Not long ago a pastor's wife told me, "When I was growing up, I don't think my parents

even knew I was there." Now in her middle years, this dear Christian lady is very withdrawn. She's like an eight-cylinder car functioning on only four.

8. *"God is not pleased with me."* It is important when we raise children to distinguish between our feelings and God's. Sometimes they don't match. Not long ago a lady wrote me about her teenage daughter who was very hateful and mean. In such a case it's appropriate for parents to tell their child that he or she is not pleasant. But very often they go a step further and say, "God is upset with you. He doesn't like children who act like you do." If a child hears this over and over, it can cause him to grow up feeling that he can never really please God. This attitude can short circuit all of his efforts.

9. *"I don't have any talent."* Children who are criticized excessively may come to feel they have nothing to offer. After a while they stop trying. They then grow up criticizing others the same way they were criticized. They tend to develop a defeatist attitude which can be fertile ground for depression.

10. *"I don't look right," or "I'm ugly," or "I'm too fat."* When growing up, children like to feel their looks are acceptable. But sometimes parents who are angry will take their feelings out on a child by saying things like, "You're ugly. Why don't you do something about the way you look?" Such negative feedback can cause a person to be overly concerned about appearance. (Anorexics fit into this category.) Feeling unacceptable can also have the opposite effect so that a person will refuse to dress nicely. Subconsciously, such people want their appearance to conform with how they feel about themselves inside.

Note: In our next issue of *LIVING* we will continue this discussion focusing upon conditions in a home which can bring about negative impressions in a child, plus practical ways of overcoming harmful childhood input.

Clyde M. Narramore

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Don Ensign

TO THINK ABOUT

by Ruth E. Narramore

NOT LONG AGO I was watching the evening news on television when a story was reported involving a husband and wife who were both serving in the United States armed services. It seems that "Mrs. Soldier," who already had one child, was about to give birth to her second. This caused a problem in that her platoon was being sent overseas. Furthermore, she was demanding extra pay to cover the expense of a nanny to care for the new child. The reporter asked her whether she would consider leaving the military to fulfill her role as a mother.

"Never!" was the woman's curt reply. "It would take a lot more than just being a mom to make me leave the military."

Her answer left me cold. It was obvious that in this woman's assessment, "just being a mom" was extremely low on her totem pole of priorities.

Personally, I can't think of a much more important voca-

tion. When God entrusts a tiny, helpless infant — a brand new bundle of potentiality — into our hands, it's an awesome responsibility.

In God's eyes there's nothing of more value than a human life and the soul and spirit involved in that life. That's why Christ was willing to die on the cross: it was to rescue human lives from destruction. And that's why when God honors us by placing a child in our custody, it's a sacred trust and must not be taken lightly.

Yes, parenting is serious business. It carries with it many demands. It has its share (and more) of worries and concerns. It often requires sacrifice. But it also has many, many joys and is the most rewarding job I can think of. To train and shape a



child in the Lord is a tremendous privilege. It is an honor.

When my children were growing up, I *wanted* to be with them. I wanted to be there *for* them when they needed me; I

wanted to share in the excitement of their accomplishments, to experience their joys along with them, to help them through difficult times, and to soothe their hurts. To me, being a full-time mother was a sacred trust. To be sure, it was a challenge, but it was also a joy. This didn't mean I didn't have other outlets as well. I was involved in church music (organist, music director, arranger). I also helped my husband with his writing. We did a lot of entertaining, which I enjoyed. *But I was home*, and when the children need-

ed me, *I was there*.

I realize, however, that in today's world there are many mothers who would love to stay home with their children, but who *must* take outside employment to make ends meet. In no way do I condemn them. God knows why these women have joined the force of "working mothers" (although mothers who remain at home work too, and you'd better believe it.) I also know that just staying at home does not necessarily make one a good parent. It takes wisdom and godly guidance.

All of us make mistakes. That's part of being human. The important thing in child-rearing is for the positives to far outweigh the negatives. As we rely on God and strive to do His will, He is there to help us. And when all is said and done, it is Isaiah 54:13 that gives the bedrock for successful parenting: "*All your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children.*" □

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

LOOKS FORWARD TO MAIL

I can't tell you what a blessing you are to me and to my family. How we do look forward to your mail! It always comes when we need it most.

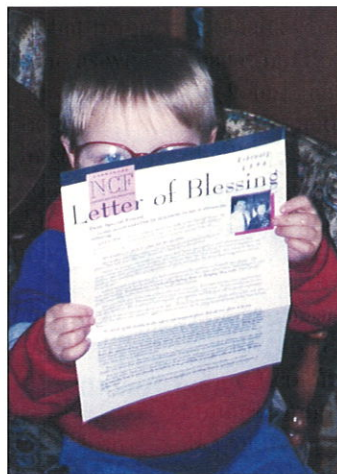
May God bless and keep you.

M/M Ray B. Cromer
Columbia, South Carolina

STARTING YOUNG

I thought you would enjoy a picture of my great-grandson, Cory Hurley (four years old) as he is reading your *LETTER OF BLESSING* with Grandpa's reading glasses. He's a blessing to us.

Lee Alice Durben
Covina, California



KEEP ON SERVING CHRIST

We enjoy your radio programs very much. And your magazine, *LIVING*, has

many good articles that bring blessings to our home as we read it.

I hope you will be able to keep on serving Christ so that your ministry will continue for many more years. May God bless you, your family, and your staff.

John W. Bocka
Leonia, New Jersey

NOT THE SAME PERSON

Thank you for loving Jesus. I have appreciated your counseling over the years. Your ministry and all involved have had a major part in changing me. Because of your ministry, I'm not the same person I was 20 years ago.

Thank you for sending your magazine. I really enjoyed seeing your beautiful grandson, daughter, and her husband in the *SPECIAL INSIGHT*.

Faye Weinhold
Mohnton, Pennsylvania

SHORTEST 15 MINUTES

Your broadcast seems to be the shortest 15 minutes when I compare all the 15-minute programs I hear on the radio.

Even though I cannot listen as often as I used to, one thing remains the same: The program is still rich with blessings.

Nathanie Etinoffe
Commonwealth of Dominica,
West Indies



FATHERING: COMMITMENT TO BEING A SPIRITUAL LEADER

A prominent pediatrician and father of eight shares valuable and practical suggestions.

by William Sears, M.D.

FATHERING IS TOUGH, and Christian fathering is even tougher. So many demands compete for a father's attention and threaten to pull him and his family away from God. If you are a dad who is struggling, the following suggestions may show you how to become a spiritual leader in your home and help you bring your children to faith in Jesus Christ.

Make the Commitment

At the core of fatherhood lies commit-

ment. My goals are to return to my Father in heaven and to lead my children there also. Making this a firm commitment is the first step toward becoming the spiritual leader of your home.

Define Your Priorities

To make this commitment stick, it is necessary to continually define your priorities and reaffirm your position. The order of importance that I believe God sets for us is (1) God, (2) family, (3) job, and (4) church activities. All these priori-

ties are interrelated. A job should be primarily a means of providing for one's family, a means for serving God. What gets many fathers into trouble is devoting so much time and energy to their jobs that their jobs begin to dominate their lives and compete with God and their families for their attention.

Define Your Goals

To be a spiritual leader in your home, you must have a well-nourished spiritual life of your own. No one can give what he

does not have himself. Being a God-centered person is necessary for being a God-centered father. Here are some goals that Christ Himself has given to committed believers:

- ◆ Love the Lord and love your neighbor as yourself.
- ◆ Fear God and keep His commandments.
- ◆ Pray for wisdom.
- ◆ Study Scripture and apply it in your life.
- ◆ Live a Christ-centered life.

Define Obstacles to Your Growth

In an increasingly materialistic world, there are many obstacles to spiritual growth.

Debt is often a sizable obstacle. Many people are financially overextended, especially in a system that offers easy credit and even rewards some kinds of debt with lowered taxes and easy write-offs. In my pediatric practice I see how children are affected by their parents' money worries. Children often inherit a sense of financial pressure from the atmosphere at home.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to spiritual growth for all Christians is *materialism*, a preoccupation with satisfying ourselves with the world's attractions. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). These words of Jesus expose a stumbling block for many Christians in our affluent society.

Practical Tips for Christian Fathering

Consider the spiritual leadership of your children as a business venture. The competition for the values and minds of your children is tough. The following practical "business tips" can help you beat the competition and secure the hearts of your children.

Be a role model. Children see your values in your daily living. What is important to you becomes important to them.

Children are naturally attracted to big cars, fancy gadgets, and any expensive "toys" their fathers may have. Are you constantly talking about your "grown-up toys," playing with them, talking about how you are going to pay for them, expressing your delight in them, and getting angry when they are broken or don't

give you the gratification you expect? Do you fail to fit God into your busy schedule, skipping Sunday school and church for other, more glamorous pursuits? Do you doze off in front of the television instead of making time for a 10-minute bedtime prayer? You do not want your

Being a God-centered person is necessary for being a God-centered father.

children to learn that *toys* are more important than God. But they take their cues from you.

Begin early with small things. The critical period for your children to be influenced by role modeling is when they are three to six years of age while they still view the world through the eyes of their parents. What is important to you is important to them.

By four to six years of age children should be able occasionally to delay their gratifications. From time to time, teach your young children how to give up small things, such as a toy at the check-out counter. This will set the pattern for saying *no* to more elaborate material things when they are older. If a child is going to make it as a Christian in today's world, he or she must learn to say no to self. Let your children see times when you say no to yourself in situations where they can identify.

Provide an alternative to materialism. If a child is told constantly what he *can't* have, he will rebel against your whole system, feeling that "it's no fun to be a Christian." God's advice in Deuteronomy, chapters 6 and 11, is to saturate your child's environment with the things of the Lord instead of things of the world. The most important alternative to materialism that you can give your children is *yourself*.

Teach your children to share. If God has blessed you with an abundance of material things, use them to enrich the lives of the less fortunate. Let your Father in heaven and your children on earth see where your heart is. (They are the only persons who need to know about your philanthropy.) You can teach shar-

ing to your children in a multitude of ways, beginning with your own attitude of generosity toward others.

Pray and read God's Word. You cannot be a good father without outside help. Prayer and study of the Scriptures are essential.

Does your child see you reading the Bible? Do you rely on God's Word to solve both major and minor problems? When your children ask for your opinion or advice on a subject, think how much more meaningful it is if when you give them your opinion, you back it up with appropriate Scripture.

Pray together daily *for* and *with* your child for two things: (1) that you may have God's guidance and wisdom as a father, and (2) that He will fill your child with His Spirit and direct his or her thoughts and behavior. **Just as your Father listens to your heart and not your words, your child is more sensitive to your attitude and sincerity than by an oratorical prayer.**

As the spiritual leader, you can help your child begin and end the day with the Lord. This modeling carries over into your child's view of God: **If God is top priority in Dad's thoughts, He must be very important and therefore, He should be top priority in my thoughts.**

Give your children memories. One of the most beautiful gifts you can give your children is to fill their receptive minds with vivid memories of their father in various roles — as a Christian, as a spiritual leader in the home, as the loving husband of their mother, as a fun friend, as the provider, and as someone who made his children a top priority. Memories keep the model you set for your children ever available in their minds.

Spend time with your children. They are spontaneous in their actions, and their moods determine their receptivity to guidance. If father is not around when something exciting or important happens, or if he tries to guide when a child is not in the mood to be guided, both father and child miss the opportunity for a teachable moment that may *not* come around a second time. So spend quantities of high-quality time together. Be available, be approachable, and be "on call" for your children. In this way

they will know they hold a high priority in your life.

Establish special times. Have special times with your children. Group times are fine, but you should also arrange special one-on-one times with each individual child. Resist the temptation to preach or your child will shut you out. You want him to look forward to outings because he enjoys your company. He should not feel as if an oral report is necessary or that this is a time to be quizzed and drilled. The way you listen and respond will send as great a message as any profound advice you offer. Listening carefully will tell you a lot about your child's self-image and his emerging value system. You can gradually ease into topics that are important to you.

Try to leave your child with the following messages:

✓ I love you more deeply than you ever can imagine.

✓ I am interested in how you feel and what you do.

✓ I want to be involved in your life — to help, not to interfere. I am available for advice, not because I am smarter or because I don't trust you, but because I have lived longer and have profited by my experiences.

✓ My most important wish for you is that you learn to love God.

Spiritual Leadership Benefits Your Marriage

Once you step into the role of spiritual leader in your home, you will find that your family relationships operate on a much more meaningful and rewarding level. Your wife views you with more respect as the chairman of your own home than she would if you were chairman of your own corporation. One of the greatest gifts you can give your wife is your involvement in your children's lives.

Fathers who have their spiritual houses in order *earn* respect from their children. Esteem for their father and admiration of his personal qualities make children *want* to obey him. If you have provided your children with a Christ-like model, your children will follow you because they want to, not because they have to.

How fathers love and serve their *Master*, how they love and serve their *mates*, and how they work toward their *mission* in life will leave a lasting impression on their families. Children reared in such a home have *direction*. And

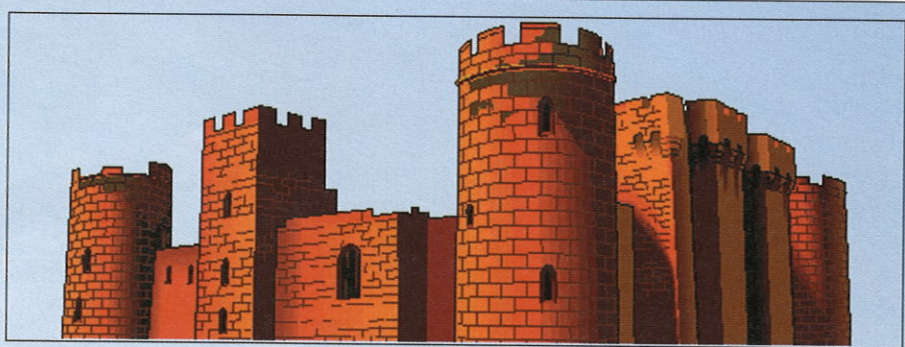
because they have direction, they also have *self-worth*. They feel positive about themselves because they have purpose in life. This helps them to develop proper *priorities*. They are able to say *no* to things that compete with their relationship with God, and this is very difficult for most teenagers unless they have the proper focus.

Parenting is not a pastime that always provides instant gratification. You may not see the full fruits of your labor until your children are much older. Christian

fathering is a long-term investment.

Fathers, when you stand before your Father in heaven and are held accountable for the rearing of your children, what will your judgment be? Will you have done it according to God's plan? □

William Sears, M.D. is a well-known, highly respected pediatrician. The above article is adapted from THE COMPLETE BOOK OF CHRISTIAN PARENTING AND CHILD CARE, written by Dr. Sears and his wife, Martha Sears, R.N. Used by permission. He and Martha and their family of eight children live in Capistrano Beach, California.



EVERY HOME A KINGDOM

No home can be truly Christian unless Christ is made the core of the family.

by *Clate A. Risley*

The Christian home is a sphere where love rules but where proper discipline is maintained.

It takes more than beautiful walls and comfortable furniture to make a home. To grow up in a home where Christ is known, loved, honored, and recognized daily in consistent living means more than wealth or fame.

The Christian home is an abode where the family dwells together in love and harmony, each delighting in the company of the others and seeking the good of all. Such a place cannot be maintained without the Bible, prayer, praise, playing, and planning together.

There is more to having a Christian home than having all members Christian. It's "togetherness" at the Christian level that makes a home Christian.

No home can be Christian until Christ has been invited, received, and made central in the thinking and actions of the family.

Every Christian does not have a Christian home, but if he remembers to be a Christian even when his home is not, his testimony before other members of the family is the greatest sermon they will ever hear. His life becomes a wedge for Christ and eternity, or a block between the family and Christ.

It takes effort to have a Christian home. True happiness doesn't just happen. It takes planning and leadership to make the right things happen. The results of selfishness and laziness are costly, both here and hereafter.

God intends every man to be a king, his wife a queen, every child a prince or princess with their home as their kingdom.

May God grant that every king and queen, and every prince and princess, will thoughtfully determine and assume his rightful share of the responsibility to make his kingdom a real Christian home. □

Clate A. Risley served for many years as a leader in the National Sunday School Association of America.



PRAYER FOR A CHILDLESS MOTHER

She had cared enough to bring him into life rather than send him out of existence by abortion.

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.

WE SAW HIM BLOW OUT THE CANDLES atop the chocolate cake. He took his time, and then with one boisterous puff, he blew them all out.

"You'll get your wish!" we shouted, as if in chorus.

He smiled back at us, his handsome face reminding me once more of how fortunate we were to have him as a part of our family. How he had grown! Those stretching arms and ever-lengthening legs, extending from a firm torso, prophesied a strong manhood.

As usual, friends and relatives had gathered for this festive occasion. We went through the same delightful ritual for everyone's birthday. There were the balloons and party hats, the noisemakers and colorful streamers, the candy-filled

favor cups at each place setting. Of course, the climax of the meal was always a special cake.

"Now it's time to open the presents!" his mother called out, pointing to a mound of gifts he had been eyeing throughout the afternoon and evening. He had been told that he couldn't even touch them till the magic moment came, but now it had arrived! He was all hands.

"Just what I wanted!" Jay exclaimed as he ripped open a large box to find a tractor he had been looking at in a local store. "You remembered!"

"Of course we remembered," I said. "How could we forget when you kept reminding us every time we passed that store?" We all broke into laughter.

Jay then put it aside to dig into yet another gift. And so it went till every pre-

sent was opened and the wrappings were piled at his feet. It was a wonderful evening.

I thought back over the eight years we had been celebrating birthdays for this boy. Each one stood out in my mind. Originally, my wife and I had planned to have two annual celebrations for Jay. There would be his biological birthday in July, then the day of his adoption in September. That had been our intent, but after a couple of years, the adoption day slipped by without partying.

Why? I wasn't sure. Perhaps because we wanted Jay to fit in with the family. The rest of us did not have two yearly birthday celebrations, so why underline the fact that he was adopted? Wouldn't it be better to weave him in with the other family members? For whatever reason,

the July event sufficed.

Yet this year, like every year on Jay's birthday, I had a heavy feeling in my heart. I did not pry it away, for I concluded that it had something to teach me.

The weight was heaviest when I turned out the last light in the house and everyone was soundly asleep. The place was quiet with the darkness of the night. As I passed Jay's room, I tiptoed in and found him already in dreamland. I paused for an extra moment of reflection.

Jay was two-and-a-half months old when we got him. On an autumn day we walked into the social worker's office where a foster couple held a baby boy wrapped in a yellow blanket. When we peered between the folds of the wraparound, we saw the most precious little face looking up into our eyes.

"Now I will leave you here in the office for about an hour so that you can be with the baby by yourselves," the social worker said as she and the couple left us.

The hour sped by too quickly. We were overcome with joy. We stared into that tiny face and could see more than one face. There were so many expressions forming, so many messages being given to us. Love welled up within our hearts.

"I want to take him home today," I said to my wife. She agreed. But the rules insisted that we had one hour with the child and then he would have to go back to the foster parents while we spent 24 hours deliberating. We knew that was the way it had to be.

"How can we wait till tomorrow?" my wife said to me on the way home.

"I don't know. I don't think we'll get any sleep tonight."

But we did sleep. And when morning came, we were ready to return to the social worker's turf. We were laden with our own blue blanket and other purchases we had gathered on the way.

All we needed now was the legal meeting before the judge. That finally came, securing Jay as ours. No longer did he belong to his birth mother. He was ours for life.

All these memories flooded my mind as I looked at Jay's sleeping face, particularly after another birth-celebration with friends and family. How time was passing! We had done so much with him already. Still, I knew the years would speed along and he would become a man and then leave home for his own adventures.

What a mystery is life! And in it all, how good of God.

So when I left his room for my own, I thought again of "her." *Who was she? What was her name? Where did she now live? Was she married or had she remained single? Did she have other children? Most of all, was she thinking about Jay on this night?*

She was the one who had borne him. She had conceived him in her womb,

*My prayer is
that both of
their hearts
may find the
comfort and
peace only
God can give.*

nourished him through those nine months, and then labored to bring him into the world. She had nursed him for those first days, had caressed him, had smiled back at his puckering face. She had also said that last good-bye to him as the agency took him away.

How many nights had she wept for him — to see him again, to know his whereabouts and something about the folks he was now living with, to have at least a glimpse of his growing frame?

She had thought enough about her son to write down medical histories of her own family for the social worker to file and to share with his new parents. She had cared enough to bring him into life rather than send him out of existence by abortion. She had also shared with the social worker that she loved her baby and wanted him to have a loving home.

So with all that known (and that's all we do know about the birth mother), I could not help but feel that while we were celebrating our boy's birthday, there was a young lady somewhere with a heavy heart. She was recounting the memories and storing them away with deep pain. How could she but hurt for the child that was no longer hers?

I know the complexities of all this.

We're counseled not to contact the biological mother. It makes sense. She's not to know us either. But still, the humans involved must have some links with one another, though we never meet.

Therefore, years ago I made it a point to remember that young woman on Jay's special birthday nights. As I'd get ready for sleeping, I'd picture her in my mind. Then I'd offer her to God in prayer.

Please Lord, take care of that childless mother who is somewhere on this earth. You know where she is. You know what her lot in life is this day. So be near her, and may she feel the comfort of our caring, knowing that a mother and father are taking good care of her boy.

Lord, You know everything. You know a heart and a mind that is flashing back to that hospital room where a tiny babe was held by an unmarried teenager. You also know whether or not her heart is hurting tonight.

So God, come near to her and wrap Your arms around this very special mother. We thank her for being so careful as she prepared her child for us. And Lord, may she come to know and understand Your love and caring for her....

I don't think I ever finished those yearly prayers. They seemed to just trail off into the night's darkness till I myself had fallen to sleep.

One of these years I suppose Jay will ask me about his "real" mother. I'll tell him that she is probably alive somewhere. I'll tell him that she cared enough to bring him into this world and that God answered her prayers by allowing him to come to our home.

I will then pray that the Lord will ease his own ache; I'll not be able to do anything to stop it. But I know God is faithful and will bring healing to my adoptive son's heart.

I'm convinced that his birth mother will be doubly blessed. She'll be surrounded not only by the prayers that rise from my own lips, but also by those of her son. For nine months her heart was next to his. So as the years go by, my prayer is that both of their hearts may find the comfort and peace only God can give.

Lord, may it be so. And happy birthday, Jay! □

Rev. J. Grant Swank, Jr. is pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Windham, Maine. He and his wife, Priscilla, are the parents of three children.



“PLEASE COME HOME!”

I learned why Satan is referred to as the accuser of the brethren.

by *Katharine Wool Parrish*

WE WERE APPROACHING THE middle of the worship service when it all began. I glanced toward the family pew from my place in the choir and saw that our teenage daughter was not there.

The sickness deep within me fought with the words of faith I was hearing, and seemed to win by benediction time. The sermon formed a backdrop to a scene in her bedroom earlier that morning. She had groaned about not feeling well and begged to be allowed to “skip” Sunday School. Even then, as I called, “We’ll expect you at church,” I sensed something amiss.

As the family overflowed from the car to the house—Bibles and Sunday story papers flying—we saw the note.

“I just have to get away and find out who I am,” we

read with dismay. “I can’t tell you where I’m going, but I’ll probably call you tonight. I still love you—and want you to pray for me. This doesn’t have anything to do with the fight we had last night” (there had been harsh words about a broken curfew, and the repeated threat to leave home). “I have some money...so don’t worry...I don’t know when I can come back.”

All the aroma went out of the dinner roast. The usually happy clutter of getting out of church clothes and preparing for a family meal was lost. We went through motions. We must have, for it was at the dinner table that we discussed Jeannie’s message to us. The little children couldn’t understand where she had gone. Everybody must have a reason for going away—to a friend’s house, a job, a date. Her small sister’s trusting

question, "Jeannie'll be home for supper, won't she?" cut deep into my heart. The teenagers were some help. Her brother thought the whole thing was a "stupid" way to behave, though he could see she had felt "hassled" by some of the house rules lately.

There was nothing to do but wait and pray. What we did was think. It was foolish to analyze first our pain and then our guilt. But we did. That afternoon my husband and I were in charge of a Sunday School teachers' training session. All I remember is that I desperately didn't want to be there, and that it went badly.

There was no one to whom we could go with this nightmare. We were "pillars" in the church and community. People thought we had the ideal family. Our beautiful girls always took part in church activities and sat religiously in the family pew. People came to us for advice on rearing children. How could we say, "Help! Our daughter has left home! We're paralyzed with fear for her safety—with guilt about our own inability as parents—with frustration about what to think and do?"

We were fortunate. That evening she called. The mouth-drying anxiety lessened when we knew she was safe. That was the first time I wanted to cry, "Please come home!" but God in His loving wisdom changed my words. I heard myself saying, in answer to her almost-pleading question, "No, I'm not coming to get you. I want you here more than anything right now. But if you come home before you're ready, you'll just leave again. We don't understand why you had to leave your home—we love and miss you—but you have to decide when to come home."

Then her daddy and I cried and prayed some more. Several years earlier, a small son had died. The devastation we felt was almost the same—except that Jeannie had wanted to leave.

And, of course, there was hope.

By morning I was wondering how long this would last—and how long I could bear it. I wept for the fragrance of her soft hair when I went to straighten her room. If only I could hold her close—touch the unruly curls, which I had once brushed into shiny ponytails.

Following the vacuum cleaner around the house, I remembered all the people I knew who had lived through the same sort of nightmare. It was disturbing to realize that many of these families were in our church. They had not been able to share their feelings with us. In that spiritual fellowship, they had not felt free to say, "We're *not* feeling fine. We're broken and hurting because of what our children are doing." Was it because they felt we wouldn't understand—or care? Perhaps we wouldn't have—until now.

Physical pain and exhaustion can not be more painful or devastating than what parents go through at a time like this.

One friend had shared. I was mopping the steps when I remembered a long-ago afternoon in her lovely home. Except for the goodness of God, there is no explaining why she decided to tell me of her family's experiences with a runaway daughter. At the time

all my children were young, and I must have felt—if I even gave it a thought—that nothing like that would ever happen to our good, loving "Christian" family.

The beauty of this friend was that she was serious about trusting in God and praised Him for everything that happened. There, on my hall stairs, her silent testimony ministered to my sorrowing mother's heart.

The words of Paul in Philippians 3:1 came to me: "Whatever happens, dear friends, be glad (rejoice) in the Lord." This verse kept coming to me as I recalled the faith my friend had shared. They had been through terrible times, but she could praise God through it all because she trusted His promises for her daughter.

Then I heard myself singing! The hymns of faith came up from my sobbing spirit, and I was praising God there on the steps! It was not because of what was happening, but because I suddenly knew the overwhelming love of my own Father who, because He wanted to do so, was sharing my pain!

Still I didn't know what was going to happen. But through tears and song, I raised one petition: "Please Lord," I begged, "bring her home when it's Your time for all of us." Even to Him I couldn't say, "And please hurry!" Somehow I knew He understood.

Authorities on the subject say there are stages of grief. Similarly, I believe there are stages of parental self-abuse. Whether or not your child chooses to leave home for one reason or another, or stays and rebels against your teaching, there is always the danger of this self-abuse. Physical pain and exhaustion can not be more painful or devastating than what parents go through at a time like this.

We began with the anxiety for our seventeen-year-old's safety. *Where was she? Who could she go to? Where did she get money, or transportation? Would she hitch-hike—horrible thought—and get picked up?*

Then came the recriminations. I learned why Satan is referred to as the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). The questions came sneeringly: *What makes you think you can rear children? Why should other people entrust their children to your teaching? Doesn't the Bible say that a man should be in charge of his own family if he's to be a leader in the church? What kind of "Christian" home do you have here anyway?*

But we weren't through. We went over her life—from plump, carefree and lovable babyhood to

the beauty of young womanhood—weeping all the way. What had we done here—and here—and here—that would cause her suddenly to feel she had to leave her family who obviously loved her?

Then came grief. If, indeed, our daughter had rejected all we meant to her, then she had taken with her all the dreams, plans, and ideals we held for her. We “hit bottom” in our sorrow.

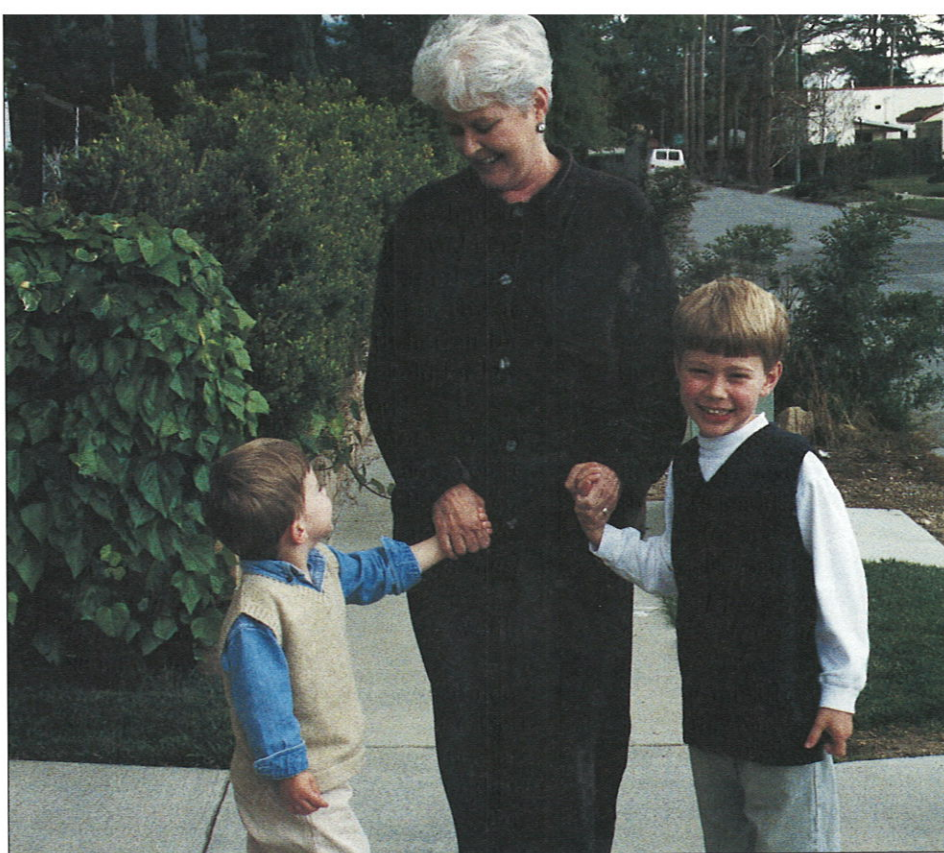
I remember taping a note to my husband’s shaving mirror. It said, “You’re the best Daddy in the world.” It was necessary for us to encourage each other. Otherwise Satan’s accusation—*You must be lousy parents. There’s no use to even try with these younger ones*—would seem to have been too true.

That must be the reason Paul admonished the early Christians to praise God so often. They were going through terrible times, and much ridicule from their heathen neighbors. They must have discovered—as we did—that when we praise God for Who He is, there isn’t any room for the many tools of Satan. Guilt, rejection, grief, self-abuse—even pain—melt in its shadow. There’s something triumphant about trusting Jesus with those things that hurt you so deeply. You find that you don’t have to let them be in charge of your life. We found that when we trusted God with our beloved daughter and our feelings about her, they no longer had the power to break us up into the crumbled pieces of personhood we had been on that Sunday afternoon.

Our story has a happy ending. She did come home and shared with us why she felt she needed to be on her own for awhile. She wanted to do something she thought we wouldn’t approve—it happened to be a different college from the one we had chosen for her—and she was afraid to tell us. By then, God had helped us to see that she is her own person and not the measure of our success or ability as parents.

Still—we were not through. Many times since then, we’ve had to remember that love is not possessive, but respects even one’s children for what they choose to be and do. Some days it’s difficult, but the grace of God never gives out, and He can keep us loving one another whether any of us deserves it or not. □

Mrs. Katharine Parrish is the mother of seven children, and lives in Cary, North Carolina.



GRAMMA’S MUSIC

Is this how Lois had felt with young Timothy?

by Sylvia Aftonomos

“THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME.” After two weeks away, I enjoyed the familiar surroundings, the peace and quiet of my home. I grabbed a cup of coffee, sat down in my living room, and picked up my Bible.

I opened it to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy. In the first chapter, Paul, the great apostle, called Timothy, “my dearly beloved son,” and recalled his unfeigned faith, “which dwelt first in his *grandmother* Lois and his *mother* Eunice.”

What a godly influence those two dear ladies obviously had on young Timothy! I tried to visualize them to glimpse their lives.

In the dawn’s light, I saw Eunice, his mother, busily occupied with household chores while Grandmother Lois looked after little Timothy and sang to him from her favorite psalms.

I followed them out to the fields. While his mother worked in a nearby vineyard, Grandmother played with young Timothy in the shade of a fig tree and taught him about the fruits of the earth, the beauty of nature, and of a powerful, yet loving God who created all.

In the sizzling heat of the noonday sun, I joined the little family under an old olive tree. Eunice drew water from the nearby well. As they enjoyed the refreshing ambrosia, his mother and grandmother talked about Christ, “The Living Water,” and all that He meant to them in their lives. The boy Timothy was taking it all in.

A group of shepherds approached, guiding their sheep to the well. The two women took the opportunity to teach little Timothy more about Jesus, “The Great Shepherd.”

The afternoon light shimmered and softened. Timothy rode a donkey and Lois surprised him with the most unbelievable of all statements: “God can make even a donkey speak human words!”

His eyes widened—

The ring of the phone startled me and brought me out of my reverie. I picked up the receiver.

(Continued on p. 14)



PLAY WEDDINGS

Children have the prospect of growing up, but adults pay a high price for their play weddings.

by *Vernon C. Lyons*

IN THEIR PLAY TIMES, children love to mimic adults. Little girls especially love to have play weddings. Rummaging through mother's cast-offs, a piece of veil is found, a dress long enough to drag on the floor, and some high-heeled shoes. Then add some of Mom's lipstick and all that remains is to talk some not-so-willing boy into being the groom for the occasion. Flowers from the

weeds of a vacant lot make up the bouquet, and after some giggles the ceremony is finished. But it is soon forgotten and then they are either making mud pies or playing cops and robbers. It is understood that nothing serious was meant by anyone involved.

But now we have adults who mimic the children and have play weddings. There is a little more class and a lot more money, but it

all too often appears that after the ceremony is over, nothing serious was meant by it! Children at least have the prospect of growing up, but adults pay a high price for their play weddings.

In his great love chapter the Apostle Paul says, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind

me" (I Corinthians 13:11 NIV).

When you get a real marriage license and have a real wedding and make real vows, then you are really married!

Jesus put it plainly by saying, "What God has joined together let not man separate" (Mark 10:9).

Now if a person is not quite grown up, then he should not have a grown-up wedding. If he does not mean what he says, then he should not say it. If he is not a responsible adult, then he should not make an adult commitment. If you are not quite sure about what you are doing, then don't do it.

At a wedding, a vow is made to stay married until "death do us part." We should all keep our promises. A vow is an upgraded, super-serious, exceedingly solemn and sacred promise. It is to be kept regardless of difficulties, temptations, trials, adversity, or problems of any kind. It is to be kept even if it is most difficult to keep it.

Why then is a vow not kept? At base,

this is an issue of integrity. An honest person keeps his word. When you marry, make sure you are marrying an honest person. Unless this is a person of sterling integrity, you are marrying someone whose word is not good.

Don't marry someone who is incompatible or who will be cruel to you physically or mentally or who will abandon you or be unfaithful to you.

The real issue is character. One who is not of good character does not make a good marriage partner. With passions aflame and emotions running loose, it is very hard for a young person to be a good judge of character. This is why no one should marry without parental approval because the emotionally detached parents are far better judges of character than an emotionally involved young person.

If you truly believe what the Bible says about marriage, you will take these truths most seriously. All weddings at the church where I pastor are Christian wed-

dings, and Christian weddings are for Christian people. There is always at least six months of pre-marital counseling, including the opportunity for the couple to prepare for this important experience by meaningful interaction, the reading of books, listening to tapes, and talking with mature spiritual people about their decision and the future.

We do everything we know to prepare young people for marriage and to strengthen existing marriages through preaching and teaching and counseling. There is a world of help — seminars, video series, books, tapes, library resources — all make their contribution to strengthening a marriage.

For Christian adults, there is no such thing as a "play wedding." Marriage is serious business! □

Rev. Vernon C. Lyons has been senior pastor of the Ashburn Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, since 1951. Through the years he has also had a ministry in writing, radio and television.

GRAMMA'S MUSIC

(Continued from p. 12)

"Hi, Mom?" My daughter's voice greeted me. "Would you like to go out to lunch with us? The children would be delighted."

I hesitated, silent for a moment. Would Lois pass up an opportunity to create a pleasant memory in her grandson's life? True, life is vastly different today but are children's needs any different?

"Are you there, Mom?"

"Yes! Yes, I'm coming."

I listened to the children's chatter. To their delight, I gasped each time they babbled about the escapades of Zoro, their doggy. On our way out of the restaurant I held the hands of my two grandsons, ages two and four, while their mother carried their infant sister.

We walked to the car. The boys wanted me to march with them. And so I marched. Then they wanted me to sing. We all sang:

"This is the day, this is the day

"That the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.

"Let us rejoice, Let us rejoice,

"And be glad in it, and be glad in it!"


Cocking their heads upward, the boys watched Grandma sing. I caught the glee in their eyes and felt rejuvenated, blessed.

Is this how Lois had felt with her grandson Timothy?

Back home I thanked the Lord for the memory of a happy time with my grandchildren. It is like music that keeps playing and warms the heart long after the instruments are silent.

But even more, I realized anew how meaningful the influence of godly grandparents can be in the lives of their children's children. □

Sylvia Aftonomos is a free lance writer who lives in Omaha, Nebraska.



HAVE YOU SEEN OUR NCF WEB-SITE?

Dr. Clyde M. Narramore, Christian psychologist and founder of the Narramore Christian Foundation, has recently announced the addition of on-line services. The new NCF web-site is located on the HarborCity Network, a Christian network owned and operated by Martin Erdmann of Hendersonville, N.C.

It is now possible to hear a number of Dr. Narramore's Psychology For Living radio programs on the Internet. In addition to information about the Foundation's ministries, viewers of the site may request free booklets on various topics. The new web-site can be accessed at:

www.harborcity.org/ministries/ncf

To e-mail your comments and questions use:
ncf@pacbell.net

See you on-line. Tell your friends about this!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Kevin Narramore

MINISTERING IN MOSCOW

SOME OF MY FONDEST CHILDHOOD memories include the times when our family would travel to summer Bible conferences. Oh the joy of ping-pong, campfires, hot fudge sundaes, swimming in a lake, and sailing with my big sister, Melodie! An even keener memory, however, are the times when Dad would speak on topics such as, "Why A Psychologist Believes The Bible." After each message, scores of people would flock to the front asking Dr. Narramore for a few minutes in order to talk about a personal problem or some pressing family concern. He generously gave of his own free time and would sometimes even squeeze a breakfast or lunch appointment into his schedule, but often it was not possible to accommodate everyone.

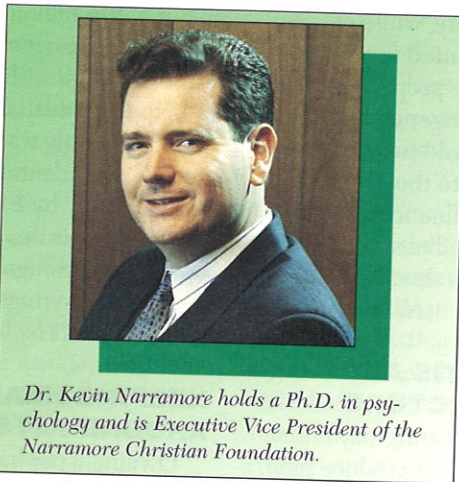
Soon it became clear that in every state of the union there was an outcry for Christian mental health practitioners who could minister to the whole person.

It was precisely to meet this need that the Narramore Christian Foundation founded the Rosemead School of Psychology. In just 30 short years there are now several thousand competent Christian therapists across America.

But who is ministering to the emotional and spiritual needs of the people beyond our borders?

It's a widely known fact that between 25-30 percent of all Americans suffer from some form of emotional or mental disturbance. In the world's largest nation, the former Soviet Union, you can be sure this figure is much higher. Any regime of tyranny and oppression that denies individual liberty and negates the existence of God cannot help but create a society with widespread psychological wounds and a tremendous spiritual vacuum.

In the days of the cold war, the term "emotionally ill" was often used to label those considered to be dissidents of communism. This included Christians. Many of these so-called "dissidents" were shipped off to Siberia and subjected to hard physical labor. Others were imprisoned. After the break-up of the old Soviet system, there emerged a wide-



Dr. Kevin Narramore holds a Ph.D. in psychology and is Executive Vice President of the Narramore Christian Foundation.

spread awareness of the need for improving the mental health of everyone.

While the breakup of the Soviet Union opened the door to many wonderful spiritual benefits, the dismal state of mental health in Russia has been further battered by the numerous social upheavals. Since 1990, for example, alcohol consumption among males has doubled, the suicide rate has increased by one half, and the number of orphans has increased by more than 34 percent.

Specialists agree that psychological care in Russia is extremely inadequate. There is a tremendous shortage of treatment facilities. Those that do exist are often deficient. There are not enough psychological practitioners, nor are there sufficient institutions to train them. And, of course, there is little or no psychological training with a *Christian* emphasis.

One beacon of light in all of this darkness has been the influence of a new school, the **Moscow Christian School of Psychology**, which offers graduate training for Christian mental health professionals who will deliver services to children and families in Russia. In addition, the school has a Christian counseling center and also sponsors conferences on Christian mental health in various cities. Amazingly, the program has been approved by the Russian Department of Education and has excellent rapport with high government officials.

Recently the Narramore Christian Foundation provided a grant to Dr. Steven Williams (an American Christian

psychologist serving missionaries from his headquarters in Austria) enabling him to fly to Moscow to present a 68-hour course at MCSP on family counseling. His lectures were translated in tandem from English into Russian.

Upon his return to Austria, he sent a report covering many aspects of his experiences in Moscow. Writes Dr. Williams:

"I was received with warm hospitality and I shared an apartment with a Russian family. While the interaction with the students was a pleasure, I was somewhat discouraged by the learning environment. Paint was peeling off the walls, and the room in which I was teaching was no larger than 9 feet by 12 feet. Electric wiring and plumbing was installed on the outside of the walls. There was only a very small white board on which to write and there was no lectern. (It was customary for teachers to literally write their lectures on the walls and doors which were later washed.) There was no overhead projector. There was no library to speak of, and most of the books were in English rather than in Russian."

Interestingly, a few of the students at MSCP entered the program, not because of its Christian emphasis but because of their desire to learn the helping arts. Some of them who enrolled not knowing the Lord have made decisions for Christ during their studies. The Narramore Christian Foundation believes that the Moscow School of Christian Psychology has the potential for making a lasting impact on Russian society. Many of their graduates will be working with troubled families and will share the love of Christ as part of their work.

Dr. Williams concludes his letter:

"As I completed my time in Moscow, I felt a new awareness of the needs of the Russian people and how a competent program in Christian psychology could produce a meaningful influence on Russian society. I pray that the Narramore Christian Foundation will continue to see the need for providing Christian counseling outside the borders of North America, thus reaching the world for Christ. Thank you for the privilege of working with you in this noble commission." □

HEALTH WATCH

by Eva Hallam Solberg

STORING MEDICINES

Moisture can cause medicines to deteriorate and lose their effectiveness. Therefore, don't store medicines in the bathroom. Keep them, instead, in their original containers, with cotton removed, in a cool dry location.

(The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter)

MEMORY AND REASONING

Nature matters more than nurture when it comes to memory and reasoning. What you're born with and what you experience both count, but the experiences accumulated over a lifetime were once thought to play the bigger role in mental ability. However, a recent study of 110 pairs of identical twins over age 80

found that heredity accounted for about 60 percent of overall mental ability, while environment accounted for the rest — the same proportion that is seen in younger adults. This finding should prompt more research into the genetic factors that influence aging and age-related illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease.

(Health After 50)

ARTHRITIS AND ACUPUNCTURE

"Acupuncture may offer some benefit to reduce pain, although more testing is needed to determine whether the benefit is due to the placebo effect or some other mechanism," says Johns Hopkins rheumatologist and *Health After 50* board member Dr. John Flynn.

More than 12 million

Americans have turned to acupuncture and have spent about half-a-billion dollars on it for problems, including asthma and infertility, as well as help for arthritis. The procedure recently was upgraded from "experimental" to the level of "tool" by FDA and the National Institutes of Health — the same category as scalpels and syringes.

(Health After 50)

KEEPING HEALTHY AROUND PETS

Owning a pet has many emotional, psychological, and physical benefits. But keeping animals around the house also may expose you to pet-transmitted infections or diseases. A review of illnesses spread by dogs and cats in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* suggests ways to reduce your risks:

- ✓ Vaccinate pets for rabies and other diseases in your area.
- ✓ Treat dogs to prevent heartworm, which in rare cases can infect people.
- ✓ Keep animals and their living areas clean to prevent skin infections and infestation with disease-carrying parasites, such as ticks, fleas, or mites.
- ✓ Clean up after your pet — many diseases are spread by animal feces.
- ✓ Wash hands after contact with pets or their feces. To avoid infection with toxoplasmosis, pregnant women should not change cat litter boxes.
- ✓ Teach children to avoid unfamiliar animals, and don't leave young children unattended around pets.
- ✓ Get medical attention for all animal bites.

(HealthNews)



Living Memorials



My Gift of Love

TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF:

Beryl Farmer
Duane Logsdon

Gordon and Florence Johnson
Herman Funk

PRESENTED BY:

Anita Farmer
Clyde & Ruth Narramore and the
staff of the Narramore
Christian Foundation
Clyde & Ruth Narramore
The staff of the Narramore
Christian Foundation

(Gifts received after March 16, 1998, will appear in the July/August 1998 issue of PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING.)

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Working Through the Past
- Christ-Centered Psychology
- Why Do Children Kill?
- A House Divided By Rage
- Lonely?
- A Plea For America

by Clyde M. Narramore

IS THERE ANY HELP FOR MY SHYNESS?

QUESTION:

I have read your booklet, "Children Who Are Shy." You are the only one I know who addresses this subject. I am afraid it is too late for me to get help. (I am seventy-four years old.) I grew up with this affliction, not knowing help was possible. What's more, I didn't even know I needed help.

I was born and raised in a pastor's home. I asked Jesus to come into my heart and life in my late teens and began to love the things of the Lord, but I kept it all inside. I enrolled in a Bible school for three years and sang in a quartet, but my shyness only seemed to grow worse.

I want so much to tell people how to be saved. I think of what I will say the next time I talk to someone, but when I come face to face, the words just won't come out. This bothers me when I read Romans 10:9 and 10. The thought crosses my mind that maybe I'm not really saved. I have prayed many times that God would give me boldness, but it seems He doesn't hear me.

I am very discouraged and depressed. Is there any help for me?

ANSWER:

Your letter is so precise that I would like to review the main points.

You say you are extremely shy and that you grew up with this affliction.

Interestingly, you state that you did not know help was available and didn't even know you needed it.

I often hear shy people

say, "I was born this way." In other words, they are intimating that it would be impossible to change. But the opposite is true.

You say you were saved in your late teens, but when you try to witness, you fail. Then when you read Romans 10:9 and 10, you wonder if you are truly saved: *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

I presume the part of the verse that bothers you is "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If so, you are lifting that phrase out of context. Confessing Christ with your mouth doesn't mean you are expected to lead three people to the Lord every week. You have confessed in your letter to me that you were saved in your late teens. Evidently you are eager to tell others how to be saved because it means so much to you, but you can't get the words out because of your shyness.

You also say you are discouraged and depressed. It is natural for you to resent being locked into your cage of shyness. God created us as social beings and means for us to interact with one another. In view of this, when you get help for your shyness you will no longer feel so discouraged and depressed.

Although you say you pray for boldness, you feel that

your prayers don't seem to be heard. But you can be sure that God will never leave you nor forsake you. As you go through the process of conquering your shyness, you'll be in a even better position to witness for Christ. Many people can testify that after working through a problem they were better able to understand others going through similar situations.

You say you are in your seventies and fear that it's too late to change. Let me assure you that as long as a person is still breathing, he or she can change. Age is no limiting factor.

Finally, you ask, "Is there any help for me?"

The answer is a definite yes. If you want help and are willing to get it, there are people whom God has gifted and trained to help you become more outgoing and relational. No one has to remain as he or she is.

May I suggest you focus on Scriptures which show that God wants you to be confident and dynamic. Jesus says in John 10:10b, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

In Genesis 1:28 God said that He created human beings in His own image. He then instructed them to populate the earth, subdue it, to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and every living thing on the earth. In other words, God wants people to take charge, and not be wimps.

What causes extreme shyness? There are numerous

reasons why a person may be so reticent. Of course, there are some genetic differences from person to person, but these variations are usually within a normal range.

Some people develop in a shy, quiet, bashful manner because this type of behavior was modeled for them as they were growing up. Perhaps one or both of the parents were like this, and the child absorbed it.

In some instances children have been severely squelched by a dominant mother or father or other family member or caretaker. As one lady said, "I learned early in life that the best thing for me to do was to shut my mouth and never open it."

Health factors may also cause a person to feel inferior, inhibited, and shy.

Even some denominations and churches place an unreasonably high priority on quietness.

I suggest you see a licensed Christian psychologist who is able to interview you and give psychological tests. After diagnosis is established, a therapist will know what procedures to follow in bringing about changes.

Let me assure you that you can change significantly.

The following Scripture verse was a blessing to me as a college student and has been for many years: *"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist"* (Luke 21:15). This is a promise from God. May its eternal truth become a reality in your life! □

by Lee and Gloria Bendell

ARE YOUR PRAYERS EFFECTIVE?

I BELIEVE THAT GOD ANSWERS PRAYER! I know that He answers *my* prayers, and I believe that God answers *your* prayers as well! However, I am well aware that in His wisdom and justice, His answers may or may not always coincide with our requests. Like Jesus, we need to respond, "Not as I will but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

Perhaps we have some doubts about the effectiveness of our prayers. Are God's "conditions" too stringent for us to meet? James 5:16 gives us both the command to pray, as well as the conditions that must be met if our prayers are to be effective: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." In the King James it states, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

First, we must ask ourselves if we are "righteous" enough for our prayers to be effective — to *avail much*. Certainly, we are all aware of our shortcomings as reinforced by God's Word: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Some sins are of commission; some of omission. Ecclesiastes 7:20 bluntly tells us, "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins." Romans 3:10 reiterates, "There is no one righteous, not even one."

Fortunately, we have a wonderful, awesome God who takes care of our shortcomings! He is able to declare us righteous. "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who *obey* the law who will be declared righteous" (Romans 2:13). "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:21, 22).

Praise be to God for the righteousness that we as believers gain vicariously through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross.



"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus Christ) the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:18, 19).

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. My mental picture is that because of my faith in Jesus Christ, **when God looks at me, an unrighteous man, He views me through the blood of Jesus Christ who died for me, and this makes me righteous in His sight.**

Of course, our prayers must also be sincere— fervently and powerfully so. Psalm 62:8 exhorts us, "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge." Then we are encouraged by His words, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). I have to believe that delighting in the Lord means seeking His perfect will. Thus as we pray for healing, for changes in attitude or behavior, for special needs of our family or friends, for our church and other significant ministries (e.g. NCF), for our work or financial situations, for our country and its leaders — keep in mind that *God wants us to pray for the desires of our hearts, but know*

that what He gives us is for our best and is His will.

Yes, we must ask and seek (Matthew 7:7, 8). But we must ask according to His will (I John 5:14, 15), we must ask in faith, not doubting (Matthew 21:21, 22), we must petition with thankfulness (Philippians 4:6), we must pray continually (I Thessalonians 5:17), and we must ask in the precious name of Jesus who is our Lord and Savior (John 14:13, 14).

If we harbor sin in our hearts, the Lord will *not* listen (Psalm 66:18). And if we disobey His commands and don't do those things that are pleasing to Him — specifically "love one another" — our requests may not be granted (I John 3:21-23)!

As we observe our National Day of Prayer on May 7th, the familiar verse of II Chronicles 7:14 sums up our need to pray while setting forth the humble attitude with which we are to go about it: **"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."**

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

—Joseph Scriven



All Scripture in this article is quoted from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.



OUR WORLD TODAY

by Eva Hallam Solberg

EVANGELISM TO HISPANIC WORLD

Anglo-Christian leaders in the U.S. will be joining with Hispanic leaders for an historic International Congress on Hispanic Missionary Evangelism to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 25-30. The goal of the meeting is to create strategy for reaching Hispanics in the United States and the whole of the Spanish-speaking world during the next century.

(EP News Service)

FATHERHOOD FACTS

More than 90 percent of today's fathers are present at their children's births.

In a 1993 study, 70 percent of children of divorce and remarriage reported a poor relationship with their father.

Forty percent of children of divorced parents haven't seen their fathers in the past year.

A 1995 poll found that 72 percent of fathers would like to spend more time with their children.

Seventy percent of juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes, as do 60 percent of rapists and 72 percent of adolescent murderers.

A 1991 survey revealed that 75 percent of men said they would trade rapid career advancement for the opportunity to spend more time with their families.

Children living apart from their biological fathers are 40 percent more likely to repeat a grade and 70 percent more likely to be expelled from school.

Forty-two percent of non-custodial fathers have no timeshare privileges.

"Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older he will remain upon it."

—Proverbs 22:6 TLB

This year, 2.5 million children will join the ranks of the fatherless.

Twenty-three million American children do not live with their biological fathers.
(Pasadena Weekly)

MEN CAUGHT DOING GOOD

Men from a church in Nashville, Tennessee, provide, free of charge, an oil change every three months for vehicles of their older attendees and for single parents. They will also change the oil for other members who only have to pay for the cost of oil and filter.

In another state men visit their community's elderly members quarterly and offer to change light bulbs, fix a leaky faucet, or tend to other small problems.

Others have patched or replaced roofs, chopped a supply of wood, and assembled do-it-yourself furniture for single parents.

(Contact)

Note: What a great ministry! We hope the idea grows among our churches.

LOOSEN TECHNOLOGY'S GRIP ON YOUR LIFE

Some people have become addicted to the convenience of technology. The root of their addiction is their belief that they are indispensable, and that others simply can't get along without quick com-

munication with them.

Some things to do to eliminate the hold technology may have on you: Use your fax machine, E-mail, voice mail and pagers only when absolutely necessary, be available to people only during certain hours of the day; avoid unnecessary loads of bad news; and stay away from unhealthy temptations that the media have glamorized.

(Bottom Line Personal)

DAY CARELESS

Studies increasingly confirm the common-sense intuition that day care poses dangers to small children. So why is the Clinton Administration pushing it?

Quality care is dependent on the same underlying emotional processes that make for strong mother-child relationships. For young children, high-quality care means a caregiver who stays with the child for long periods of time — not just months. A high-quality caregiver babbles, chatters, coos, hugs, strokes a baby or toddler, and consistently makes the effort to respond warmly to his verbal and nonverbal attempts at communication.

The medical consequences of group care (more acquired illnesses) are disturbing enough. A study involving 22,000 children concludes: "Full-time care for infants and young children puts a sub-

stantial proportion of the population at risk for psychological maladaptation."

The more that outside pressures—including government subsidies—help push grudging parents into using day care, the worse the negative effects of day care are likely to become.

A tax credit available *only* for commercial care—which is what President Clinton is set to propose—will bypass not only women who are homemakers, but all women who choose to keep their children's care in the family—the vast majority of all American mothers of young children. The day-care industry, a multi-billion-dollar concern which looks to use the power of government to increase its profits, will be the one to benefit.

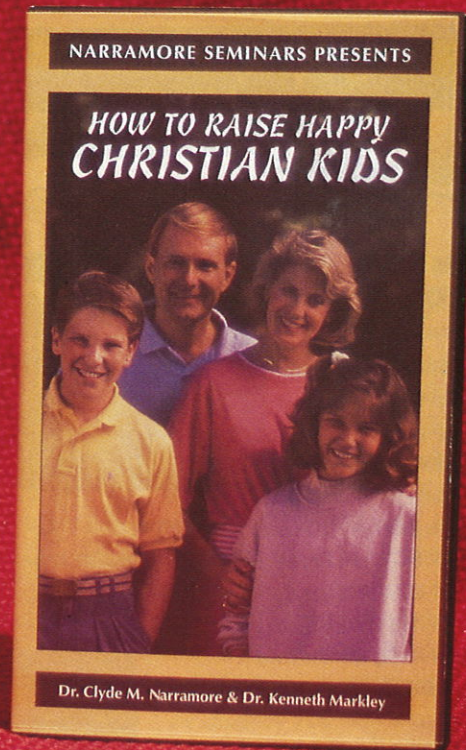
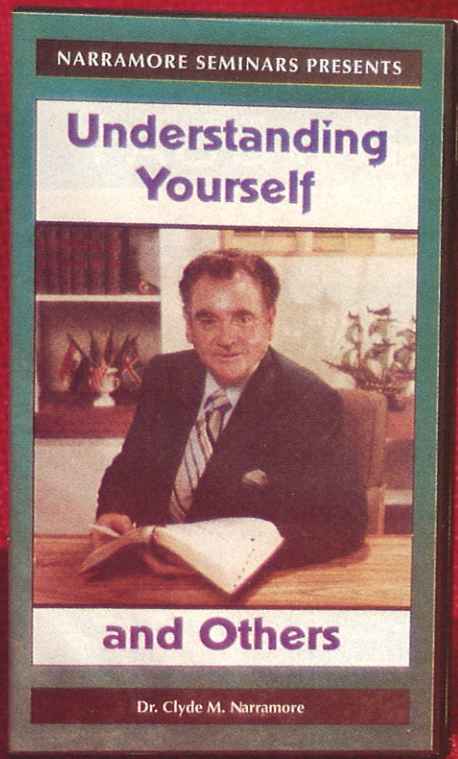
To promote government subsidies only for those who use commercial child care is to push a service that is actively harmful for some children and one that most parents emphatically do not want.

(Maggie Gallagher in NATIONAL REVIEW)

NEGATIVE ADVICE

Former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said, if you want to raise a delinquent, you should:

1. Turn the child over to a sitter as often as possible.
2. Tell him he is cute when he hits.
3. Drop him off at Sunday school and go somewhere else yourself.
4. Let him read anything he wants and watch TV without restrictions.
5. Allow him to stay out as late as he wants.



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