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Editor's family

The Pinedos on
The Importance
of Family.

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from the editors



We feature our editor's family, the Pinedos, and they share with us 10 ways to show how important family is. If we take "family" seriously, we will take our future spouse seriously, which means that we will marry a Christian. Taking our family seriously also means that we will keep ourselves sexually pure before marriage, as God tells us to do. These are important topics we cover in this issue of *Christian Family*.

Husbands should take responsibility for their mistakes, as the example of Judah shows us. We also offer 10 verses to encourage wives and moms. In all our lives, it is important to remember that Jesus loves us, so we take a closer look at that song. The rainbow, from the story of Noah, is a constant reminder of the promise that God loves us. Join us in this issue as we work together to strengthen our Christian families.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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DISFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES IN GENESIS...

Men, let's own up to our mistakes

family.

by Eric Welch

The key thread running through the fabric of Scripture is the Seed of the woman (cf. Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:16). To preserve that thread through history, the Lord used the concept of family loyalty and covenant blessing as an instrument to bring that promised Seed into the world. God was able to work with that thread, even through flawed individuals who often broke family loyalty. Whenever the patriarchs made mistakes, God intervened through His providence to ensure the thread would never break. By the end of Genesis, that thread had passed from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There were times in which the individuals were so flawed; how could God keep that thread from breaking? In fact, by the time we reach Genesis 38, the covenant blessing had by-passed three of Jacob's sons—Reuben, Simeon and Levi—because they had broken family loyalty. Reuben acted sexually immoral (Genesis 35:21-22; 49:3-4). Simeon and Levi acted treacherously and violently (Genesis 34:25-31; 49:5-6). The next in line was Judah. How would he act? Would he break family loyalty? Would he qualify for the blessing?

When you read to the end of Genesis 37, it does not look good. Jacob's sons were jealous of Joseph. They took him and threw him into a pit to figure out what to do with him. At first, they wanted to kill him. It was Judah who proposed that they sell him to Midianite slavers (vss. 26-27) who were headed to Egypt.

Judah's story picks up at chapter 38 and it continues to spiral downward. Can the blessing continue through him? In this chapter Judah illustrates that Jacob's sons have already begun to act like the wicked Canaanites. They have begun to intermarry with them. In fact, two of Judah's sons broke family loyalty by not adhering to the near eastern custom of levirate marriage. Because God's purpose was being thwarted by wickedness, He intervened directly. God killed Er, Judah's firstborn, for his wickedness (vs. 7). Onan, the second born, was selfish and sought his own pleasures; God killed him, too (vs. 10). The third son was too young to fulfill his familial responsibilities. Things do not look good. The rest of the chapter shows that Judah himself is also about to break family loyalty too.

At this point, many commentators find the story of Judah in chapter 38 as out of place. Yet, in the context of the covenant blessing, I find it one of the most pivotal chapters of Genesis. The events of Genesis 38 are graphic and are not meant for children, but the story is key. Just when Judah is about to break family loyalty himself, we see him become a changed man. This is what happened. Judah found out that Tamar was "with child by harlotry" (vs. 24). He was so enraged with her that he was about to execute her by fire. At that moment, Tamar revealed that Judah was the father of her twins. Then, here is the pivotal moment. Judah says, "She [Tamar] has been more righteous than I" (vs. 26).

From that point on, Judah is such a changed man that we later see him stepping forward to lead his brothers (43:3,8; 44:14,16,18; 46:28). He becomes their spokesman and makes decisions for the group. In the end, he was willing to place his freedom on the line when he thought Egyptian prime minister (Joseph) was going to make a slave out of Benjamin (Genesis 44:18-34). At the end of Genesis, as Jacob was giving his deathbed blessing to his sons, he confirmed the promised Seed to Judah (49:8-10).

When Judah said, "She [Tamar] has been more righteous than I," he owned up to his sin. From that moment, Judah humbled himself and showed responsibility. That is real leadership. Judah proved himself qualified to receive the covenant blessing. Through the line of Judah, God would continue to weave the thread of the covenant blessing and bring the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus of Nazareth, into the world.

Husbands and fathers, what a powerful lesson we learn from such a dysfunctional family. Like Judah, do we own up to our mistakes and take full responsibility for them? As husbands and fathers who wish to be the spiritual heads of our family, do we have a contrite heart that is sensitive to our sins and easily broken when we know our sins break God's heart? Let us own up to our wrongs, admit them, and say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong." Such confession can go a long way in healing a broken relationship. Sometimes a man's ego prevents him from apologizing for a wrong. He thinks it shows weakness, but it is the opposite. It takes the courage of a lion to sacrifice our egos at the feet of Jesus, just as Judah was willing to lay down his freedom for his little brother. It's when we are on our knees that we stand the tallest. May God give us more "Judahs" in our families! ■

parenting.



by Paul Holland

your Princess marries a Prince

Dads often refer to their daughters as “princesses.” Christian women are “daughters of the King.” If they are “daughters of the King,” then they are also “princesses.” Christian men are “sons of the King,” or “princes.”

As I write this article, I am two weeks away from performing the wedding ceremony between one of my princesses and her prince. My older daughter found a Christian man, and they have decided to serve their Savior together in marriage. We know a lot about his background; we know his parents and both sets of grandparents, all of whom are faithful Christians. Why should a Christian marry a Christian? How can you ensure that your princess or prince will marry a Christian prince or princess?

Let us answer the last question first. You cannot ensure that your son or daughter will marry a Christian. If you live in a society where the parents arrange the marriages of their children, it might be possible. There’s nothing you can do to **completely ensure** that your child will marry a Christian.

Even if your child marries a Christian, you have no guarantee that he or she will marry a strong, faithful Christian. Nor do we have any guarantee that if he or she does marry a Christian, they will stay together, stay married, and/or stay faithful. There just are not any guarantees when it comes to predicting human behavior.

What can you do to make it as **likely** as possible that your child will marry a Christian? It begins as early as

your children comprehend what marriage is about. When they begin understanding who “daddy” is, relative to “mommy,” and who “mommy” is, relative to “daddy,” then it is necessary to start teaching them how important it is to marry the **right** person.

The global destruction brought about by the flood of Noah’s day (Genesis 6–8) was instigated by the marriage of the “sons of God” with the “daughters of men” (6:1–4). It is extremely probable that the “sons of God” were descendants of Adam and Eve’s son, Seth, who “called on the name of the Lord” (4:26), while the “daughters of men” were descendants of Cain who were epitomized in the vengeful man, Lamech (4:23–24).¹

Abraham decided to find a wife for his only, unique son (Hebrews 11:17), so he sent a servant to Abraham’s homeland because Abraham was adamant that Isaac not marry a Canaanite (Genesis 24:3,8,37–38). We have no record of God commanding Abraham to find a certain kinswoman for his son. In fact, the chosen wife, Rebekah, came from a home which worshipped idols (see 24:29; 31:19,30,35).² Without a spoken word from God, we cannot know for sure. But Abraham knew God had put a curse on the Canaanites (15:16), and it is my guess that Abraham did not want Isaac marrying into a people who were under God’s curse. Of course, the curse was because of their iniquity, which had its roots in idolatry.

God would later command Israel not to marry the Canaanites **because** of their idolatry and the powerful influence one spouse has over another (Deuteronomy 7:3–4). God was **not** forbidding **interracial** marriages; He was forbidding **interfaith** marriages. In fact, those same Israelites had seen some of their own family members struck dead by God because they had been influenced to worship idols by relationships with the Moabites (Numbers 25:1–9).

While our daughter and her prince are both strong members of the Lord’s church, I have noticed that she is also strongly influenced by him. Up until last year, our family had been so close that she told us almost everything that happened in her life and asked Mom and Dad’s opinion. The closer she became to her boyfriend, and especially once they were engaged, the less likely she was to ask our advice. Rather, she began saying, “I’ve got to talk to Jacob about this.” That is as it should be. I am simply illustrating how one’s heart and mind turn toward the object of their love and away from Mom and Dad (cf. Genesis 2:24). **That’s** why you want the other person in their life to have the same religious values you do.

One’s spouse influences how they spend money, how they raise their children, whether they spank or not, how they view their work ethic, how they dress, and how they talk. In every way and in every aspect of life, one’s spouse influences the other. You want them, at a minimum, to walk together spiritually.

Therefore, while your children are young and as they grow up, teach them how important this is. Your spouse helps you make the right decision spiritually. Gently and kindly point out the example of others to your children, both negatively and positively: “If her husband were a Christian, that would likely not have happened...” “He has the support he has, to do what he does, because he married a Christian.” Indoctrinate your children in the importance of marrying a Christian.

Secondly, help them understand that when your princess or prince marries, he or she marries into a family. Since so many people are **deeply** religious, if both have the same religion, there will be much less conflict with the two families. Re-read the paragraph before the paragraph above, the one that begins “One’s spouse influences how...” The closer those major points are between the two families, the less conflict they will have.

Esau married Hittite women, and his marriages brought grief to his parents (Genesis 26:34–35). Esau recognized that the marriages to the Canaanite women displeased his father, Isaac (28:8), so he subsequently married into Ishmael’s family (28:9). Teach your children that the closer the two potential families are, the more peace and harmony will exist in their lives.

Third, from the day your child is born, pray that God will lead him or her to a son or daughter of the King. I have long prayed for three things for my daughters: they will marry a strong Christian, they will stay faithful, and they will get a good education. Jacob is an answered prayer.

Fourth, within reason, make it possible for your children to meet Christians. If your church does not have a youth group, get them involved with a Bible camp, or let them attend a Christian university, or help them think evangelistically with a boy or girl before they think about a relationship. If they are adults, they may have to move to a larger city where there is a larger church where they might meet a Christian. Once they are married, perhaps they will move back and work with the smaller congregation.

We parents cannot guarantee our children will marry a Christian, but there are things we can do to make it more likely. The benefits of that decision will be felt now and in the life to come! ■

1. See the author’s commentary on Genesis 6 for reasons why he says the “sons of God” were probably good men while “daughters of men” were evil men: https://www.swartzcreek.net/?page_id=971.

2. See his commentary on Genesis 24 at the address above.

marriage.

10

BIBLE VERSES

for Wives

by Willie Alvarenga

In the last issue we presented 10 verses husbands are to consider in marriage. In this article we will review 10 verses for wives. I hope they will be of great edification for all women who deeply respect God's Word.

1. **Genesis 2:24:** *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

From this verse the wife learns that, once she marries a man, he becomes her priority in the family. Then they become one flesh, which denotes perfect unity and harmony among them.

2. **Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18:** *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”*

In this passage, God instructs the woman about her responsibility toward her husband. She is to submit to her husband in the way she is to submit to the Lord. This submission does not mean that she is inferior; rather, it shows her obedience to what God has established in His Word.

3. **Ephesians 5:23:** *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”*

From this passage, a wife learns that the husband is her head, that is, someone who has the responsibility to be the spiritual leader of his home. This means that she will be in good hands since her husband is to love her, to protect her, and to strive to always satisfy her spiritual and material needs.

4. **Ephesians 5:33:** *“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*

The apostolic admonition is for the wife to respect her husband. Sadly, many marriages lack mutual respect.

Therefore, we are to be thankful that the Lord, through His Word, demands and reminds women to respect their husbands. Respecting them means to respect the authority and responsibilities God has delegated to them in the family.

5. Titus 2:3-5: “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

This passage teaches many things to women, but I want to emphasize the love wives need to have for their husbands and children. This love is demonstrated by prudence, purity, care of the home, and submission to the husband. If the wife does these things, her actions will show that she really loves her husband. But not only that, she will also show obedience to God’s instructions in His Word. The apostle Paul pointed out that this honorable conduct in women will prevent the Word of God from being blasphemed.

6. Proverbs 19:13: “A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping” (cf. 21:9).

The writer says that a contentious woman is like a continual dripping—something unpleasant. She may be someone who does not submit to her husband, does not love him, and does not take care of her children, but who is rebellious to what God demands from her. The wife is to strive to possess a humble and meek attitude. This attitude will help her husband to live in harmony and happiness with her for the rest of their marital life.

7. 1 Peter 3:1-6: “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women

who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

This passage contains several wise instructions for women. The apostle Peter writes about submission, conduct, purity, respect, and spiritual adornment in daily life. These traits of conduct are treasured by the Lord, and they open the doors to the possibility that those wives with husbands who are not Christians may win them for Christ through their godly example.

8. Proverbs 12:4: “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones” (cf. 31:10-31).

In these verses, the writer points out that the virtuous woman is a great blessing to her husband. The home where two spouses are faithful and fear God will be blessed by Him, and the spouses, as well as their children, will enjoy beautiful unity, protection, joy, and love.

9. Job 2:9: “Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’”

This passage reveals the attitude of Job’s wife, who became an obstacle to him in the most difficult times of his life. Instead of providing encouragement and comfort for her husband, she spoke words of discouragement. When difficult times come to the marriage, both, husband and wife, must help and strengthen each other to continue to faithfully serve God. The wife is to always be a source of encouragement.

10. James 1:22: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

In the same way we concluded in the last issue, I want to encourage all wives to daily practice the advice these texts provide for them.

Once more, let us be thankful to God for His written Word. Through the Word, wives can read passages pertaining to the godly and diligent conduct they are to show their husbands and God. Personally, I am thankful to God for my wife and the unconditional support she has given me during the last 20 years I have devoted to the preaching ministry. I can say, with all confidence and honesty, that she has followed this advice in our marriage. May God bless all faithful wives who strive to live according to what God has instructed in His Word. ■

A FLOOD AND A RAINBOW

by Kerri Epling

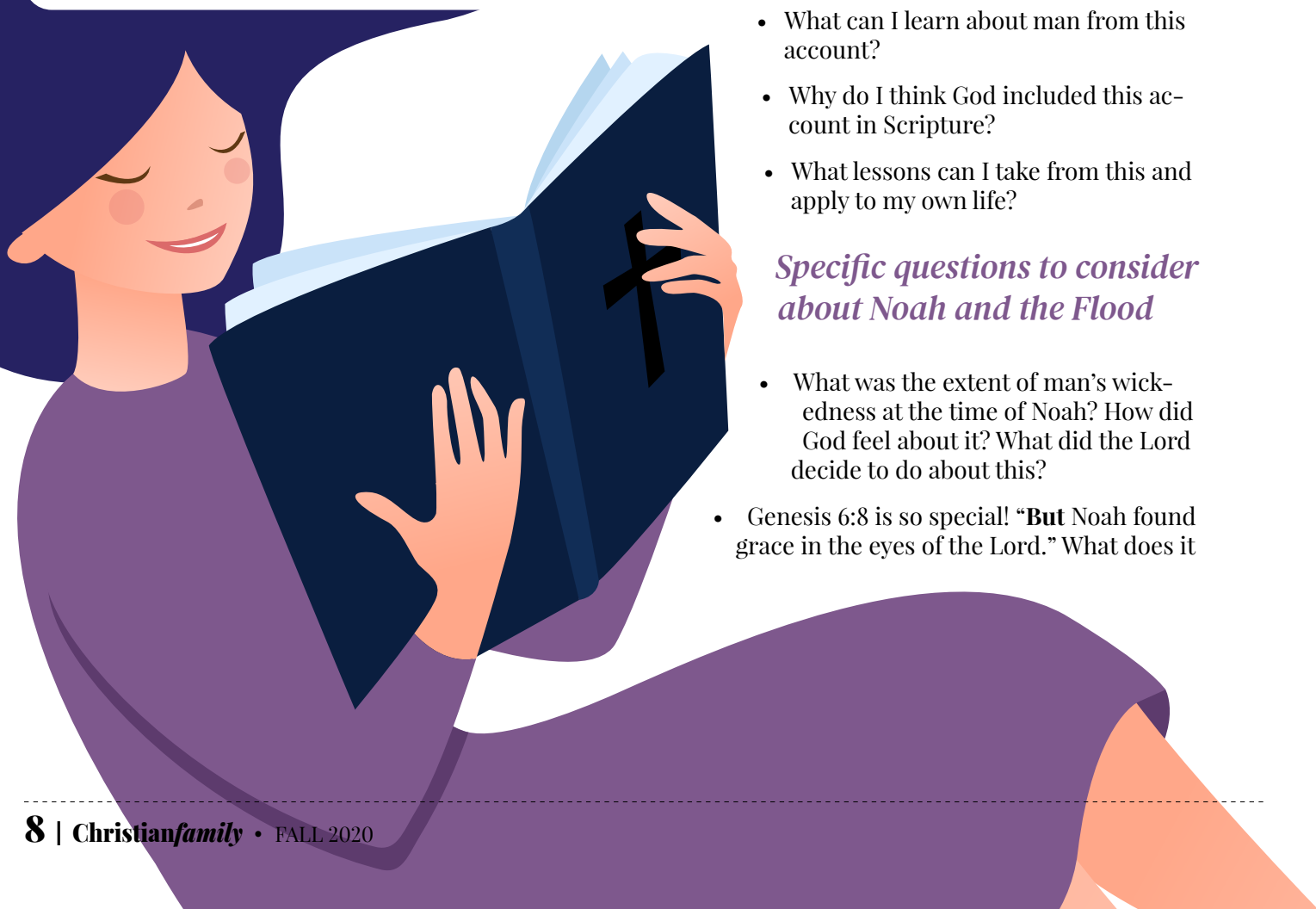
I hope you have been as blessed as I have by our previous two studies on Creation and the Birth of Jesus. Stories for “kids” are powerful springboards for adult Bible study and lessons as well. They are also an easy way to combine personal study with teaching and training our children. My prayer for these studies is that you will be able to build study habits that you can apply to any account in Scripture. Let’s dive right into our study of Noah, the Flood, and God’s promises. Our primary text for this lesson can be found in Genesis 6:1-9:17.

General questions to consider when studying any account in Scripture

- What are the basic facts about this book of the Bible? Who wrote it? To whom? When? Where?
- What is the setting of this account?
- Who are the major “characters” in this account? What role does each play? Why are they important? What is their family background? Are they followers of God or not?
- What is the basic sequence of events/details of the account?
 - What can I learn about God from this account?
 - What can I learn about man from this account?
 - Why do I think God included this account in Scripture?
 - What lessons can I take from this and apply to my own life?

Specific questions to consider about Noah and the Flood

- What was the extent of man’s wickedness at the time of Noah? How did God feel about it? What did the Lord decide to do about this?
- Genesis 6:8 is so special! **“But** Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” What does it



women and mothers / bible study.

mean to “find grace” in the eyes of the Lord? What are some things we must do so that we, too, can find grace in God’s sight?

- God gave Noah specific instructions about building an ark. List those details. Did Noah follow all of them? How do we know?
- Hebrews 11:7 is full of action verbs about Noah. Noah had to **do** something to be pleasing in God’s sight. The things he did led to his salvation and that of his family. What are some things you are doing to assure your own salvation (cf. Philippians 2:12) and that of your family?
- How many people were on the ark? Why is that significant? (Hint: Think about Matthew 7:13-14 as well).
- Noah had to leave behind all that he had ever known to get on the ark in obedience to God. What are some things we are called to leave behind in the “world” in order to walk in the light?
- Who shut the door of the ark? Is that significant?
- How long did the rain last? How long were the waters upon the earth?
- What was the first thing Noah did when he exited the ark?
- The rainbow is an incredible visual reminder of God’s faithfulness to His promises. In a world where the rainbow is often used to mean so many other things, let us never forget its true significance! Think about the promises God has made us and list your favorites. If you need reminders of God’s faithfulness, copy verses about promises and place them in prominent places in your home.
- Read 1 Peter 3:18-21. What is the significance of these verses?

Questions for children

- Who built the ark?
- What did God command Noah to take with him and his family in the ark?
- How many days did it rain while Noah was on the ark?
- What did Noah do with the raven and dove?
- What did Noah do when he got off the ark?
- What did God put in the sky? What did it mean?

Suggestions for interaction with children

- Sing “Good Old Noah Built an Ark” and let the kids act out being the animals. Sing “Pitter Patter” about rain.
- Stick animal stickers on a coloring page of the ark.
- Use a box or container to be the ark and put all the stuffed animals in the house in them and pretend that it is raining but the ark and animals are safe. If the box is big enough, your child(ren) could pretend to be Noah and his family.
- Every time you see a rainbow, point it out to your children and remind them that God keeps His promises—to Noah and to us!
- Make a rainbow out of colored cereal, candy, etc. Make a bracelet or necklace from rainbow-colored beads and let your kids wear them as reminders of God’s promises. ■

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

featured.

10 ways we show our family is important

After the kingdom of God, family is the second greatest institution on Earth. How can we show that our family is important?

- 1 Make devo time an unbreakable daily activity.** If we love our family, then we will want them to get to heaven. A daily spiritual routine will help achieve this goal.
- 2 Spend quality time with your family**—not only time in the same place, but time to connect, to talk, and to develop your relationship.
- 3 Find things you enjoy doing together.** Instead of doing things apart, find one or two activities all enjoy doing. This will help you connect and strengthen your bond.
- 4 Tell each family member how much he/she is loved and appreciated.** Don't just assume that they know it; say it, and say it often!
- 5 If you can manage with one salary, let your wife stay home to train and enjoy the kids.** Think about the reasons why you would need an extra income. If the reasons are simply to have nicer physical things, then you may need to change your focus.
- 6 Do not take on too many jobs, commitments, or activities that pull you away from your family.** Remember that we can be busy doing secondary things and forget about the things that are most important.
- 7 Listen to your spouse and your children.** Try to understand the way they think, their point of view, and their concerns and needs.
- 8 Play with your children.** Playing is one of the most important things for little ones. They need more playing partners than toys. Teens also need some fun times with parents.
- 9 Go on dates with your spouse, just like you did before getting married.** Do not put this aside; this is one way you can keep the fire burning in your marriage.
- 10 Make your family the best friends you can have.** Treat your family as you would treat your friends and Christian family. Treasure their friendship, and do not take it for granted.



P the Pinedos

Moisés and Kimberley met in a 1999 Latin American Missions trip to Peru, where Moisés assisted teaching the youth, and Kimberley assisted with the distribution of hygiene supplies. Since that time, they became good friends and kept constant communication as Kimberley was able to return every year and help a missionary couple in Peru. Two years later, they got married in Lima, Peru, and began working together with a congregation in the same city.

In 2003, they had their first daughter, Melanie (16), and the next year, they moved to the U.S. where Moisés started working with Apologetics Press in Montgomery, AL. In Alabama, they had two more daughters, Ella (13), and Kelsey (11). In 2010, they moved to East Tennessee (Kimberley's hometown), and Moisés started working long-distance with House to House. As his work term with HTH ended in 2014, the Dalraida congregation in Montgomery, AL began to support Moisés to continue to write and translate biblical materials for the Hispanic brotherhood through the work of EB Global (an online effort HTH helped to start.) In 2018, God blessed Moisés and Kimberley with their fourth daughter, Layla (2).

The Pinedo family enjoys spending time together. Moisés works from home; Kimberley uses her talents and studies to homeschool their daughters; and their daughters enjoy drawing, singing, baking, and reading. The whole family enjoys going bowling or walking on a nearby trail. They worship and work together with the Elizabethton congregation, where Moisés teaches a small Spanish Bible class.

Family is important to me because they provide love and support. I need help and guidance to reach my goals. A Christian family works together to help guide each other to heaven. My family not only physically helps me, but spiritually, they help me stay on my path to heaven.

-Melanie-

My family is important to me because they care for me and support me. My family cares for me in many ways. My parents provide for me, and my sisters show their care by checking on me. My family also supports my good decisions. If they think it's wrong they will guide me to something better. I love my family, and they are very important to me!

♡-Ella

My family is important to me because the people who are in it are special to me. They take me to church and they teach me the Bible. They love God and me! My family is important because they forgive me when I fail. I love my family!

♡-Kelsey

Layla



Why waiting for marriage matters

by Caleb & Rebekah Colley

God created sexuality as part of His good creation (Genesis 1:28). He wants us to enjoy all the blessings of sex. As the Creator of intimacy, God also makes the rules about it. To help us think about these rules, let us begin with a simple principle: **God-approved marriage is the only relationship in which sexual expression is a right action.** Consider each phrase in this sentence:

- A **God-approved marriage** is one that does not violate the biblical passages that teach us what marriages God approves (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:10-12; Romans 7:1-3).
- **Sexual expression** refers not only to the physical act of intimacy, but also to expressing oneself sensually. This could include displaying areas of one's body, touching, or bodily movements as in a dance (see Matthew 5:27-30; Mark 7:21; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5).
- A **right action** is one that is in obedience to God's commands. His commands, based upon His divine nature, determine what is right or wrong (Micah 6:8; Matthew 7:21; Colossians 3:17).

Put simply, sex inside a God-approved marriage is right, but sex outside a God-approved marriage is wrong. The Bible word for sex **outside** of a God-approved marriage is "fornication" (sometimes translated "sexual immorality"). Hebrews 13:4, for example, contrasts fornicators with those who restrict sex within a God-approved marriage.

The principle we have just considered implies that **premarital sex is fornication**. Here are six reasons to avoid fornication by waiting for marriage:

1. You must wait for marriage because you must reflect the holiness of God.

The holiness of God refers to His separation from everything that is evil, or His moral perfection. We serve the God Who is perfectly good and Who calls us to strive to be holy

as He is. But fornication goes against the will of our holy God. Lusts of the flesh, some of which promote fornication, lead us in the opposite direction of holiness, away from relationship with God. The apostle Peter wrote, "Do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16; NASB; cf. Matthew 5:48).

Though there are many reasons to wait for marriage, holiness is the primary factor. Our love for and appreciation for God's perfect character, which motivates our Christian choices, is the best prevention for fornication. The apostle Paul wrote, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).



2. You must wait for marriage because you want to see the Lord.

Holiness (or “sanctification”) is required for seeing the Lord in heaven (Hebrews 12:14). While we can be forgiven of sexual sin, the willingness to sin endangers our soul. If we are unable to reach true, godly sorrow over our sin, we will not go to heaven. We may die prior to obtaining forgiveness, especially considering that fornication usually is not just a one-time act, but part of an ongoing relationship or practice. When Paul listed the deeds of the flesh, he included fornication and sensuality, and then wrote “that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). A moment’s pleasure is not worth sacrificing one’s soul for ever and ever (Matthew 16:26).

3. You must wait for marriage because you want to avoid dating and marrying the wrong person.

The choice of a marriage partner is monumental, because our spouse will have a large influence upon our spirituality (1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Peter 3:1-2). We will marry someone we date. If the person we are dating is comfortable with promoting sensuality and pressures us to move toward fornication, this betrays spiritual weakness that may be impossible to overcome. It may also indicate other big problems such as pornography addiction. There are cases where both parties in a sinful relationship repent and help one another get to heaven, but this does not mean we should pursue obstacles to the bright future God wants us to enjoy.

4. You must wait for marriage because you want to avoid physical consequences.

One obvious physical consequence for women is pregnancy. Every child is a blessing, but God did not intend

for women to go through pregnancy, birth, and childrearing without a husband. (A young man may promise to marry a woman, but if he already is willing to break God’s law to fulfill his own desires, then why would he hesitate to break a promise to another human?) Furthermore, premarital sex puts any children who result from the union at risk of being reared without a father or mother (cf. Titus 2:3-5; Ephesians 6:1-4).

Another physical consequence of premarital sex is the array of disastrous sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “young people aged 15-24 years acquire half of all new STDs and that one in four sexually-active adolescent females has an STD.”¹ Perhaps you’re already familiar with the havoc STDs can wreak in the human body, but in case you’re not, consider the following material concerning just one of the most widespread STDs, HIV. If the symptoms of this disease develop, they generally include fever, fatigue, rash, headache, sore throat.² Left untreated, the immune system becomes increasingly weaker and the disease progresses to AIDS, which gradually kills.³

Abstinence before marriage and monogamy during marriage is the safe plan. Ultimately, there’s no such thing as “safe sex” outside of marriage.

5. You must wait for marriage so you can avoid relational consequences.

Entering into marriage with a sexual past makes even a God-approved marriage difficult. The ghosts of past relationships will haunt us by imposing guilt and jealousy inside of marriage, and the temptation to compare our spouse with a previous lover(s). We will not be able to avoid excruciating conversations with our spouse. In short, we will make our future lives painful by indulging in sinful pleasure today (cf. Hebrews 11:24-26).

6. You must wait for marriage so you can avoid lifelong regret.

Even a forgiven person lives with a degree of regret over sin. Paul wrote, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). The guilt of sexual sin is difficult to overcome. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote so urgently and decisively, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

All sins are equal in that they all make one guilty before God (Romans 6:23; James 2:8-13), and yet sins are unequal in their consequences during this life. Premarital sex is one of those sins that comes with a host of consequences. How can we ensure that we will avoid these consequences by waiting for marriage? We must keep our thoughts pure, studying God’s Word and avoiding tempting interactions and sensual entertainment (Philippians 4:8). We must be spiritually discerning in our dating choices, including not only the people we date, but also what we do and where we go. For example, we should have rules restricting us from being alone in secluded places with our date. Young men are to relate to “younger women as sisters, with all purity” (1 Timothy 5:2).

Fundamentally, we must trust God that He has His richest relational blessings in store for those who prepare themselves spiritually for marriage as He planned it (Genesis 2:24). Our love for our holy God will guide us to decisions that are best for us (Psalms 119:105). ■

1. “Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2018” (2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/std/stats18/adolescents.htm>.

2. “What Are the Symptoms of HIV Infection?” (2004), University of California, <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/hiv?page=basics-00-02>.

3. *Ibid.*

children.

Jesus loves me!

by Julie Schroeder

I'm sure you know a song that goes like this: "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so..." It is probably one of the earliest Bible class songs you can remember learning. Many times this song is taught to children as young as two or three years old. Thousands of babies have been rocked to sleep with the sound of these words in their ears. It has been translated into several different languages so that children around the world can understand it, too. Why do you think this song is so important?

The Bible is how God speaks to us today. He does not come to our house or call us on the phone. When we read God's words, we are hearing Him "talk" to us. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:15 that we are to sing with our mind; in other words, we are to think about and understand what we are saying when we are singing. We are not singing just because it sounds pretty; our singing is for God!—not just for ourselves, our parents, or our friends. In order to help you to truly sing this song with your mind and heart, we will discuss the meaning of the first verse.

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so...

Where does the Bible tell me this? You see, from Genesis to Revelation, God tells us of His great love for us. We could not list all the verses that prove this. In the beginning of the Bible, we see that God made a plan that would allow people to be very close to Him. (This means to be saved.) He promised a man named Abraham that, through his lineage, all nations could be saved. The rest of the Bible, all the stories you read (Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, and Daniel) are part of the really big story of God's love for us. All of these true stories were pointing the way to the coming of Jesus that we read about in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Little ones to Him belong...

In the book of Matthew, both in chapters 18 and 19, Jesus talks about children belonging to Him when He says, "to such [people who have the heart of a child] belongs the kingdom of heaven." Think of very small children. They love to help, give hugs, and smile at everyone.

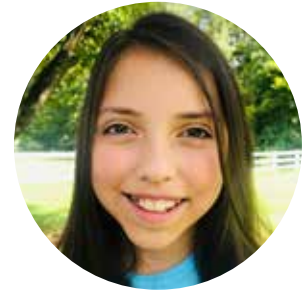
They are not naturally "mean" to others. They do not know what lying is. This is called innocence. This is why children belong to Jesus. You see, Jesus wants us to never lose the innocent heart we have as children. Christians are to have this type of heart to be "children" of God.

They are weak but, He is strong.

Most people think of adults as being strong and children being weak. People do not naturally think like God does. That is why it is so important to read the Bible, because that is how we learn to think like God. Many people think that, to be "strong," you have to be the first to do something, the loudest, and the best. But really, to be close to God, we need to be the opposite of this. Jesus said in Matthew 20:16, "So the last will be first, and the first last." The Bible never once tells of Jesus trying to brag about Himself or being the "boss" of others. Jesus gave His whole life to other people. He made Himself last, not first.

He fed people, healed people, made people live again, and taught people about God even when He was very tired or sad. Jesus made the needs of others more important than His own. Did you know that Jesus let people kill Him, when He never once did anything wrong? He never cried out, "But, I did not do anything wrong!" He never fought back or said ugly things about the people doing this to Him. You see, it takes more strength to think of others first. To be unkind and thoughtless is easy. Jesus showed the most powerful strength ever known when He gave His life for every person who ever lived, lives, or will live.

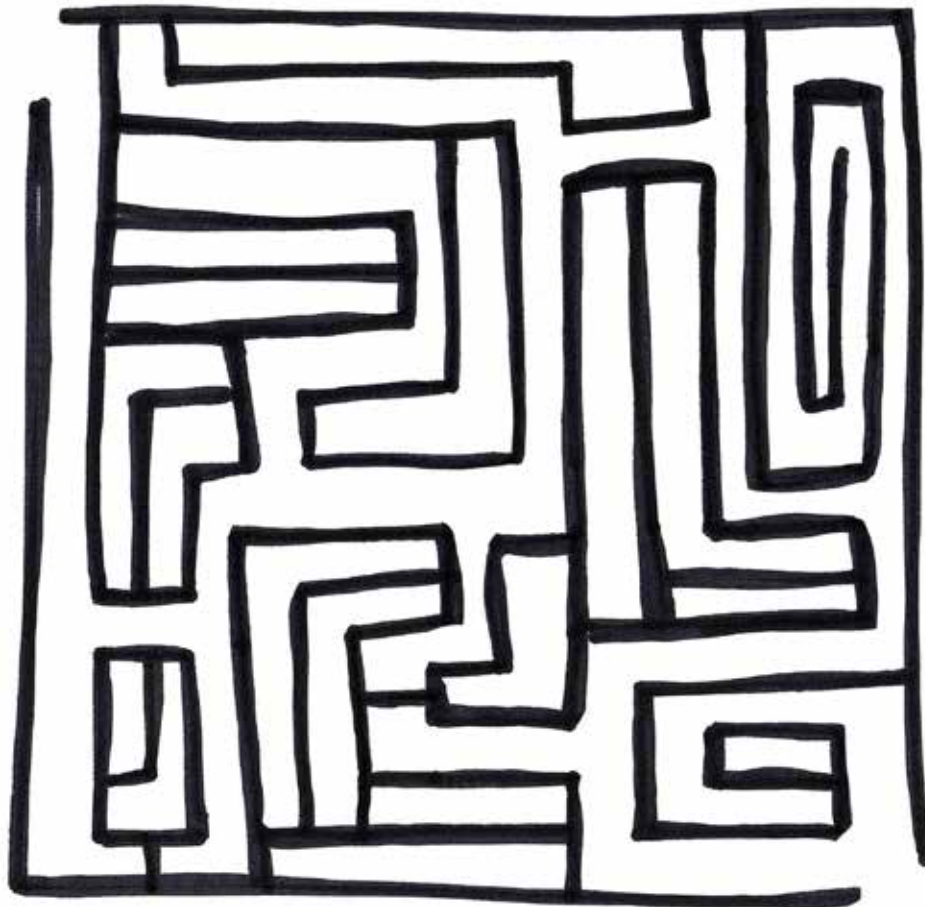
It is very important to know the meaning of what we sing to God, our Father. Just saying the words is not praise. Now, when you sing "Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so," you can enjoy knowing that you **truly know and understand** that **the Bible does tell you so!** ■



Illustrations in this spread by
Kelsey Pinedo (age 11)

Jesus loves children!

In Matthew 19, Jesus showed His love toward children. He told His disciples: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 14). Would you help the two children find their way to the loving Jesus?



Online and printed Spanish
materials for children at:
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questions.

Q&A

Q: How can I overcome the death of a beloved one, and how can I help other members in my family who are dealing with the same grief? —ANONYMOUS

Dealing with death is one of the biggest challenges humans face. One of the shortest verses in the Bible depicts one of the most loved qualities in Jesus: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35) at the death of His friend. Psychologists tell us that we pass through various stages as we process the news of our loved one’s death. We need to remind ourselves and others that we will adjust. We should focus on the future. We can display pictures or other items which can remind us of our loved one. We might even plant a tree or flower in their memory. We can certainly pray that God will help us adjust. —PH

Q: What should we do if our teen daughter rebels against us due to loving a non-Christian young man? —ARAGUA, VENEZUELA

Teenagers are moving into the stage of life in which they really want to make their own decisions, to think for themselves. Share with her the article in this issue about “Your Princess Marries a Prince.” Perhaps you can read the article together and talk about ideas presented. Gently and patiently explain to her the dangers of falling in love with a non-Christian. Explain to her that your deepest desire is for her to serve Jesus, and a non-Christian boyfriend can make that goal very hard. Pray with her

that God will give her His wisdom, and pray for her in your private prayers. Always, be gentle. —PH

Q: Would you, please, give advice concerning the use of technology and social media in the home?

—AGUASCALIENTES, MEXICO

Technology can be a good thing, but without close supervision, it is a threat to the spiritual wellbeing of children. Here is some advice to consider (not in order): (1) Limit usage time. Technology can become addictive. There is virtually no end to watching TV, playing video games, listening to music, or surfing the internet; so, setting a time limit is necessary. One hour daily may be plenty of time for the combined use of electronics. (2) Replace technology time with interaction and learning time. Children are active and usually need to be doing things. Instead of letting the TV or the internet entertain your children, let them play outside, do some baking, sewing, mowing, etc. Help them feel and be productive. (3) Allow technology time only after other responsibilities are met. Have your children read their Bibles for the day, finished their chores, and completed their school homework? Learning responsibility will help them better manage their use of technology. (4) Don’t give your children alone-time with technology, especially the internet. Have a designated open place where they can use technology. Today, almost every device can connect to the internet (TVs, video consoles, tablets, etc.), and children can be exposed

to damaging content or dangerous threats. (5) Use a filter. Filters are not flawless, but they are helpful to reduce exposure to dangerous content and to inform parents. Read the manual and program the right settings. Some filters also have the option to set a timer for internet usage. (6) Restrict the use of the internet for young children. There is no need for young children to use the internet, and for the older ones who use it for school and other limited activities, close supervision is crucial. (7) Check their devices regularly. They do not need their “own” password, and they do not

need technology privacy from their parents. Check their pictures, their texts, and their internet history so you can help them and make further informed decisions concerning their use of technology.

Concerning the use of social media, my perspective is that children are better off without it. There are too many potential dangers on social media for children and teens (and even for adults). Instead, there are some apps made for children that allows them to communicate with friends by sending text-only messages. —MP

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