

Se habla
ESPAÑOL

voltee la
revista

What children need

PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY

(pages 10-11)

The Dangers of Parental Favoritism

(pages 4-5)

The Art of Loving (Part 1)

(pages 6-7)

**A Teen Talks about Recovering
from Her Parents' Divorce**

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and more

Christianfamily

A bilingual magazine for Christian families | Vol 6, No 3, July - September 2021

Photo by Jimenez Photography

EDITORIAL



We couldn't be more excited about this new issue, and we are glad you have it in your hands! We are sure that it will enrich your family and personal life in a very positive way for God's glory. Here is what you will find in this latest issue.

Edilberto (a preacher and psychologist) and Karina (a high school teacher), the parents in our featured family, give us their input on what children need physically, emotionally, and spiritually. An insightful, heart-touching article from a young lady provides advice to cope with parents' divorce, and two more articles help us deal with family conflict and parental favoritism. Other articles promote marital love, commitment to God, and family growth.

We believe this is an issue you will want to read in its entirety, share with others, and make sure your church family gets some copies. Let us know how we can help.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

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Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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The Use of RULES in Family Relationships

by Kevin Williams

Jim came home after having a bad day at work. So many things went wrong at his job that he did not have the time to properly process what had really happened. Because of that, his mind was not on his wife and children as he seemed to be inattentive to them. He did not greet the children when he came home as he customarily does each day. He walked right past his wife without speaking to her, and then he plopped down into his easy chair, oblivious to what he had done. At the supper table, he was so engrossed in thinking about his work problem that he hardly said a word to anyone. When his wife simply asked about his day, Jim lashed out at her and yelled at the children because he could not think or focus on his work issue with everyone trying to get his attention and say something to him. He stormed to the bedroom and pouted the rest of the night and avoided any contact with his family, including his wife. She was so discouraged with his behavior that she went to bed crying, not for herself, but for what the children witnessed just minutes ago.

What can one do in such a situation as this? Or, what can a family do about it? Will the family have to go through this type of treatment from now on? Is there anything that they can do? Are their hands tied in this situation?

One very effective way in which to change the dynamic of the family in a positive way is to put in place some family rules. Unlike other rules, these rules are not meant to be broken. Rather, they are to be used to put some actions in place that will truly help the situation and the relationships in the family.

In looking at this brief illustration, there are many rules that could be used and agreed upon that should improve things for this family. For example, rule number one might be for Jim to make it a practice to stop and think about his mood before he enters the house. Another rule for Jim might be to think about his past behavior and keep that unwanted behavior in the past. Still another rule for Jim might be to leave his work problems at work and not bring them home. As for Jim's wife, a good rule for her might be to ask about his work day in a private setting, away from the children, to avoid conflict with them. ■

the dangers of parental favoritism

by *Moisés Pinedo*

“*And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis 25:28). Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age (Genesis 37:3).*”

Parental favoritism is one of the most common sins parents commit against their children; it relates to showing preference to a child above another due to birth order, gender, personality, needs, abilities, looks, etc. In fact, parental favoritism has been around since the dawn of human history and has affected fathers as well as mothers. What can we learn on the subject from Isaac and Rebekah’s favoritism toward their children, and Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph?

Good, faithful parents can fall in the trap of favoritism.

We could think that only spiritually weak parents would fall prey to parental favoritism, but the fact that Isaac and Jacob were recognized as “heroes of faith” (see Hebrews 11:20-21) makes it clear that no Christian parent is immune to this disease. Just saying that “we are impartial to our children” does not make it so. Some well-meaning parents have let pride close the doors to the idea of honestly searching their lives to find signs of parental favoritism; they do not search, so they do not find (Matthew 7:7; cf. Luke 18:9-14). They are less open to the idea of asking and listening to their children’s perspective (even their grown-up children), or they may feel attacked if a perceived partiality is pointed out to them. In this regard, all parents would do well to note Paul’s warning: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).



Favoritism is not as easy to detect as we would expect.

This is a main reason why so many parents fall into this trap. What answer would Isaac, Rebekah, or Jacob have given if asked, “Are you partial to one of your children, or do you **love** one of your children more than the other(s)?” Most likely, they would say, “Of course not.” After all, would we expect these faithful servants of God mindlessly doing something they knew was in conflict with the true nature of love? Yet, the truth is that they showed favoritism, and the Bible plainly describes their favoritism as a “measure of love” given to one child and deprived to another (cf. Genesis 37:3). Parental favoritism is hard to detect because we feel good that we are not neglecting “love” toward all our children, yet we fail to check the “measuring spoon” of our love for each one of them.

Parents are to fight the attraction of favoritism.

Every sin has some kind of attraction or pleasure, whether we can see it or not, and that is what makes it appealing (James 1:13-15). Parental favoritism is not the exception; it is appealing, and it is hard to fight it. I have to constantly watch my thoughts and actions to avoid its appeal. When one of my daughters decides she wants to play Dad’s favorite sport, or she says she wants to do what Dad does for work, or she makes the food that Dad likes, it is hard not to want to spend more time with her, not to love her more, and not to be more proud of her than her sisters. Why? Because that is “easy love,” and we **just like** easy love. We choose friends who are easy to love, a mate who is easy to love, and a job that is easy to love. But there is nothing easy in the love that God requires from us (Luke 10:25-37; John 14:15).

Notice the reason why Isaac was partial to Esau: “because he ate *of his* game” (Genesis 25:28). Isaac just liked a good “steak” (what is the problem with that?), and Esau was the man for the hunt. The other boy (Jacob) just liked “camping” and seems to have been an animal lover (25:27; cf. 30:25-43). Why was Rebekah partial to Jacob? The Bible does not say, but I suspect that she could better relate to a neat, well-shaved mamma’s boy than to a rough, hairy macho man living in the woods (cf. 25:25-27; 27:11). In turn, why was Jacob partial to Joseph? “[B]ecause he *was* the son of his old age” (37:3) and was born to Rachel, his favorite wife (29:30). Joseph was a baby boy; his brothers were too grown-up and born to the wrong woman to be loved with the same intensity.

Christian parents are to fight favoritism’s strong attraction toward the child who chooses the same path we like to travel. We are to make an effort to learn to love our children who are less like us and who like doing things that are less appealing to us.

Favoritism always pays with the wrong coin.

We may think that parental favoritism is not a big deal and may rationalize it. Yet, favoritism, of any kind, does not have a part in Christianity (James 2:1-13); its consequences are always pain and suffering.

In the case of Isaac and Rebekah, favoritism caused Esau to hate his brother and make plans to kill him as soon as his father passed away (27:41). It seems that he did not care much about making his mother suffer; he may have thought, “Why care so much for a mother who does not care much about me?” Favoritism also caused Rebekah to ask Isaac to send her favorite son away to save his life, maybe never to see him again (27:42-28:5). In fact, Jacob did not stand a chance against the hairy man if God did not protect him.

What about Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph? Well, you know the story: his brothers hated him, could not speak peacefully to him, tried to kill him, and threw him in a pit; then they sold him as a slave and lied about his whereabouts. His father mourned for years and was only able to see him again after a couple of decades. Someone may say: “But didn’t it turn out well in the end?” Yes, but that does not mean that favoritism will turn out well for our own children, nor does it make favoritism any good for our families, and nor does it erase all the pain and suffering everybody experiences, even the one being favored (cf. 41:51-52).

CONCLUSION

Favoritism poses a dangerous threat to every parent. Avoiding parental favoritism is not a matter of buying the same gift for every child, giving the same amount of allowance/money to every child, or even treating every child the same way. Instead, it is about making a conscious effort (1) to get to know our children individually—their needs, expectations, and concerns; (2) to understand and appreciate that they are different—in their abilities, likes, emotions, and opinions; and (3) to love them intensely and unselfishly—to shape their hearts, minds, and spirits to be everything the Lord (not us) wants them to be. ■

The art of **LOVING** *Song of Solomon 1 & 2*

by Paul Holland

If we looked up the words “adultery,” “adulterer,” “adulteress,” “immorality,” “prostitution,” “prostitute,” and “naked,” it all adds up to 172 uses of these words in God’s Word. That is an average of 2.6 times per each of the 66 books! Clearly the Bible has a lot to say about our sexual life. Yet, the Bible would be incomplete if that were the only picture God gave us of this very important part of our existence.

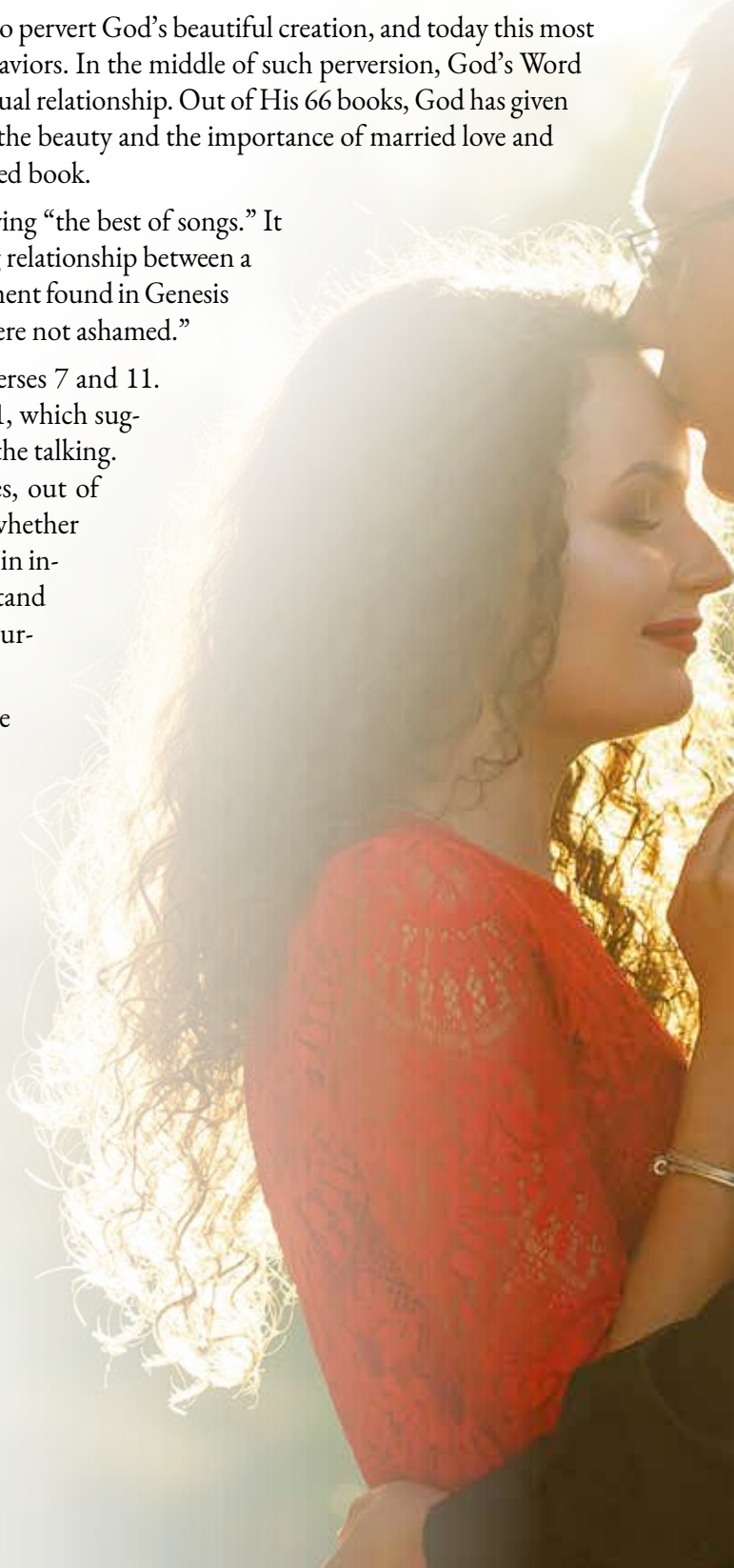
God created sexual intimacy, but it did not take man long to pervert God’s beautiful creation, and today this most private act of our lives has become one of the most public behaviors. In the middle of such perversion, God’s Word still speaks to us about the beauty of love, marriage, and the sexual relationship. Out of His 66 books, God has given us the Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon, to illustrate to us the beauty and the importance of married love and the physical relationship. Let us spend some time in this inspired book.

“Song of Songs” reflects the Hebrew language’s way of saying “the best of songs.” It was written by Solomon. It is poetry; it is a view into the loving relationship between a man and a woman. Some suggest it portrays in poetry the statement found in Genesis 2:25: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Solomon arrives on the scene in 3:6-11; note especially verses 7 and 11. It appears that the bride and groom come together in 4:16-5:1, which suggests the experience of a honeymoon. The bride does most of the talking. According to Bragg’s count, she speaks 55, perhaps 74 verses, out of 117.¹ In a modern translation, the editors normally designate whether the man, the woman, or the chorus is speaking. That is helpful in interpretation. Because the song is poetry, we should not understand it to reflect a real event. It could be reflecting reality, but its purpose is to praise love, not to be a historical account.

As we read through the first two chapters, we note that the bride wants to be with her lover (1:4). She does not believe she is attractive (1:5-6), which makes it more important that he believes she is the “fairest among women” (1:8). He makes himself attractive to her (1:3), and she makes herself attractive to him (1:12). How frequently do you make yourself attractive to your spouse? How often do you compliment your spouse’s appearance?

It seems that neither lover can express enough of his or her admiration for the other! The bride also seems to be “self-deprecating.” In 2:1, the bride says she is the “rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys.” Those are beautiful flowers, but they are also ubiquitous; one rose or one lily is nothing special. What is important is that he thinks she is the most important, most beautiful of all women (1:15). In the bride’s speech in chapter 2, we see that she finds comfort in his embrace, protection in his arms, and satisfaction from his love.



The groom expresses his desire to see her and to hear her voice (2:14). The chorus speaks up and expresses their desire for distractions to be removed from them expressing their love (2:15). One refrain found several times is: “fairest among women” (1:8; 5:9; 6:1).

Celine Dion sang a love song titled “If Walls Could Talk.” But in Solomon’s poem, we have an inspired look into a pure relationship of love. Let us consider this poem and ask ourselves how God wants us to treat our spouse. ■

1. David Bragg (2004), *Love Songs: A Comprehensive Study of the Song of Solomon* (Henderson, TN: Hester).

“I could only keep **MY EYES** *on you”*

It is said that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once had captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner, “What will you give me if I release you?”

“The half of my wealth,” was his reply.

“And if I release your children?”

“Everything I possess.”

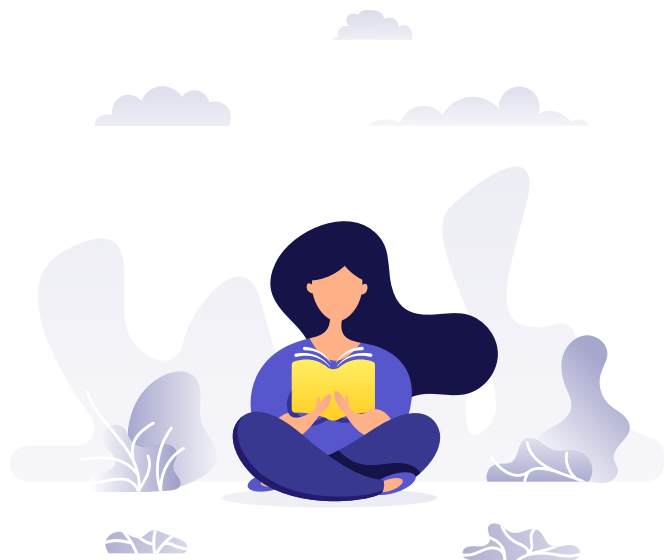
“And if I release your wife?”

“Your Majesty, I will give myself.”


Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, “Wasn’t Cyrus a handsome man!” With a look of deep love for her husband, she said to him, “I didn’t notice. I could only keep my eyes on you—the one who was willing to give himself for me.”

—Author Unknown

Called by JESUS



by Kerri Epling

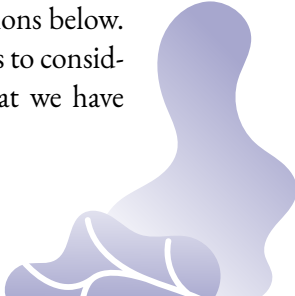


*O*ur children often sing a song that goes like this:

- ♪ *Jesus called them one by one,
Peter, Andrew, James, and John;
Next came Philip, Thomas, too,
Matthew and Bartholomew.*
- ♪ *James, the one they called the Less,
Simon, also Thaddeus;
Twelve apostles Judas made,
Jesus was by him betrayed.*
- ♪ *Matthias then took Judas' place,
To preach the word to every race.
Paul, three preaching trips did make,
And went to Rome for Jesus' sake.*
- ♪ *Yes, Jesus called them,
Yes, Jesus called them.
Yes, Jesus called them,
And they all followed him.*

The list we use for this song is found in some form in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6: 13-16, and Acts 1:13. We read through this list in these places and often pay little attention to it. However, there are great lessons to learn from those Jesus called to follow Him during His earthly ministry (and after His death, burial, and resurrection). In this issue, let's consider those He called then, how they served Him, and how it can help those of us who are the called now.

Read through the accounts of Jesus calling His apostles (Matthew 4:12-22; 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51) and answer the questions below. Remember our usual questions to consider about any Bible passage that we have presented in previous lessons.



Questions about the apostles

- What professions did various apostles have before they followed Jesus? What does this tell us about them? (See also Acts 4:13).
- Who brought Peter to Jesus?
- What does Matthew 4:22 say about the apostles' response to Jesus calling them?
- Why did Jesus call the apostles? (Read Matthew 4:19 and Mark 3:14).
- What charges/commissions did Jesus give to His apostles? Think beyond just their calling to the various tasks He gave them throughout their tenure as apostles (e.g., Matthew 10; 28:18-20).
- Thought question: Were these apostles true followers of Christ? How do we know?
- Do a character study on the various apostles if you want to dig a little deeper. Some we know more about than others.
- Describe what happened with Judas. How/why did he betray Christ? What were his consequences?
- Read about Matthias taking Judas' place in Acts 1. What qualifications did he have to meet?
- The apostles were called by Jesus. Who are "the called" today? How does Christ "call" His followers today? (Read John 12:32, Acts 2:39, Romans 8:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, and 1 Peter 2:21).
- Christ called His apostles to be fishers of men. Does He expect the same of us today? How can we do this?
- What responsibilities do followers of Christ have today? What is our purpose?
- How do we respond to Christ when He asks us to follow Him? Do we respond immediately? Are we willing to give up everything? (See Luke 9:23 and Mark 10:17-27).
- How can people know that we are followers of Christ (John 13:35)?
- If we love Christ, what will we do (John 14:15)?

Suggestions for interaction with children

- Teach them the Twelve Apostles' song.
- Make biography posters of each apostle with facts about them.
- Talk about how Jesus called them to be "fishers of men," and teach them ways to "catch fish" for Him. There are plenty of craft ideas for fishers of men online.
- Put the names of people you and your children know on paper fish. Let the kids "fish" them out of a bowl and think of a way to "fish" for that person (example: read them a Bible story, send them a card saying you are praying for them, invite them to Bible class).
- Put the apostles' names on paper fish (two per apostle) and play a matching game. ■

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

the *Córdobas*



...are a family of four people: Edilberto and Karina, and their two children, Caleb (12) and Darah (9). Edilberto is from Panama, and Karina is from Costa Rica. Edilberto studied theology in the Bible School of the Americas in Panama and psychology in the Latin University of Costa Rica. He and his family have been working for 20 years with the church of Christ in Naranjo, Costa Rica, where Edilberto is one of the preachers. Karina is a high school English teacher and helps the church teaching the ladies and children. The Cordoba family is very active in the church and the raising of their children.

CF: *Would you briefly describe each member of your family?*

Darah is very affectionate and has an incredible ability for communication; she is attentive and determined in her convictions. **Caleb** is very friendly, helpful, compassionate, and independent. He has a great imagination and loves to learn on his own. **Karina** is a resolute and analytical woman, very focused on her goals; but above all, she is very loving. **Eddie** has a calm character. He is dedicated to critical thinking, service, and patience.

CF: *What single word would define your family and why?*

“Perseverance.” This is a constant aspect of our daily life while we face different trials, make decisions, and encourage each other. We insist on God’s dependence in everything we do. Perseverance has been key to overcoming the stages and difficulties of life.

CF: *Since you are from two different countries, how have you dealt with your cultural differences for the well-being of your family?*

Differences are definitely a challenge, but, thanks to the Lord, this challenge is not a disadvantage. Since we are

from two different countries, we have different traditions with different cultural implications, but also obvious similarities. We have learned to focus on what we have in common: our love for the Lord. We also have the advantage of coming from Christian families. This has contributed to family enrichment when differences emerge.

CF: *Edilberto, in which ways have your psychology studies contributed in the raising of your children?*

One of the most valuable ways is the ability to understand the reasoning behind our children’s attitudes, reactions, and behaviors. As parents, this has helped us to focus on the personalities and individualities of our children, acknowledging that they are different people and that they need personalized training.

CF: *Karina, in which ways has your experience in the public school system contributed in the raising of your children?*

Getting to know children of different family backgrounds and providing solutions to a variety of situations has been an enriching experience. Developing a relationship with my students, sharing time with them, and knowing their problems have deepened the way I view each circum-

Photos by Jimenez Photography

stance. With my children, this has contributed to flexibility, and at the same time to solidity, in the way I deal with different upbringing aspects. It has helped me to foresee possible difficulties my children may need to overcome.

CF: What are the greatest aspirations you have for your children?

Our greatest aspiration is for our children to persevere in the way of the Lord. We use every opportunity to teach them to identify and accept God's discipline as one way He shows His love for us. We also want them to find a Christian mate to marry so they can serve the church together in a life of faith and loyalty to the Lord. ■

What children need

PHYSICALLY

From the moment of conception, children require protection and a good supply of food; parents are to provide this. Diet is to correspond to their different stages of development, and the same is to be said of games and exercise routines. The protection of their physical integrity involves knowing the risks their surroundings may present. It is vital to stress the differences between male and female without implying gender superiority or inferiority. This demands we teach them the different roles they have (and/or will have) in the family, the church, and society.

EMOTIONALLY

It is important that, at an early age, they are trained to develop love and respect. Each person has his own personality, but it is malleable. Training is to be positive and practical. It is important that they feel, and know, that they are loved and understood; this will strengthen their self-esteem and ability and determination to make decisions and accept the responsibility for their decisions. We are to recognize the relevance of expressing love; hugs are very important!

SPIRITUALLY

On the spiritual level, children need to develop a sense of dependence on God; this is very important. The word "develop" implies a constant work; this work entails protection and risks. The seed of God's Word is to be fertilized with living family examples. Children are not to be forced to believe in the God of their parents, but they are to be actively persuaded to believe in that God and develop their own faith in Him. It is necessary to provide them with the tools that will help them make right decisions in life, based on their godly convictions, so they can continue in the right way even in the absence of their parents.



A **TEEN** talks about **RECOVERING** from her **PARENTS' DIVORCE**

by *Dakota B*

Divorce is more common in our country today than in past generations. Where children are involved, there is always a level of hurt that is overlooked by others and not fully understood by those who do notice the pain. Professionals who deal with grief recovery have identified specific reactions that most will experience. I will identify some of those and tell you how I have dealt, and am dealing, with them.

Shock/denial—You feel confused as to why your parents divorced, and you don't believe or accept the circumstances. Feeling shocked, you shut down and may not feel any specific major feelings.

I saw it coming, because divorce was threatened often. I was still shocked because I didn't think it would actually happen.

Talk to someone about how you feel. Write in a journal. It doesn't have to be specific; just write down what is happening. This will help you process your feelings. Understand that none of this is your fault. You are only a bystander in a "two-person war". They are the ones who made the decision to leave—not for anything you said or did. If you have a good relationship with one parent, it may be good to continue improving it. Siblings are good to talk with as well. These relationships will help you have an ally and someone who understands your feelings. I sought my dad, because he became my caretaker and he always had my best interest at heart. He gave me advice to help me work through everything, especially feelings I didn't understand.

If you don't have anyone in your family, seek a mentor who can help you talk everything out or give advice. Talk to God, especially if you don't have anyone or prefer not to talk to anyone. When no one else was around, I talked to Him about how I felt and asked questions. I prayed for comfort and help to understand my feelings. God is a great Listener. He always wants what is best for you and understands what you are going through. Psalm

27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me." During the times you feel that your parents have forsaken you, look to God for answers and Someone to lean on. He will never abandon you (Hebrews 13:5).

Anger—You get upset easily, being mad at one or both of your parents.

I had a hard time accepting I was angry because I thought getting upset was wrong. I also didn't want controversy with anyone and didn't want to lose my mom. It was much harder when I saw her almost daily, so I bottled up my anger.

It is perfectly normal to feel anger. When I accepted that I was angry, I learned I was angry with my mom's choices to leave, and not her. I was close with my mom; if I hated her, I would have lost a side of me I cannot replace. It is ok to be angry, but don't turn your anger into hatred. We are to love the sinner and hate the sin, so we should love our parents but hate their sinful choices. When the time is right, and you want to, consider rebuilding a new relationship with them. If they no longer live close by, allow them to call. It is much healthier to acknowledge that they are a part of your life, good or bad, rather than trying to pretend they were never there. When you are ready, even if it takes a while, receive them. Holding a grudge over them will keep you from reaching the last stage, acceptance.

Bargaining—You say you will do anything sacrificially to find relief for yourself or others around you.

I often tried to think of circumstances that would have avoided divorce all together. They were often things I couldn't control. I thought if there was a time machine, I would go back in time to convince my parents not to marry. When my mom left the church, I would pray to God asking if I could trade my soul for hers, so she could go to heaven. I knew neither one was possible, but being overwhelmed with frustration, I thought that, if I could do something to fix it, then no one would be hurt.

When you reach this stage, remember that it is not your fault. Though you may feel like I did, we have to understand it is out of our control. However, we can control how we feel and the way we deal with our emotions. Use this period to find yourself. Being a teenager, you are already going through a self-discovery phase. By seeking your interests, and using each day to develop yourself, you constructively direct your attention to something productive and healthier. This will help you love yourself and become your own best friend. No one knows you better than you do. Instead of asking God to change your circumstances, thank Him for what you do have. Thank Him for the food in your cabinet, house and bed to call home, and for listening and watching over you. When things feel out of control, find comfort in knowing that God is always in control. Look to Him for security and stability.

Depression—You hide your feelings, and you distance yourself from others around you. You may feel overwhelmed.

I closed myself off from my family during this stage. I hid in my room whenever I had the chance.

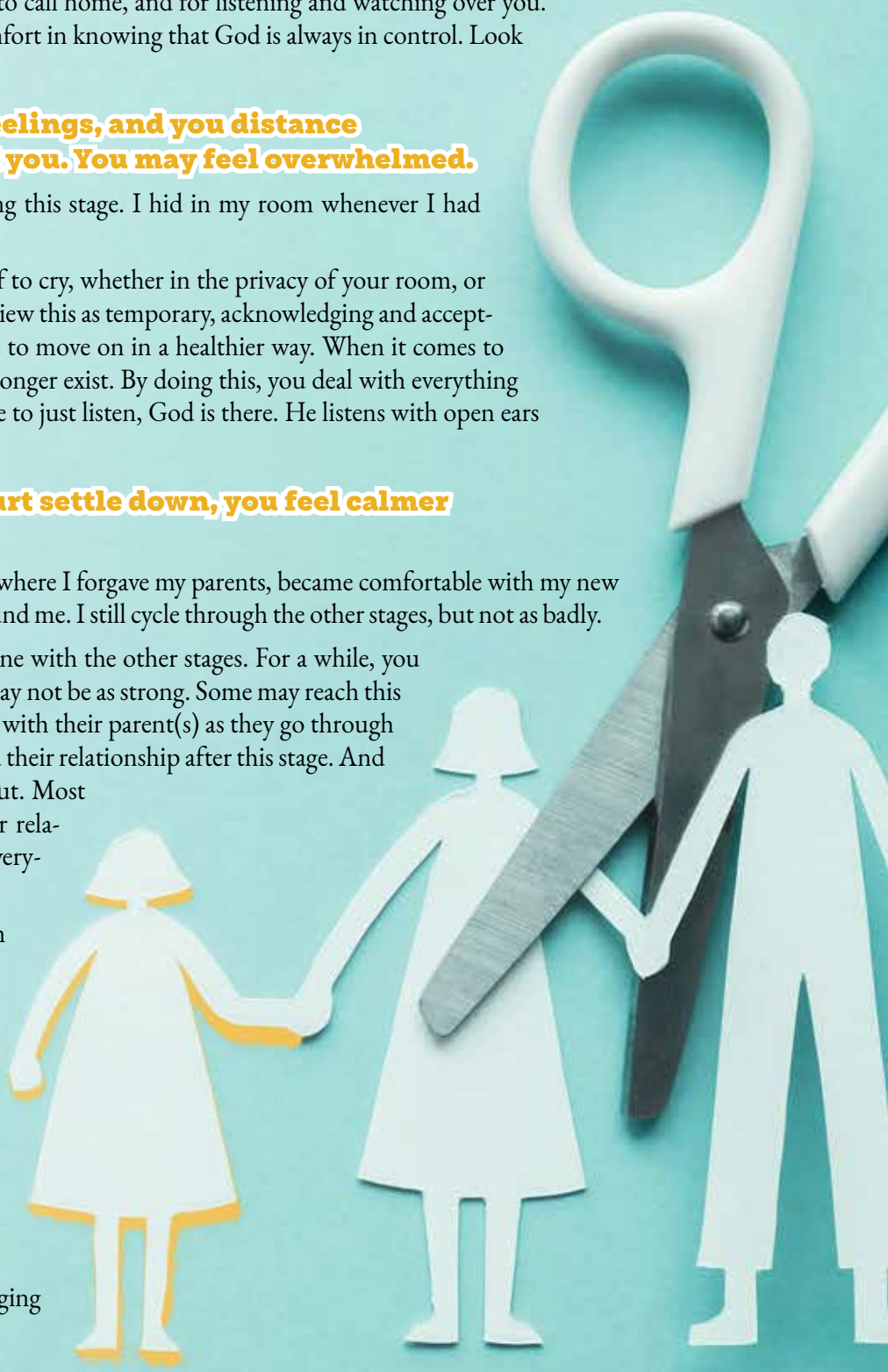
This is totally normal. Allow yourself to cry, whether in the privacy of your room, or while you are talking to someone. If you view this as temporary, acknowledging and accepting that you are hurting, you will be able to move on in a healthier way. When it comes to your emotions, cuddle them till they no longer exist. By doing this, you deal with everything in a healthy manner. If you need someone to just listen, God is there. He listens with open ears and the intent to help.

Acceptance—As anger and hurt settle down, you feel calmer and in a more relaxed state.

It took me over a year to reach this point where I forgave my parents, became comfortable with my new life, and was at peace with everything around me. I still cycle through the other stages, but not as badly.

Acceptance doesn't mean you are done with the other stages. For a while, you will cycle through them again, but they may not be as strong. Some may reach this stage sooner by developing a relationship with their parent(s) as they go through the previous stages. Others begin to mend their relationship after this stage. And others wait till they are adults to reach out. Most importantly, don't feel forced to fix your relationship. It is much easier to accept everything when you are ready.

Divorce is a major change that can cause stress for everyone whom it affects, which is one reason why God hates it (Malachi 2:16). However, He made us, and He knows people make decisions like this. For those that get stuck in-between, He provides them with support and help to cope with these major life changes. We are all here to help each other get to heaven. The more love and understanding we have, the more like Jesus we will be when bringing people to Him. ■



The Lord's ARMY

by Jared & Michelle McLeod



The Lord's Army." I have a video on my phone of our oldest child singing that song and giving his best 2-year old salute and "Yes Sir!" Needless to say, it's one of my favorite Sunday school songs. Yet, beyond the simple lyrics and the VBS-calisthenics that come along with it, it is an important proclamation for Christians: "I'm in the Lord's Army!" It's a battle cry and a pledge of allegiance.

We are in a battle

We are all in a battle, and it's a big one. The apostle Paul wrote that Christians "do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Ephesians 6:12). Principalities? Rulers? Cosmic powers? Spiritual forces of evil? Sounds intimidating! And it would be...if we were alone and unprepared. Yet, we are persuaded to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10), not our own. Where we are weak, the Lord is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). We are not told to put on our own armor, but to put on God's armor (Ephesians 6:13-18). It is God Who protects us. It is the Lord Who gives us the strength to fight against such impossible odds. But **we must choose**.

Whose side are you on?

At the end of Joshua 5, Joshua was about to lead the Israelites into battle when he encountered a man armed with a sword. He asked the man, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" (Joshua 5:13). But the man did not answer Joshua's question. Instead, He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come" (vs. 14). This Commander, of course, was God Himself. The Commander did not answer Joshua, but instead begs the question, "Are you for Me, or against Me?"

In life's battle, are we for God or against Him? Will we serve in the Lord's army, waging war against the "spiritual forces of evil," or will we surrender to Satan and his schemes? We all must choose whom we will serve (Joshua 24:15). But there is only one Way to victory.

Christians are victorious

Know this: If we are soldiers in the Lord's army, the Commander will give us the victory. Just as He was with Israel as they faced the city of Jericho, so the Lord will be with us. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, expressed his victorious feelings when he asked the rhetorical question "If God is for us, who *can be* against us?" (8:31) A few verses later, he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and gave a list of opponents, "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). These are not small adversaries, by any means. "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Nothing can stand in our way which God cannot overcome. Nothing can defeat us. It is through the Commander of the Lord's army that we find victory. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

We may never march in the infantry. We may never ride in the cavalry. We may never shoot the artillery. We may never fly over the enemy. But if we are in the Lord's army, the Commander will guide us to victory every time in our spiritual battle. ■

The Lord's ARMOR

Since the Christian is in a battle and is in the Lord's army, he must wear the Lord's armor. Read Ephesians 6:14-17 to identify the components of the Lord's armor. Then, write each component in its respective box.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6



Online and printed Spanish materials for children at:

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Illustrations in this spread by Kelsey Pinedo (age 12)



To ask a family-related question to the editors, go to:

www.ebglobal.org/info/cfq

Q: *Our family has been invited to the home of a family with a higher education level than ours. How is the best way to develop a relationship with them?* —U.S.

First, we would recommend for you to be yourself. No one appreciates hypocrisy, so don't pretend to be someone you are not. Secondly, ask questions in order to find common interests, and then pursue those interests. We would also recommend not drawing attention to the differences in education since that makes everyone feel awkward. Assuming the family is Christian, they do not want you to feel inferior to them simply because your education is different. Paul wrote in Romans 12:3 that a Christian should not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but he is to think soberly. Don't think less of yourself for having less education. —PH

Q: *How can I, as a mother, help my daughters to learn to be submissive to authority?*

—ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA

First, be an example by willingly and gladly submitting to the sovereign authority of God (James 4:7), to civil authorities (Romans 13), and to the leadership of your husband (Ephesians 5:22). Second, teach your daughters the reason for submission to authority. You will get better results by helping your daughters understand the "why" of submission rather than forcing them to submit. Finally, show them that submission to authority is not a concept to be feared or despised (as some in society are portraying it). In fact, submission to authority is a beloved concept and virtually universal. Federal and local laws emphasize the need and value of submitting to authority. If they understand that submission to authority is already a part of their life (submitting to traffic laws, schoolteachers, etc.) and will always be a part of their life in a civilized setting, then they will be more willing to accept and excel in this area. —MP

Q: *How can I strengthen my marital relationship?* —HIDALGO, MEXICO

There are two avenues through which a relationship is created and maintained: association and communication. First, association: Spend time with your spouse. Do things together that are mundane (like washing dishes or working outside in the yard or garden), and do things together that are fun (like taking walks, riding bicycles, or playing games). Second, communication: Talk with one another about everything—your personal interests and desires for your relationship and family, your fears, your past, your job, etc. Of course, the more time you spend together, the more differences you will experience, which will lead to talks about how you two can become more like Christ. —PH

Q: *How can I strengthen the faith of my children in the teenage years?* —GUATEMALA

Do not underestimate your teens. Modern society expects little from teens, and thus, yields little results. Some, even Christians, express their low expectations of teens by saying something like, "Just wait until your kids become teens." We cannot get the best from teens if we expect the worst from them. I am a father of four daughters. Two of them are in their teen years, and I would not change that for anything. They love our family life, have amazing abilities and potential, and are truly committed to the Lord. Demand more of them and give more to them (example, time, and teaching), and their faith will impress you! —MP

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