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# homelife

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Wisdom from  
the experts

## Easy Ways to Give Thanks

## “People cannot change”

& other  
marriage  
myths

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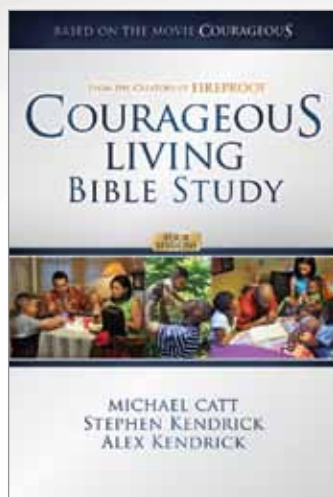
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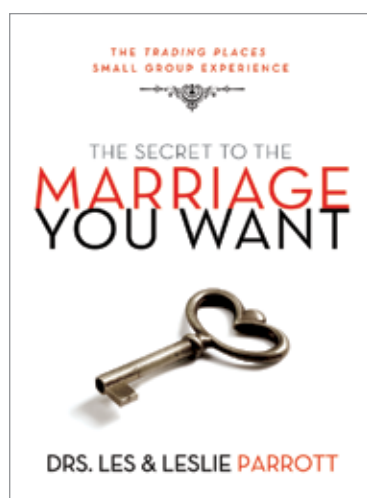
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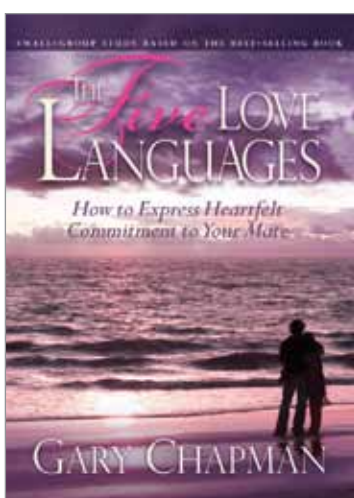
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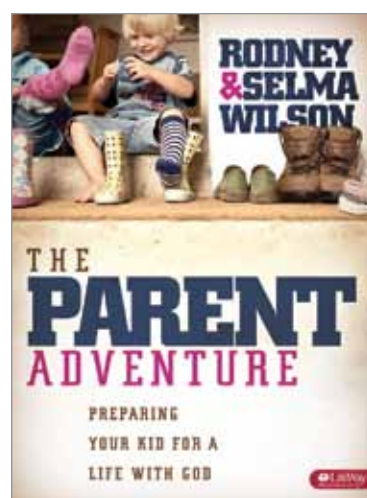
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the upcoming movie *COURAGEOUS*. Scan the matrix barcode on the left with the QR code reader on your phone to see a video preview.



# contents

November 2011

VOLUME 66, NUMBER 2

## Features

### Grow



#### 18 Hold Down the Fort

Discipling kids in military families has unique challenges. *by Clint Kelly*

#### 21 Talk the Walk

Wisdom for talking about salvation with your kids. *by Jennifer McCaman*



#### 22 Telling Secrets

An encounter with the persecuted church can change you forever. *by Andrea Bailey Willits*

### Nurture



#### 34 Let's Stick Together

How to keep others from coming between you and your spouse. *by Marie Armenia*

#### 44 Adoption 101

If you've ever considered adopting a child but felt stumped by the process, these eight basic steps will get you started. *by Andrea Bailey Willits*



#### 50 Crafty Not Required

God covers our parental shortcomings. *by Sophie Hudson*

### Improve

#### 56 Easy-Does-It

Liven up your Thanksgiving table with these simple projects. *by Vanessa Dolberry*

#### 64 What's Your Giving Plan?

A smart strategy for charitable donations. *by Francine L. Huff*

### On the Cover

44 Adoption 101

16, 56, 64 Easy Ways to Give Thanks

18 Nurturing Faith in Military Families

30 "People cannot change."

26 Moved to Minister

Cover Photo: ©Cavan Images



# contents Departments

November 2011



24



60



30



54



48



70

## Grow

- 14 **Family Discipleship: Faithful Friends**  
Godly friendships add meaning to life.  
*by Joy Fisher*

- 24 **Soul Garden: Find Your Calling**  
Where is God leading you? *by Angela Bisignano*

## Nurture

- 26 **Power of the Home: Who Is My Neighbor?**  
Discover the needs next door. *by Jennifer McCaman*

- 30 **Love as a Way of Life: Myth Busters**  
Four beliefs that destroy marriages. *by Gary Chapman*

- 32 **Marriage Mentors: Along for the Ride**  
How to compromise about free time.  
*by Les & Leslie Parrott*

- 38 **My Home Life: Speaking in Love**  
Words are a thermostat for the heart. *by Ashley Haupt*

- 42 **Smart Stepfamilies: Give & Take**  
The power of a flexible attitude. *by Ron L. Deal*

- 48 **Parent Line: Loss of a Pet**  
Help your child cope with grief. *by Gary J. Oliver*

## Improve

- 54 **Family Manager: Multitasking Strategies**  
Do more with the time you already have. *by Kathy Peel*

- 60 **Now You're Cooking: Crowd Pleasers**  
Small-group meals minus the stress. *by Judie Byrd*

- 67 **Family-Friendly Media: Health Apps**  
Six apps to keep your family well. *by Jeff Land*

- 69 **Men of Honor: A Dad's Heart**  
Men need these blessings from a father.  
*by Jason Ellerbrook & Kenny Luck*

## In Every Issue

- 8 **Welcome Home** *by Gary Chapman*

- 10 **Mailbox**

- 73 **Pass It On**

- 74 **For the Girls** *by Ivey Harrington Beckman*





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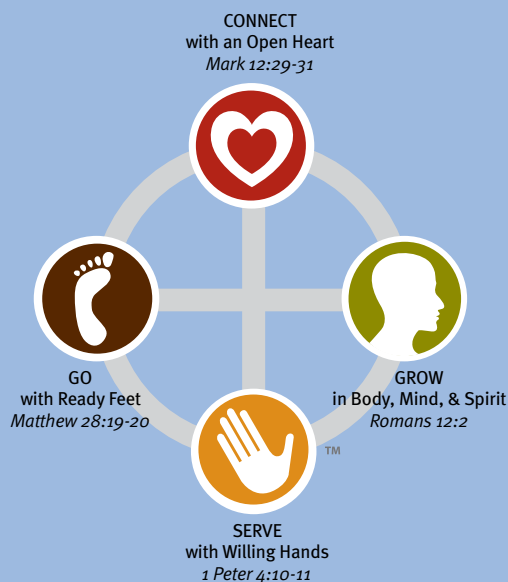
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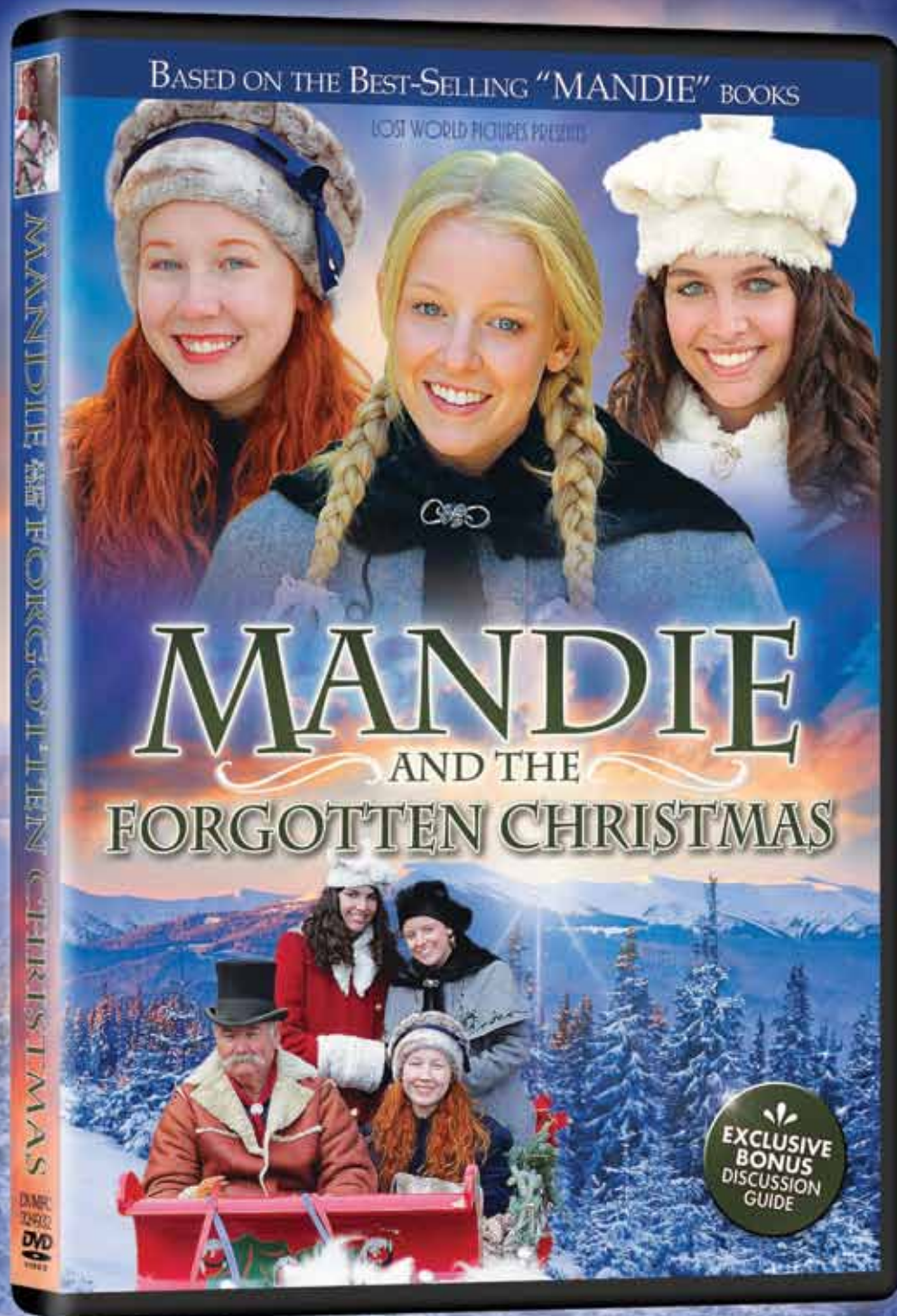
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# welcome home



ALLEN CLARK

## Faith in Real Life

**A few months ago**, Karolyn and I made a return trip to Israel. We've been there several times over the last 30 years. It's always an awe-inspiring experience to stand on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and remember Jesus' call to Peter, Andrew, James, and John to leave their fishing business and follow Him. His call to us is no less specific.

The garden of Gethsemane is my favorite place. I never visit it without thinking of Jesus' tears of agony as He contemplated the crucifixion. Three times He expressed His feelings to the Father. Each time He ended His prayer: "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:39-46). It reminds me that during the difficult times of life, God wants us to be honest about our feelings and yet choose to follow Him.

When our children were teenagers, Karolyn and I took them to Israel. We wanted them to know that Christianity isn't based on mythology but on God's specific acts in the course of human history. We're deeply grateful that today each of them follows Him.

There are many ways to make Christianity come alive for your children. I hope this issue of *HomeLife* encourages you with practical ways to strengthen your family's faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Gary Chapman".

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wants to hear  
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## Cover-Worthy

As a military wife, I was thrilled to see your feature on moms in the military ("A Few Good Women") in the July '11 issue. We recently joined the Air Force, and I was surprised to see how many women not only join but find a lifetime career in the military. It touches my heart that *HomeLife* is reaching out to military families, especially to the women who serve and are often overlooked. My church was kind enough to give me extra issues so I could give them to mothers who are serving at our base, and I'm excited to be able to minister to my military friends by showing them that a magazine thought they were worth a cover story.

**Rachel Ollivant,**  
Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota

## Natural Medicine

I was interested to read your article on painkillers in the August '11 issue ("A Dose of Wisdom") and was happy



to hear the author warn readers of the dangers of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. However, I was disappointed that the article did not mention alternatives to taking these harmful medications. Even when taken as directed, any drug is harmful to our bodies. However, there are alternative treatments in natural medicine, homeopathy, herbal remedies, and diet that treat the same diseases without side effects. The Weston A. Price Foundation ([westonaprice.org](http://westonaprice.org)) is a great website that can introduce readers to these alternatives. Please pass this information along to your readers so we can all be the best stewards of the bodies God has given us.

**Emily Williams, Miss.**



## Challenges of a Pastor's Family

I had to laugh as I read Ms. Painter's letter in the August '11 issue ("Mailbox"). As a daughter of a pastor, I'm eternally grateful for the legacy of faith passed down, partially due to my dad's ministry, but that didn't make the sacrifices any easier. I praise God that our church members encouraged my dad to put family first sometimes. There were many times someone else would lead a prayer meeting so my dad could be at a softball game, chorus concert, or school function. I wouldn't trade being a pastor's kid for anything, but it's greatly due to a loving and understanding church body.

**Hannah Card, Va.**

## Helpful Missions Tool

I first want to say thank you for putting out such a great magazine. I look forward to reading each issue and am encouraged and challenged by the articles. My family and I serve as missionaries in Ecuador, South America. While on home assignment in Burleson, Texas, I read your article "Prepare Now for Departure" by Jonathan Merritt (November '08). It's a good overview of what I would say to short-term missions teams coming to visit us in Ecuador. May God richly bless your continued service to the Lord with this valuable and informative magazine.

**Sheryl Greenwood, email**

## Editor's Note:

To read "Prepare Now for Departure" by Jonathan Merritt, visit [lifeway.com/homelifeonline](http://lifeway.com/homelifeonline).

Put your letter in our mailbox! Good, bad, or somewhere in between, we'd love to hear from you.

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*HomeLife* often includes websites that may be helpful to our readers. We verify the appropriateness of each site prior to publication. However, content changes frequently. We encourage you to use caution and discretion before opening any website.





## ~Online this month~ at [lifeway.com/homelifeonline](http://lifeway.com/homelifeonline)

- ▶ The cost of adoption explained (see page 42).
- ▶ Printable Thanksgiving DIY materials (see page 56).
- ▶ A behind-the-scenes look at Therron Smith's ministry (see page 26).
- ▶ PLUS! A sneak peek at the new book *Raising Boys & Girls* by Sissy Goff and David Thomas (LifeWay).



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# grow

## Deepen Your Faith

He changes the times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

Daniel 2:21



# The Value of a Faithful Friend

The give and take of friendship adds meaning to life. **BY JOY FISHER**



gifts from God to help me on life's journey. We help one another and learn from one another."

## discipleship moment

Encourage each family member to name of a good friend. Name one thing, big or small, we've done for this friend. Then name one thing this friend has done for us.

"I believe my friends are gifts from God to help me on life's journey." — Susan Furtwengler

Susan has established bonds with other couples since her marriage to Dave 18 years ago and the birth of their two children, David, 14, and Bethany, 11. Susan and Dave love to spend time with Angela and Ralph. The two couples have been friends for seven years and have weathered some storms together — literally! Last January they were all snowed in at Ralph and Angela's house and had a blast sledding with both families' kids. When devastating tornadoes hit Alabama last April, the Furtwenglers experienced the loss of a few trees in their yard and endured almost a week without power. The morning after the tornadoes, Ralph and Angela came to help clear the debris and offered hot showers at their home. As all the food in the Furtwengler's freezer defrosted, the two families and other neighbors barbecued and shared the bounty, then had a sweet time of giving aid to harder-hit families in their city.

## discipleship moment

Proverbs 27:10 tells us, "Don't abandon your friend or your father's friend, and don't go to your brother's house in your time of calamity; better a neighbor nearby than a brother

**Family Discipleship** helps you live out Deuteronomy 6:5-8. Share each month's devotion with your kids, and discuss its spiritual truth. Then try ideas to **Connect, Grow, Serve, & Go** with your family (see page 16).

**Being a dependable,** faithful friend sweetens the relationships in your life and draws others to you who reciprocate love, care, and support. Susan Furtwengler cherishes the sweet friendships she's enjoyed over the years.

"I truly value my friends, partly because I've never lived near any family since I became an adult. In some ways, my friends have become my family," Susan says. "I believe my friends are

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far away.” Can our friends who live nearby count on us for fellowship in good times and help in hard times?

Making and choosing friends isn’t always easy. Recognizing that friends have passed through her life in stages, Susan felt equipped to help her own son when middle school brought changes to David’s friendships. Together, the family prayed for a new friend to enter David’s life. Not many days later, he met a new boy who is now a close friend.

“I want my kids to understand that their friends can have so much influence over them, good or bad,” Susan shares. “Life is about choices, and the quality of a person’s life is made by these choices.” She and Dave consciously pray for friends for themselves and for their kids who inspire them and help them to be more Christ-like.

### discipleship moment

What are some characteristics of faithful, dependable, Christ-like friends? Would others describe our family in these terms?

When they were in high school, one of Susan’s closest friends shared with her about Jesus. “This started my real journey of faith to know Jesus personally,” Susan explains. As the years went by, Susan’s friend drifted from the faith she once knew. Susan prayed for her for more than 15 years; at their 20-year reunion the friend confided to Susan that she had started attending church once again. A jubilant Susan says, “I had told the Lord I would wait and pray, and even if I was old I was expecting Him to answer that prayer. And He did!”

### discipleship moment

How can our family use friendships as a way to share Christ with others? Do we regularly pray for friends who don’t know Jesus? ☐

**Joy Fisher** loves girls’ nights out with a group of ladies she’s called friends for more than 15 years. At home, she is wife to David and mom to Sam, Jacob, and Lara.



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## AS YOU GO

Use travel time to:

### PRAY

for a different friend on the way to school each day in November. Take turns choosing the friend. Name three things you like about this friend. When you get home, send an email, text, or make a phone call to tell the friend your family prayed for him or her today.

## Bring Scripture Home

Memorizing Scripture as a family is a great way to remind one another of God’s faithfulness. Post these verses on the refrigerator and recite them at mealtimes.

**Week of November 6:** “A friend loves at all times.” Proverbs 17:17

**Week of November 13:** “Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Proverbs 3:3

**Week of November 20:** “Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.” Luke 6:31

**Week of November 27:** “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15

For a daily Bible passage and Discipleship Moment to share with your family, visit [lifeway.com/homelifeonline](http://lifeway.com/homelifeonline).



# NOVEMBER 2011

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

1

Take the 30-day gratitude challenge. Each day share with your family one thing you're thankful for.

2

3

4

5



Connect



Grow



Serve



Go

Learn more at [lifeway.com/lifespan](http://lifeway.com/lifespan).

6

Memorize  
Proverbs 17:17

Daylight saving  
time ends

7

8

Find out if your church will have an Angel Tree this year. If not, offer to coordinate the project.

9

10

11

Veterans Day

12

13

Memorize  
Proverbs 3:3

14

Nov. 14-21  
Operation  
Christmas Child  
collection week

15

16

17



Plan a date night with your spouse before the busyness of the holidays begins.

18

19

20

Memorize  
Luke 6:31

21



Serve  
Thanksgiving  
dinner at your  
local homeless  
shelter.

22

23

24

Thanksgiving  
Day

25

26

Turn off all  
electronics  
after supper.

27

Memorize  
Romans 12:15

28

29

30

## family challenge

Involve the entire family in preparing Christmas cards for mailing this year. Start early! As you write each name on the envelope, pray for that person or family and thank God for the friendship you share. Be open to new ways to be dependable, faithful, trustworthy friends to each person or family in 2012.



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# Hold Down ~the FORT

Caleb was just 5 when the nightmares and the stomach-aches began. The kindergartner had a recurring dream that his daddy had been shot. It was 2007 and Cliff Horn was deployed to Iraq with the U.S. Navy. It was his wife Sara's job to reassure their little boy that God is in control. For two weeks the nightmares persisted. "That is such a hard moment for a mother," Sara remembers, who with Oliver North co-authored *A Greater Freedom: Stories of Faith From Operation Iraqi Freedom* (B&H). "You neither want to make promises you can't keep ("God won't let anything happen to your dad") or to make your child's fears worse ("Well, your dad could get shot")."

Sara talked to Caleb about what it means to trust God. "I explained that God's in control even when we're not. When I told Cliff about [the nightmares], he received special approval to send a photo of him driving a bulldozer. As a member of the Seabees Construction Battalion, his primary job is to build things, but he does carry a weapon for defense."

Sara and her son continued to pray every night for Cliff's safety. That and the photo helped put an end to Caleb's disturbing dreams.

If you're a military parent like Sara and Cliff, you know discipling your kids can be a tough job. With the challenges of military life, from its inherent dangers to separations and moves, it may seem formidable to teach your children that God is in control and never changes. But you're not alone. Be encouraged by these nuggets of wisdom from military families like yours.

With the challenges of military life, discipling your kids can be difficult. Other military families share their wisdom.

By  
Clint  
Kelly

**1. Keep your spiritual life strong.** It's important to Sara that she remains spiritually grounded by reading God's Word and praying so she can disciple Caleb. She advises the same for other spouses of deployed military personnel. "Take care of yourself and seek the lessons God wants to teach you about trusting Him, growing in relationship with Him, spending more time focused on Him," Sara says. "Giving yourself 100 percent to your children and your deployed spouse is dangerous because eventually you will wear out."

**2. Reach out to your church.** Going to church can be difficult because of the painful awareness that your deployed mate isn't with you. Your church family also may

not fully understand what you need. Despite those realities, Sara says it's important to be with other believers. "Make a point to ask friends if you can sit with them in the service," she suggests. "Look for others sitting by themselves and introduce yourself. Stay involved in your small group and let them know of ways they can help. Approach your church leadership about forming a military family or military spouse group for others in your situation."

**3. Bond with other military families.** Geoff DeWeese is a major and attorney with the Army JAG Corps stationed at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Neb. It's his eighth post in 12 years. The chief of military justice is husband

of 17 years to his wife, Melody, and dad to five children ranging in age from 2 to 10, including 4-year-old twins.

The frequent moves take their toll. The children are less willing to make friends knowing they have to leave in a year. Another new church becomes a frightening obstacle filled with a sea of unfamiliar faces and strange surroundings. “The older children grapple with the idea that they serve their country by moving all the time,” Melody explains, “and that’s just as hard and just as important as Daddy being a soldier. Sacrifice is a tough concept, even for Christian kids.

“Thankfully, there are a lot of practicing Christians in the military,” Melody says. “They bring us meals when we’re sick, watch our children when we need a break, pray for us when we’re hurting, and encourage us in our lives and our faith.”

#### 4. Remember that discipleship is a process.

When older children join the military, those preparatory years of discipling will pay dividends. “Our son Drew was in the Marines for five years,” says counselor Tony Rankin. “He had been discipled by several men at [church] during his teenage years, by a coach at school, and had attended some meaningful church and sports camps.” While Drew was deployed to Iraq, the Rankins continued to encourage him in the faith through phone calls, letters, and advisement to contact the chaplain when they were unavailable.

Everywhere Tony spoke or preached, people prayed for his son. Drew, in turn, lifted up fellow Marines through shared care packages from home that included words of affirmation and gratitude from people across the country.

**5. Be an example for your kids.** “I know women who have experienced six or even seven deployments,” Sara notes. “I tell them that how you handle deployment is an example of how your child will handle it. If you fall apart, your child is more likely to do so. But if you see deployment as an opportunity to reinforce what it means to lean on God

for His strength over your own, you have the opportunity to teach your children that lesson as well.”

Married 13 years, Sara has an eye-opening message for the women who look to her for guidance: “You have been set apart. God knew before you did that you would be a military wife, and He has a special purpose for you and will equip you with what you need. But He asks that you lean on His strength and not try to do it on your own. Each day is an opportunity to seek His will for your life and for your family. He has a plan! Trust Him with it.” □

### A Soldier's Hope

This Christmas season Point of Grace and American Bible Society present “A Soldier's Hope,” a special holiday concert that helps to provide Bibles for military service personnel.

“There is nothing more that is needed when someone is serving on the frontlines than the comfort the Bible can bring,” says Point of Grace member Shelley Breen. “Many times our soldiers don’t have Bibles or Bible studies because the chaplains simply don’t have the budget to provide them.” Because each Point of Grace member has family who have served in the military, they knew they wanted to help.

“Our Christmas program opens with a touching tribute to our servicemen and women,” shares Leigh Cappillino. During the concert audience members will learn how they can help provide Bibles to military personnel, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year.

“It’s a special evening of Christmas celebration that all ages will enjoy,” Leigh adds. “We would love to see you there!” Learn more at [asoldiershope.com](http://asoldiershope.com) and [pointofgrace.net](http://pointofgrace.net).

## Discipleship Boot Camp

It’s difficult to help your children grow in their faith unless you keep your own spiritual life strong. Check out these resources for military families:

- [Excellentorpraiseworthy.org](http://Excellentorpraiseworthy.org). Online devotional for military couples that applies *Love Dare* principles to deployment.
- [Militaryministry.org](http://Militaryministry.org). A partnership between Military Ministry and Family

Life Ministries that provides tools for keeping the family spiritually sound during the stress of military service.

- *Making Your Marriage Deployment Ready* by Mike and Linda Montgomery and Keith and Sharon Morgan (FamilyLife). Small group Bible study on how to counter deployment challenges, stay connected as a family, and thrive.
- *GOD Strong: A Military Wife’s Spiritual Survival Guide* (Zondervan) and *Tour of Duty: Preparing Our Hearts*

for Deployment by Sara Horn (LifeWay). Mother and wife of a Navy reservist provides Bible-based encouragement and practical advice for keeping the homefront together. *Tour of Duty* contains bonus material for churches ministering to military families.

- [Wivesoffaith.org](http://Wivesoffaith.org). Online Bible studies, articles written by military wives for military wives, and weekend retreats. Survival Sisters pairs military wives in a six-week devotional/discussion partnership.

Clint Kelly is a communications specialist for Seattle Pacific University and the author of *Dare to Raise Exceptional Children* (Bethany House).



# Talk the Walk

## ► Tips for leading your child to Christ By Jennifer McCaman

**Leading your child to Christ** is the greatest moment parents can experience. But it's also pretty intimidating. What if you say the wrong thing? What if you forget the right Bible verses? What if you unknowingly confuse your child?

Remember, there's no formula for talking about salvation. Leading your child to Christ will likely happen over several conversations before he or she is ready to commit. Still, it's great to be prepared. Use the following ideas as guidelines, and don't be afraid to ask your pastor or children's minister for help.

### Before Your Conversation

- Don't mistake a simple question for the readiness to hear the full gospel. For example, if your child wants to know why a friend is getting baptized, a simple explanation, such as "Tim wanted to show the church he became a Christian," might be all he or she is ready to hear at the time.

- Ask open-ended questions. Examples include: "What do you think *salvation* means?"

- "Why do you want to become a Christian?" "What do you think *baptism* means?"

- Pray with your child. This will remind you that it's God through the Holy Spirit who will bring your child to salvation. Praying also sends a message to your child that this isn't an ordinary conversation.

### During Your Conversation

Here are several Bible verses that clearly communicate the gospel.

- Read these verses with your child, or have your child read them to you. Use a children's Bible or an easy-to-understand translation. Take your time with each verse, answering any questions your child may have.

- God loves you and has a great plan for you (Psalm 139:13-16).

- Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23).

- Even though you sin, God still loves you and offers to forgive you (Romans 5:8).

- Jesus died for you (John 3:16).

- You can become a Christian by confessing that Jesus is your Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9).

- Know when to stop. If your child seems distracted or bored after a few minutes, decide to end the conversation and resume it another time.

### After Your Conversation

- If your child isn't ready to make a decision now, pray that he or she will keep growing closer to God.

- If your child is ready to commit, let him or her pray to receive Christ. Either lead your child in a prayer or let him or her pray alone. One possible prayer of salvation:

*Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and have disobeyed You in many ways.*

*I believe You died for my sin and rose from the grave so I can be forgiven.*

*I want to turn from my sin and ask You to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day on, I will live a life that pleases You. Thank You, Jesus, for loving and forgiving me. Amen.*

- If your child prays to receive Christ, celebrate together. Sit down with your children's minister or pastor to share the news and request information about baptism. □

Jennifer McCaman is grateful to her dad for helping her come to salvation as a child. She prays daily that her baby boy will someday choose to follow Christ.



# [telling secrets]

An **encounter** with the  
**persecuted church**  
can **change** your family  
or small group **forever**.

By  
Andrea  
Bailey  
Willits

**Y**ou're secretly huddled in a house with your family or a group of believers for hours of intensive Bible study. At any moment, authorities could knock on the door and arrest you, but your love for God is so strong that you're willing to risk everything to learn more about Him.

What if your Christianity was this raw, dangerous, and satisfying — a world apart from the cushy chairs and 20-minute sermons Americans are used to? That's what pastor and author David Platt asked his comfortable, upper-class megachurch, The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., after spending time with underground house churches throughout Asia. How, Platt wondered, could he transplant the urgency of the gospel proclamation and hunger for God's Word to the American church?

His answer: Secret Church, six intensive hours of biblical teaching and prayer for the persecuted church held periodically at Brook Hills. LifeWay Christian Resources and Disciple Making International (DMI), a nonprofit Christian equipping organization Platt founded, partnered to provide a simulcast so families and small groups around the world can share in the revolutionary Secret Church experience in their homes ([lifeway.com/secretchurch](http://lifeway.com/secretchurch)).

"Having a simulcast for Secret Church exposes more people to the primacy of God's Word and the importance of prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters," Platt explains.

About 50,000 people from 1,300 churches and small groups joined in the first simulcast event last year. Participants like Lisa were riveted.

"Everyone stayed awake until midnight; in fact, we were all so fired up we couldn't get to sleep when we did go home," Lisa says. "We know God is using this tool to birth and renew a deep and incredible hunger for His Word."

"We want participants to come away with an insatiable hunger for God's Word and be equipped to share what they've learned with others."  
— David Platt



Eighteen-year-old Caitlyn was also on the edge of her seat. “Your age doesn’t matter at all with this — I found the whole thing very intense and interesting! I felt especially connected to the church. I could really feel the body of Christ that night and it opened my eyes to the massiveness of God’s kingdom.”

Interested in the Secret Church experience? Platt shares four tips for your family or small group.

**Embrace the smaller setting.** “If I weren’t teaching, I would love to gather in a home with a group of people to be a part of this,” Platt says. “There’s something special, yet powerful, about setting aside that kind of time to study and pray together intimately as a small group.”

**Celebrate your unity with the global church.** Even from home, you’re worshiping, praying, and studying the Word in a global context.

“During the [first] simulcast, people were sending in pictures of groups studying all over the world,” Platt says. “At one point, we put up a picture of a small group meeting in Cambodia. When I saw that picture, the fact that we were joining with those brothers and sisters on the other side of the world just struck me.”

#### **Use Secret Church study guides and resources.**

Immediately following the simulcast DMI posts video, audio, and study guides at [disciplemakingintl.org](http://disciplemakingintl.org), so use these as a resource for your family or small group.

“If your children are older and able to attend Secret Church, I would recommend going back through the study with them and talking through any questions they may have,” Platt says.

Small groups can also go back through at their own pace and really dig into the material. Matt, one of last year’s participants, says he still goes back to his study guide.

“I will continue to study its truths for the rest of my life,” Matt says.

Moreover, Platt challenges small groups to take what they have learned beyond their small group and re-teach it in other contexts. “The point is never just to learn information,” he explains. “The point is to grow in Christ together and equip one another to go into the world together.”

“No matter what it costs,  
we want every nation, tribe, tongue,  
and people group to hear and have the  
opportunity to respond to the gospel. That’s  
what Secret Church is primarily about.”  
— David Platt

**Share with others.** There’s one thing Platt doesn’t want anyone to miss, whether they’re gathered at Brook Hills or at home.

“Secret Church is not just for that night,” he says. “We want participants to come away with an insatiable hunger for God’s Word and be equipped to share what they’ve learned with others. No matter what it costs, we want every nation, tribe, tongue, and people group to hear and have the opportunity to respond to the gospel. That’s what Secret Church is primarily about.”

The second Secret Church simulcast is November 4, 2011, and it’s your opportunity to connect to the global church, disciple your family, or take your small group deeper in the Word. Learn what the Bible says about some of the most sensitive and important issues facing our culture, other cultures, and the church today: manhood, womanhood, marriage, parenting, singleness, sex, divorce, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, polygamy, pornography, adoption, abortion. You’ll also pray for your persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. □

## Secret Church Simulcast FAQ

How much does it cost?

The Secret Church bundles are based on how many people are participating in your group. Order before October 24 to receive study guides.

\$49 – Small Group of 1-7 (7 study guides)

\$99 – Small Group of 8-14 (14 study guides)

\$350 – Group 50-99 (50 study guides)

\$700 – Group of 100+ (100 study guides)

What do I need to be able to simulcast?

Simulcasting is easy and basically requires an Internet connection and a desktop or laptop computer.

How do I register as a small group?

To register go to [lifeway.com/secretchurch](http://lifeway.com/secretchurch) and then select the bundle that best describes your group.

What if I need more help?

Go to [lifeway.com/secretchurch](http://lifeway.com/secretchurch) for more information or email [secretchurch@lifeway.com](mailto:secretchurch@lifeway.com).

“We know God is using this  
tool to birth and renew a deep and  
incredible hunger for His Word.”  
— Lisa

# Find Your Calling

**Nothing in life compares** to the significance of pursuing God's high calling. Think about it for a moment. Do you know what God's calling is for your life? In our busy and hectic lives it's easy to miss it. How do we know what God is calling us to? There certainly are a lot of good things we can be doing with our time; yet, the more important question may be "Are we doing what God wants us to be doing?"

Our calling is the knowledge that God first calls us to Himself; it is our best understanding of who He has created us to be; and what He desires us to do. It's the very thing that if we are listening well, inspires, fuels, and gives our lives meaning. Our calling is how we can make an everlasting difference and bring glory to God.

There is no formula for discovering God's calling for your life. You could never fit God's ways into a box. Discovering your calling is a dynamic and personal journey with God. You deepen your understanding as you listen to how God speaks to your heart. If you haven't already started this wonderful journey, here are some ways to get going on this exciting adventure:

► **Live an examined life.** Take time out to discover how God has created you. Be willing to look at yourself: where you've come from, where you're at now, and where you're going. This also entails understanding who you're not. Living an examined life means taking time to reflect, pray, and discover where God is leading you.

► **Clarify your giftedness and passion.** Learn how God has uniquely created you. There are fewer things in life that bring more joy and a feeling of truly being alive than pursuing a calling that matches your giftedness and passion. Understand what your unique abilities, strengths, spiritual gifts, and life experiences are all about. How can you use all of your giftedness to have influence and make an impact for the kingdom of God? Use the Bible, books, assessment tools, sermons, or whatever helps you to become all God has created you to become. God made only one you; dare to make a vibrant contribution in this world.

► **Live an intentional life.** Spend quality time with God. When you have a relationship with God, He will reveal your calling. Be courageous and dare to go where He leads you. If God is calling you, He will give you everything you need. You were created to be the hands and heart of the living God. Use everything He has given you to bring goodness and hope to a hurting and broken world and to bring glory to the King of Kings. Live a story worth being told. ☐

Angela Bisignano, Ph.D., is the author of *Beautifully Gifted: Equipping Today's Women for the High Calling of God* (Intermedia). In 2011, CBN named her one the "Top 6 Women Leaders to Follow." Learn more at [drangelabisignano.com](http://drangelabisignano.com), and Tweet her at @AngelaBisignano.

~

"Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to His summons and service."

— Os Guinness



Read 1 Corinthians 10:31 with your children. Discuss what it means to do "everything for God's glory." How does this apply to school, chores, helping others, and even playtime?



# nurture

Strengthen  
Your Relationship

The entire law  
is fulfilled in  
one statement:  
Love your neighbor  
as yourself.

Galatians 5:14



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# Who Is My Neighbor?

Moving two miles down the road helped one couple meet the deepest needs in their community. **BY JENNIFER MCCAMAN**

Want to learn more ways to rediscover the power of your home? Visit [lifeway.com/powerofthehome](http://lifeway.com/powerofthehome) for daily wisdom and encouragement from marriage and family experts.

## WHEN THERRON SMITH

agreed to visit a low-income housing project in Rome, Ga., he thought he would stay one day. He never expected to move in.

A preacher's kid from Georgia, Therron went to Shorter College with the idea of going into ministry. He discovered South Rome when one of his friends invited him to Ward 3, the poorest part of the city.

"Literally, Ward 3 is two miles from the college, within walking distance," Therron explains. "Parts of Rome are extremely wealthy, but cross the river or go left instead of right at the railroad tracks, and you're in a different world."

Therron agreed to go with a friend to see the community. "We spent the day playing basketball with some kids," he recalls. A couple weeks later Therron visited again and happened to meet Mrs. Linda, a local resident of Ward 3 who had started a church-like ministry in her home. "People gathered, played drums, ate, read Scripture, and prayed together," Therron describes.

After seeing the needs in the community, he felt drawn to help. "I went back every single day," Therron says. "I would run in the mornings for cross country, go to class, then spend every afternoon and evening in South Rome — making food for kids when they got off the bus, playing sports, sorting clothes for the clothing drive, hanging out at Mrs. Linda's. Then one afternoon, a girl caught my eye."

It turned out that the mystery girl, Ashley, and Therron had a class together. After they spent more time together serving in South Rome, it became clear that marriage was in their future. Though most couples see their wedding as a chance to stand in the spotlight, Ashley and Therron saw their big day as a chance to spotlight Christ to the community.

"We knew we would get married right on the playground in Ward 3. It was a no-brainer — a fleshing out of our faith," Therron explains. "I don't want to over-spiritualize it. It was just what we did. We printed invitations on Word documents and went door to door handing them out to the community. We promised people a short ceremony and a lot of food and music. The drum circle from Mrs. Linda's actually played in the wedding. It was cool to look out and see our family in South Rome."



“Our ministry isn’t as glamorous as, say, moving to Africa. It isn’t as marketable, but it’s in our backyard.”  
— Therron Smith

## Moving In

Immediately after the wedding, Ashley and Therron moved into Ward 3. Therron struggled with the tension of wanting to minister to the community and having to find a job to support his new family. “All I wanted to do was feed the hungry kids around us, play with them, love on them, and give them clothes. Ashley was adjusting to being a new full-time teacher. We were both unhappy because we were both having to work outside of South Rome,” Therron admits.

Knowing he needed to find a job, Therron tried formal church ministry. “I would sit in staff meetings but couldn’t stop thinking about my neighbors — children who literally would not get supper before they went to bed because dad was gone and mom worked the night shift. It was too much,” Therron admits. Realizing that serving on a church staff wasn’t for him, he quit soon after. “I kept wrestling with the question ‘How do I be an adult and still wash people’s feet?’ I finally landed a full-time job fixing bikes at a shop in town.”

Soon after Therron started his new job, he and Ashley found out they were expecting. Planning for the arrival of their daughter only strengthened their commitment to the people and ministry in Ward 3.

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## Moving Forward

Therron and Ashley want their family to be a living picture of the gospel to the people in South Rome. Therron reflects, “Our next-door neighbor has four kids, each with a different dad. Dads aren’t around here. I want to be an involved dad whose faithful to one woman — a totally foreign concept here. That means some nights I have to choose to minister to my wife and child instead of making sandwiches for 200 kids.”

Therron is quick to admit that he isn’t doing ministry alone. In fact, he sees God calling other Christians to South Rome. His close friend AJ recently moved into the neighborhood with his wife for the purpose of showing the gospel to the community.

“It’s easy to think that everyone in the South has heard the gospel. It just isn’t true. And even if they’ve heard it, they

may not have seen it lived out,” Therron adds. He’s convinced that the people in South Rome need Christ as much as those on the other side of the world. “Our ministry isn’t as glamorous as, say, moving to Africa. It isn’t as marketable, but it’s in our backyard.”

Therron and Ashley have lived in South Rome for two years now and have no immediate plans to leave. Therron reflects on a passage of Scripture (Proverbs 29:18) that has been particularly influential in his decision to plant his family in what people jokingly refer to as “the ghetto.” “The Bible says, ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish.’ Ashley and I want to be that vision.” □

**Jennifer McCaman** is a freelance writer, wife to a student minister, and mom to an active 10-month-old boy. She is inspired by Therron and Ashley’s commitment to take the gospel “where there is no vision.”

**Ministering through your home** doesn't have to be complicated, but it does take intentionality. Here are some practical ways your family can minister right where you live.

## connect

### Walk With Me

by Jason Hayes

Jesus' call to His disciples was, "Follow Me. Walk where I'm walking. Go where I'm going. And along the way, I've got some things to teach you."

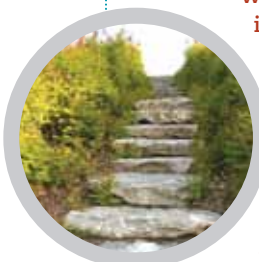
Jesus didn't necessarily seek out a fig tree, a field, or a farmer. He was walking by those things, and He used those moments that naturally occurred to teach spiritual truth. But He had to be walking with people in order to have that opportunity.

When people from an older generation invite those younger than them into their lives, they have that chance. Whether eating a meal, going to the movies, or having a conversation, the natural circumstances emerge to see and seize teaching opportunities through sharing life together.

The key is intentionality. That's what Jesus demonstrated as He walked side by side with others.

Sometimes we confuse intentionality with formality. It's not about blocking extra hours (that you likely don't have) for "mentoring time." Instead, it's about mentoring people within the existing hours that you do have. Regimented weekly meetings are fine for some, but they'll never be as effective as simply bringing others into your everyday life.

**Jason Hayes** is committed to connecting the young adult generation to God and the church. He is the author of *Blemished and Follow Me* (LifeWay) and the co-author of *Lost and Found* (B&H). Learn more at [jasonhayesonline.com](http://jasonhayesonline.com).



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## serve

### Cooking Up a Ministry

by Marie Armenia

The Bible tells us to "practice hospitality," and I convinced myself I needed more practice than others. I'm no Martha Stewart. Still, I asked Him to use my home for His glory and honor. Who knew He'd give me a meatball ministry? Yes, you read that right.

It started when a sweet young wife, aware of my Italian heritage, kept begging me to teach her to make "real" meatballs. I was busy, the house wasn't fixed up, the carpets needed to be cleaned — one excuse after another. One day, she showed up at my house with the ingredients in a bag. She was a new believer and our meatball-making time turned into a great discussion about following the Lord. She asked if she could invite others for our next cooking lesson, and I said she could.

After a few weeks, the cooking stopped and the only thing we were devouring was the Bible. One day I looked at the young women gathered in my living room — some of them mature Christians and some of them new believers — and I remembered that I'd been praying for a way to obey God's Word and be an older woman teaching the younger. The key for me was hospitality. Opening my home was the opening I'd been praying for all along. Evidently, God will use whatever we offer — our homes and the meatballs we make in them.

**Marie Armenia** is a singer, songwriter, and speaker at various women's conferences. Learn more at [mariearmenia.com](http://mariearmenia.com).



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## grow

### Verses to Dwell On

by Nancy Cornwell

The Bible is full of verses that teach about hospitality and generosity. Here are a few to study and learn from.

► "Now the One who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all generosity,

which produces thanksgiving to God through us" 2 Corinthians 9:10-11.

► "Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude" Acts 2:46.

► "Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests

without knowing it" Hebrews 13:2.

► "Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality" Romans 12:13.

**Nancy Cornwell** believes in always having an open door. Friends, family, and neighbors are always welcome at her home, as long as they ignore the dust.



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go

## Set an Extra Place

by Dawn Hollomon

As parents of a 2-year-old and a 12-year-old, my husband, Chris, and I want our kids to develop hearts for investing in others and reaching the lost. But because our boys are at such different ages and developmental stages, it can be a challenge to make hospitality a family affair.

If you're like us and are unsure how to help your kids catch the vision of sharing Christ's love with others through your home, here are two simple activities children of any age can do.

1. Let your kids take the lead by setting an extra place at the dinner table. This communicates that someone important is missing. The visual reminder will help your family remember to be intentional about opening your home to others. Your big kids can handle the breakables and knives. Let your little ones take care of the napkins and spoons.

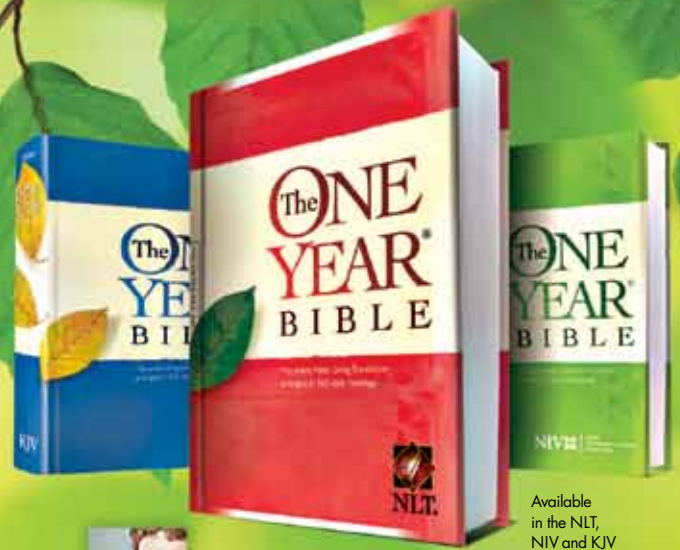
2. Pray as a family for God to fill the empty spot at your table. Encourage your kids to pray that God would bring people who don't know Him to your home, whether it's neighbors, classmates, coaches, and so forth. So what if your toddler slips Diego into the prayer list every now and then? The point is to cultivate a heart for others.

These two simple acts can be a jumping off point to help you nurture biblical hospitality in your children's hearts.

Dawn Hollomon is a minister's wife and the mom of a toddler and tween adopted from Ethiopia.



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# Myth Busters

Debunk four common beliefs to rebuild your marriage

**“I really don’t want to divorce.** I know that would devastate the children, but I don’t know how long I can live with the pain,” a woman said to me.

I’m deeply empathetic with those who live in troubled marriages. Unfortunately, many base their decisions to end their marriage on myths. Here are four common myths that destroy marriages.

## MYTH 1

**“I’m the victim of my circumstances.”**

This myth is often expressed in statements such as:

- “I grew up in a dysfunctional family, so I’m destined to be a failure in relationships.”
- “I’m married to an alcoholic. My life will be miserable.”
- “My spouse works all the time. We don’t have time to nurture a marriage.”



## \* Gary's Tip of the Month

Don't give up on yourself,  
and don't give up on  
your spouse.

When you believe you're the victim of your environment, it prompts hopelessness, which leads you to conclude, "My marriage is miserable. This is the way it will always be."

Although your environment certainly influences you, it doesn't control you. You're not a helpless victim. With the help of God, you have the ability to face your situation and make constructive choices that can lead to a much higher level of satisfaction. It's possible to have a positive spirit even in a difficult marriage. Your attitude affects your emotions and your actions. Refusing to believe this myth takes you from victim to victor.

### MYTH 2

**"People cannot change."**

This myth suggests that when people reach adulthood, personality traits and behavior patterns are set in concrete. If you accept this myth as truth, you'll experience feelings of futility and hopelessness.

This myth also fails to align with the reality of human freedom and the power of God. People can change and often do. Thousands of individuals can testify to radical changes in their attitudes, emotions, and behavior.

Don't give up on yourself, and don't give up on your spouse. Change is possible. God is a life-changing God. The greatest sinners become transformed into the greatest saints. Begin with prayer and believe that God can and will change you and your spouse.

### MYTH 3

**"I have only two options:  
Resign myself to misery or get out."**

If you believe this myth, you limit your horizons to two undesirable options and then become a prisoner of your choice.

For 15 years, Shannon and David experienced misery and contemplated divorce. But after six months of counseling, David told me, "I used to leave your office with rage in my heart toward Shannon. Today, I leave realizing what a wonderful wife I have." A smile spread across Shannon's face as she spoke, "I never dreamed I could love David again and that we could have the marriage we now have."

This couple broke the bonds of the two-option myth. So can you. Don't simply settle for misery or divorce. Seek out a wise faith-based counselor, your pastor, and helpful books. Ask

friends to pray with you and for you. You can be the agent of positive change in your marriage.

### MYTH 4

**"My situation is hopeless."**

If you accept this myth your reasoning likely is, "The hurt is too deep; the damage is irreversible." This kind of thinking leads to depression and sometimes suicide.

I listened as Lisa, a 35-year-old mother, shared her story of watching her father murder her mother and then turn the gun on himself. Lisa was 10 years old when she experienced this tragedy. No doubt her father felt his situation was hopeless. Fortunately, Lisa has worked through the trauma, but she still realizes the senselessness of her father's hopeless act. I wonder how many homicides and suicides in this nation could have been avoided if individuals had not believed the myth: "My situation is hopeless."

God is the God of hope. When you put your trust in Him, He will help you through even the most painful situations. With God, no one and no situation is hopeless.

You may have struggled in your marriage for years. You may feel that nothing you've tried has worked. You may have even had people tell you that your marriage is hopeless. Don't believe it. Your marriage isn't beyond hope. Past failures can be forgiven. Scars from childhood can be healed. God is in the business of restoration.

Your marriage can move in a positive direction when you replace these four common myths with the following truths.

1. My environment doesn't determine my happiness. I choose my attitude, and I choose to focus on the positive rather than the negative.
2. People can change. I've seen it in the lives of others. I choose to believe it can happen for me and my spouse.
3. Being miserable or getting a divorce aren't my only options. I choose to be a positive change agent in my marriage. I will begin by talking with my pastor or a counselor, asking a trusted friend to pray with me, and reading a book.
4. My situation is bad, but it isn't beyond hope. With God, there's always hope. I will trust Him to give me wisdom for positive steps in my marriage.

Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Choosing to believe this truth is the first step toward healing in your marriage. □



Gary Chapman is an author and marriage conference leader and serves on the staff of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. He and his wife, Carolyn, have two grown children. If you are in a troubled marriage, you may wish to read his book, *Desperate Marriages: Moving Toward Hope and Healing in Your Relationship*, available at [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com).

# Along for the Ride



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## Challenge ►

Kris and Dana have different ideas when it comes to how they spend their free time.

## Strategy ▼

Andrew and Robin, married 19 years, first mentored Kris and Dana for six months when they were engaged to be married. But now that they are two years into their marriage, Kris and Dana have returned for more help.

“Kris lives to ride his motorcycle,” Dana started in. “Every weekend he ...”

“Wait a second,” Kris interrupted. “When we were dating, you loved biking with me. You act like I’ve changed. But you’re the one who’s changed, not me.”

Andrew and Robin looked at each other with a knowing glance. They understood how agendas shift once a dating couple crosses the proverbial threshold into marriage.

“You used to like riding with Kris?” Robin gently asked Dana.

“Well, I liked being with Kris, and he liked being on his bike, so I went along,” Dana replied.

“You went along?” Kris countered. “You’d brag to your friends about how cool it was. You even bought me a little miniature version of my bike so I could have it on my desk.”

“Something’s changed, Dana, hasn’t it?” Andrew asked.

Dana explained how she was never crazy about riding Kris’ motorcycle, but she was crazy about him. Now that they were married, she didn’t think he would want to ride so much. In fact, she thought they would enjoy more relaxing hobbies, such as gardening. Kris wanted nothing to do with gardening. He wanted to plan a cross-country road trip with Dana. That trip was what brought the free-time issue to a head.

Andrew and Robin knew there was no quick fix. They first asked Kris and Dana to individually describe a perfect leisurely Saturday. No surprise, Kris’ perfect day involved riding his motorcycle. Dana described being at the lake an hour from their house and enjoying a picnic and talking together. Kris listened patiently and when she was done asked, “Would you be willing to ride to the lake on my bike?” Dana agreed but stipulated that she didn’t want to ride the bike all day — just to the lake and back. It was a positive compromise both felt good about.

Next, Andrew and Robin led Kris and Dana through an exercise to help them see free time from each other’s perspective. This didn’t lead to an instant solution, but it did create more understanding, empathy, and grace in their marriage. □

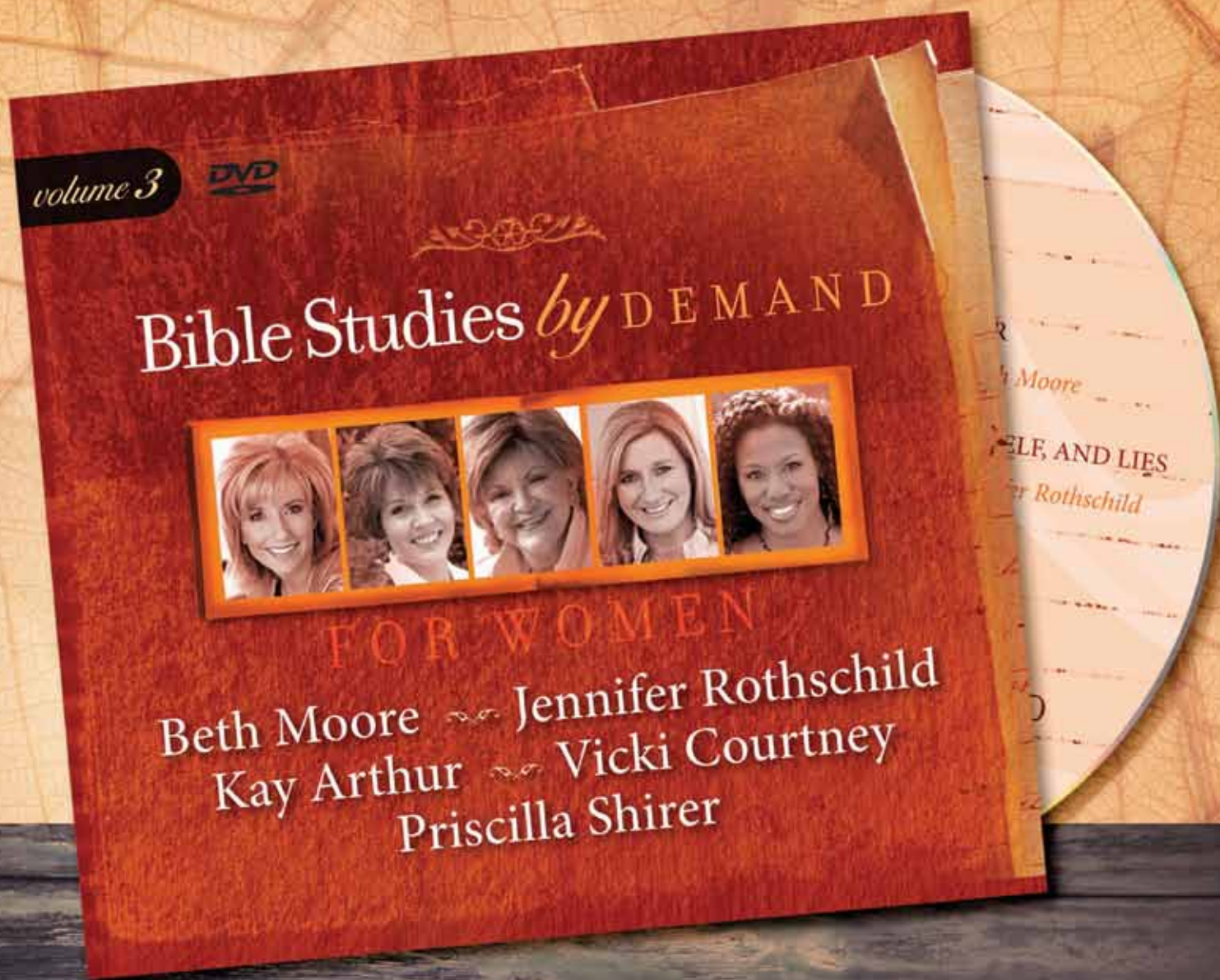
## \*Tip of the Month

When you help spouses see life from each other’s perspective, you create an atmosphere of grace and understanding.



**Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott** are the authors of *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* and *Your Time-Starved Marriage*. Learn more at [marriagementorsite.com](http://marriagementorsite.com).



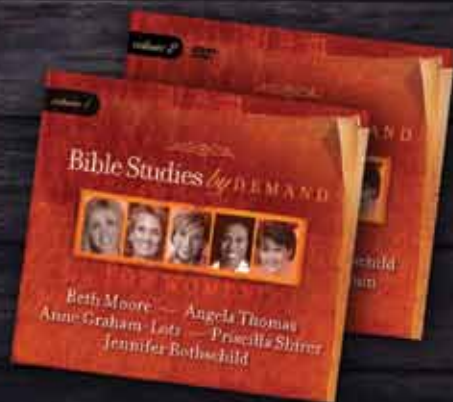


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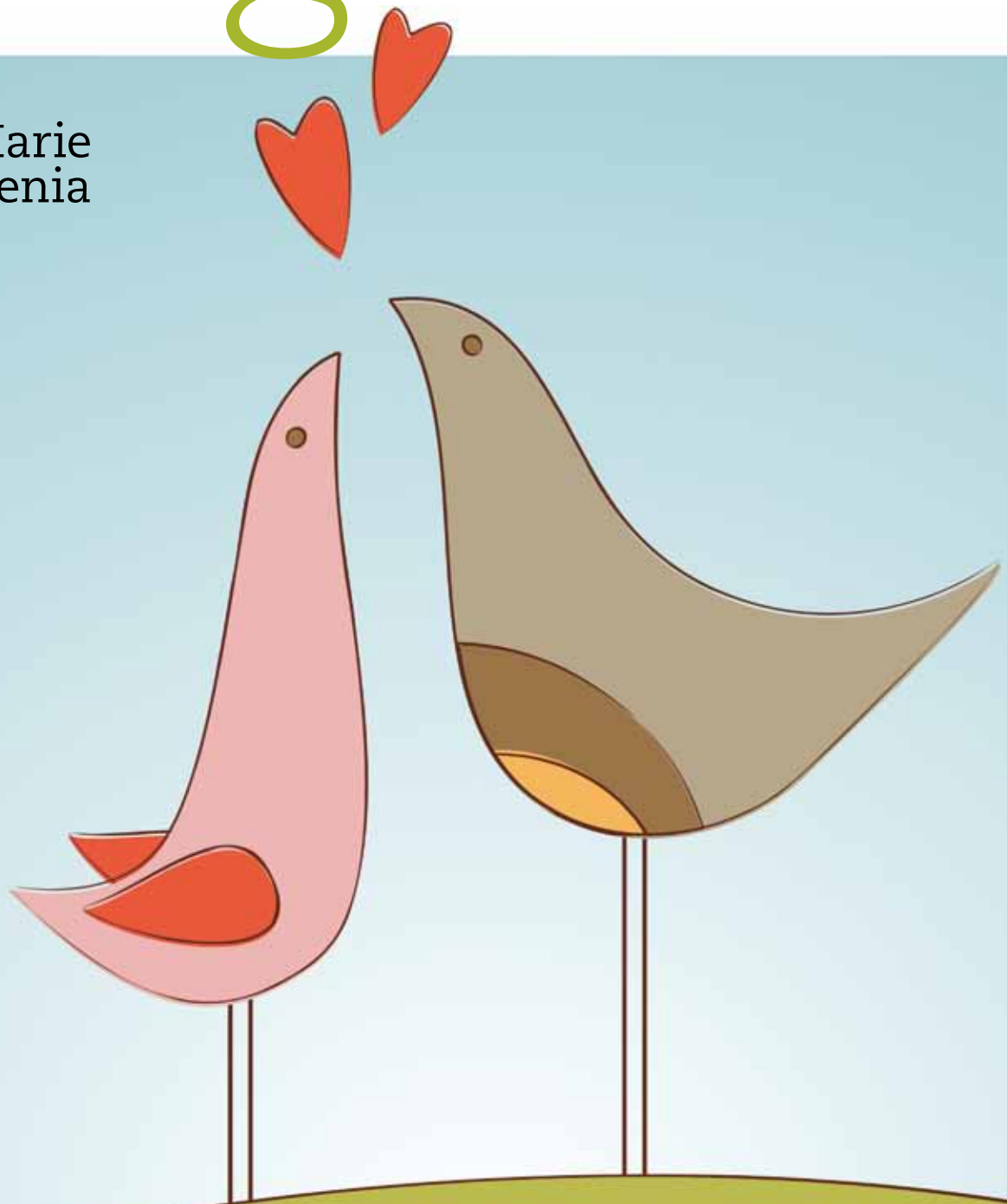
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# let's stick together

By Marie  
Armenia





# Are you and your spouse having a difficult time keeping others from coming between you?

**T**o my grandmother, my father's mother, it was a simple request. To my mother, it was an unreasonable demand. To my father, serving in Europe during World War II early into his marriage, it was a conflict between the two women in his life and he was caught directly in the line of fire.

My mother, who was three months pregnant with my brother, went home to live with her parents. Months after my brother's birth, she received a letter from my dad that said, "My mother wants you and the baby to live with her. So, pack up and move to my parent's house." What? Leave her mother and father? To live with two people she hardly knew? My mom wrote back and told him she didn't want to. My grandmother continued to pressure her son to let her grandchild live with her.

After a few weeks of being caught between the two women, my father wrote a kind letter to his mother explaining that he was going to do what was best for his wife and son — and that was to let them continue to live where they were living. He made a way for someone he knew to drive his parents to see their grandchild on a regular basis. From that moment on, and to this very day, my parents present such a united front that no one — children, family, or friends — can drive a wedge between them.

Are you and your spouse having a difficult time keeping the people around you from coming between you? Here are some simple support-your-spouse solutions I learned from observing two people who have proven to be the perfect team. They may be older, but their wisdom is timeless.

## Be Your Spouse's Best Friend

I hate to be the one to remind you of this, but your children will start their own families someday. My parents figured out how to let us know they love us more than the sun, moon, and stars while making it obvious their marriage comes first.

In his book *To Raise Happy Kids, Put Your Marriage First* (Crossroad), author and family counselor David Code advises against making children the center of your life. He explains, "It's never a matter of a dramatic choosing of your spouse versus your children. It's a question of priorities. The goal is to be best friends with your spouse and let your [children] make their own best friends."

David continues, "Children and their demands seem urgent, whereas our marriages are important but not urgent, so we neglect to feed and water them and they die so slowly and quietly we don't even realize there's a problem until we look up five years later and we're living like roommates. The neglected marriage creates tension in the household and children soak up that tension and act out or get sick." It's good to remember that marriage is meant to last for a lifetime. Children live with us for a season.

**"It's never a matter of a dramatic choosing of your spouse versus your children. It's a question of priorities."  
— David Code**

## Communication Cheat Sheet

When another person speaks negatively to you about your spouse, it can be difficult to think of how to respond appropriately on the spot. Here's a little cheat sheet with a few responses you can use in the heat of the moment.

- "Why do you ask?" This is my personal favorite. By the time the person answers your question, you should have regained your composure enough to form a response.
- "I'm uncomfortable with that question." Remember that just because someone asks a question doesn't mean you have to answer it.
- "I'm sorry you feel that way." That's it. Nothing more. And walk away.
- If someone begins a sentence by saying, "I don't want to interfere, but ..." repeat their preface back to them and respond with, "Thank you so much for not wanting to interfere" and end it there. This is a polite way to end the conversation.

Sometimes, in order to present a united front, one of you will have to publicly agree to something even when you privately don't.

## Present a United Front

Four-year-old Bradley didn't want to go to bed. His dad and mom were in a heated discussion in front of him about whether to allow him to stay up or not. Finally, Bradley said, "Guys, stop fighting. I'm a kid. I'm sleepy. I'm supposed to be in bed by now." And he walked to bed.

Growing up I couldn't cajole my parents, harass them, pit them against each other, or get them to do what I wanted them to do just because I wanted them to do it. Someone else was clearly in charge. My parents taught me that as a parent you don't debate how to raise the kids in front of them.

This can be a challenge. When our son, Philip, was 12, he asked me if he could go on a student ministry trip. The four-day excursion included visits to an amusement park, water park, Major League Baseball game, and a tubing trip, which I considered sure and certain death. Naturally, I said "No."

Weeks later, the student pastor mentioned to my husband, Phil, that he was surprised our son wasn't going on the trip. In a matter of moments, Phil signed Philip up for the trip. Upon being informed of the good news, I went into a mild catatonic state. When Phil became aware of my

concerns for our son, he kept uttering ridiculous phrases like "He'll be fine" and "He'll have fun," all the while ignoring my warning: "He's gonna get killed!" Phil was right. I was wrong. Our son survived, but I almost didn't.

Sometimes, in order to present a united front, one of you will have to publicly agree to something even when you privately don't. This is when you turn your heart toward Jesus and "[Cast] all your care on Him, because He cares about you," (1 Peter 5:7) which includes the spouse causing your anxiety.

## Let Some Things Go Unsaid

A few months ago the top sports news was about a Yankee player holding a news conference to apologize for making public negative statements about the team. Evidently, even that player knows team morale is affected by negative speech.

My parents took to heart the wisdom of Proverbs 14:1, to build up a household instead of tearing it down. I've never heard them say anything negative about each other, though I'm sure they could have.

The opposite was true for Mark, a 40-ish husband to Kelly and dad to their two daughters. He admits, "I finally gave in and went to church with Kelly a few years ago. I was humiliated to discover all the intimate details everyone knew about me. I vowed to never set foot in a church again." And he never has.

Someone should have explained to Kelly that although she shouldn't bear her burdens alone, it only takes two or three gathered together for Jesus to be on the scene — not everyone in the church. Kelly might have asked herself, *Would Mark want this person to know what I'm about to say?* before saying a word.

## Rely on Your Third Team Member

My parents knew the importance of having God as the foundation of our family. I understood, even as a child, that my parents were aware they were going to answer to Him for how they raised their children. So, they based their parenting on His Word and devoted prayer for wisdom. They also knew they would answer to God for how they treated each other. They were united in pleasing God. Our home was led by a three-person team. I call one of them "Dad," one of them "Mom," and because of their example of amazing love for Him, one of them "Lord." When others seek to come between you and your spouse, rely on the strength of the One who drew you together. □

Marie Armenia is a writer, speaker, songwriter, and singer who lives in Spring Hill, Tenn., with her husband of almost 42 years. She's thankful to have had parents who showed her how to support her spouse and to have a spouse who supports her, "Saint Phil." Learn more at [mariearmenia.com](http://mariearmenia.com).

## The Rules of Disagreement

Is there any way to be supportive of your spouse even when you disagree? Absolutely, according to Rodney Wilson, a nationally recognized marriage and family counselor and pastor. He advises:

- Agree to disagree in private. "Make it a rule that you're going to disagree in private — not in front of the kids, dear friends, family, or colleagues." Although it's healthy for your kids to see you work through disagreements together, keep major disputes private.
- Agree about how to disagree. "Early in our marriage, Selma and I created and actually signed a covenant for working through anger. It says we:
  1. agree to give each other permission to disagree.
  2. never attack each other.
  3. agree to resolve the disagreement within 24 hours."
- Agree that you won't avoid it. "Selma and I are both 'stuffers' and tend to avoid confronting. We learned a great deal from [marriage enrichment pioneers] David and Vera Mace." The Maces created an acronym — A.R.E.A. — to give couples a tool to fight fairly.
  - A is for admitting your anger to your spouse;
  - R is the desire to restrain your anger and not let it get out of hand by blaming or belittling;
  - E stands for explaining in a calm manner why you're angry; and
  - A stands for action planning or doing something about the cause of the anger. Rodney adds, "You don't stop being a team just because you don't agree about something. Every couple disagrees from time to time. Realizing this gives tremendous freedom to simply be yourself with your spouse."





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# Is Love Spoken Here?

Words are a thermostat for the heart. BY ASHLEY HAUPT

**Anger sounded in the heavy thuds** my feet made as I stormed down the hallway to break up yet another shrieking fight between the kids. A bad day and I caved to the anger that erupted out of me.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am for discipline, instruction, and the ever-molding process of these pliable little ones in my care. And sometimes you have to raise your voice to be heard over the noise. But not in the way I've been doing it. Not long ago I made a resolution to stop.

I told my husband for accountability.

The very next day, I did it again.

And I felt despair because words are a heart-thermostat. I mentally replayed Ann Voskamp's paraphrase of Ephesians 4:29 — *Only speak words that make souls stronger.*

My kids experience God through me. God doesn't yell or shame us when

we're disobedient. He doesn't shout or say to us, "What were you thinking?" or "Why did you do that again?" His discipline is strong, powerful, effective, and calm. Our disobedience doesn't change how God feels about us. We need that grace-love. And so do our kids.

I'm storming the hallway again when I remember. I pause and think to myself, *Only speak words that make souls stronger.* I breathe deeply and open the door.

My 3-year-old, Abby, is screaming angry cries in her bed, body taut and pillow wet when I come in. I lie down beside her, smooth back bangs, wipe tears and nose. She looks back with wide eyes searching mine. I break the silence.

"Why did I send you to bed?"

"Because I was screaming."

"Did Mommy tell you not to scream?"

Nod.

"Did you disobey Mommy?"

Nod. Silence.

"Abby, little girls need rest."

"Except me."

"No, including you. You need rest, too. We have a fun night ahead, but you need to nap first."

She relaxes, smiles, nods, and rolls over. I check in later. Abby sleeps, her body resting on the soft, firm bed and her soul resting on the soft, strong words. Grace words.

By His grace, may I remember it the next time, and the next, and the next. □

**Ashley Haupt** is a pastor's wife, mother of three, and daily recipient of grace. She writes about grace, gratitude, and finding God in the ordinary moments on her blog *Little Pieces of Ordinary* ([ashleyhaupt.blogspot.com](http://ashleyhaupt.blogspot.com)).

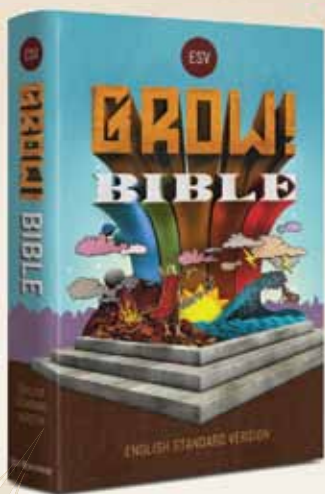
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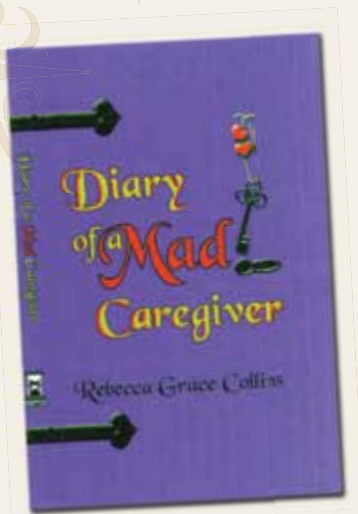
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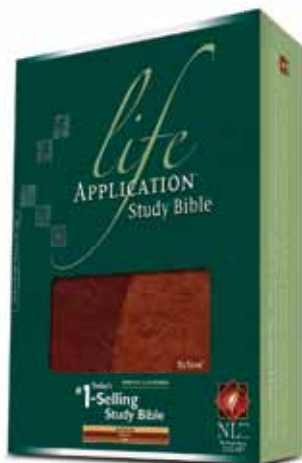
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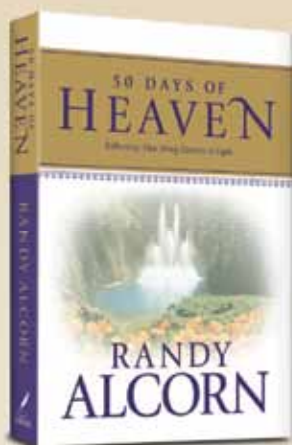


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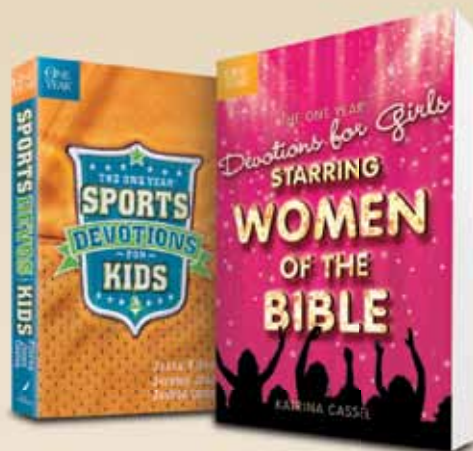




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Day was a gift to them and to myself. I really wanted the kids with us, but I realized that giving my children and my ex that time helped everyone enjoy the holidays more. And Christmas alone with my husband was marriage-building.” Knowing when to bend has been vital for Kay and reduced a lot of conflict. “Often I give my turn because it creates peace for my children. That’s more important than fairness. Besides, in time, I’ve seen this giving attitude returned by the other home.”

“Often I give my turn because it creates peace for my children. That’s more important than fairness.”  
— Kay

It’s also important to be flexible with the pace of developing relationships between stepfamily members within your home. Travis and his wife found a way to do so. “When the kids came to visit, they would hug some and shake hands with others, but after a while, my wife’s kids would migrate back to her and mine to me.” At first the couple thought they had to force the family to spend time together so they would learn to like one another. “But we learned to let them have their own space and respected when and how they chose to come together,” Travis explains. “Things got better when we relaxed and didn’t throw on the blender switch.”

### Finding Balance

Should a person always take the backseat when dealing with an ex-spouse? Should a stepfamily refrain from

# Strong Enough to Bend

With the holidays approaching, give the gift of flexibility.

**FIVE YEARS** into her remarriage, Kay discovered the power of a flexible attitude. Surrounded by four children (two hers and two her husband’s), the couple dealt continuously with the hectic schedules, between-home conflicts,

and parenting dilemmas most stepfamilies face. To cope with the stressors that were out of her control, Kay says, “I’ve learned how to let go. Early on, for example, I discovered that letting the other home have the kids on Christmas



## \*Ron's Tip of the Month

Flexibility must be tempered with stability and consistency. Finding balance is important.

encouraging the new family to bond? Absolutely not. Flexibility must be tempered with stability and consistency. Finding balance is important.

Flexibility refers to how open to change a couple and family are in the areas of leadership, relationship boundaries, roles within the marriage, and problem solving. Healthy relationships maintain a balance between a predictable pattern of interaction (stability)

and the ability to adapt or change when circumstances call for it (flexibility).

Stepfamilies require this same acrobatic dance. Olympic ice-skating duos

are amazing to watch. Though they make it look easy, two difficult actions are at work: flexibility and stability. Flexibility is required to bend, spin, turn, or move in sequenced motion, while stability allows them to share the weight of each maneuver, brace when returning to the ice after an aerial wonder, and support each other's movement on the ice.

Within a stepfamily, when it comes to financial management and commitment to the relationship, for example, a husband and wife need to know they can expect stability and consistency from each other. This gives the marriage a sense of security because each knows what to expect from the other. On the other hand, couples need the capacity to change as life demands.

As children age and enter new phases of life, parenting responses must change. Without flexibility, parents try to manage their teenagers the same way they did when the children were in preschool. Making a child's decisions regarding bedtime, mealtime, playtime, and with whom they can spend the holidays were fine when a child was 4; doing so when the child is 14 is sure to bring conflict within the home. Therefore, stability and flexibility are both important to a blended family.

So, how strong is your flexibility muscle? □

### How to Strengthen Your Flexibility Muscle



1. Strive to find creative solutions to differences. Every family experiences preference conflicts. Think beyond your initial idea of what the solution should be.

2. Demonstrate flexibility through compromise. Try to find the win-win solution when it comes to disagreements. Being open to influence by others instead of fighting to win goes a long way.

3. When it comes to leadership, get organized as a couple. Agree upon a parenting system, share decision-making, and work as a team to manage your home.

4. Take life as it comes. Blended families deal with multiple changes throughout life. Inflexible people find themselves worn out by never-ending conflict. Strive to be a flexible person, able to adapt or bend as needed.

#### discipleship moment

Teach your children and stepchildren the value of going the extra mile when dealing with challenging relationships. Use Matthew 5:41 as the model: "And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two."



Ron L. Deal is president of Smart Stepfamilies, an expert in marriage and stepfamily relationships, and author/co-author of a series of DVDs and books for stepfamilies including the books *The Smart Stepfamily*, *The Smart Stepmom*, and *The Smart Stepdad*. Learn more at [smartstepfamilies.com](http://smartstepfamilies.com).

A newborn baby is lying in an open, dark brown suitcase. The baby is wearing a striped onesie and is partially covered by a dark brown blanket. The baby's face is visible on the left side of the frame, and their feet are visible on the right. The suitcase has a textured exterior and metal latches. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

# ADOPTION

# ~101~

By Andrea Bailey Willits



If you've ever considered adopting a child but felt stumped by the process, these eight basic steps will get you started.

**m**ore than 40 percent of Americans consider adopting, but only 2 percent ever do. If you've thought about adoption but felt discouraged by the process, take heart. The process may vary depending on the adoption agency or country-specific rules, but some steps are universal. Understanding them could help your family change a child's life forever.

### STEP 1 Do Your Research

The first step in any major decision is to educate yourself. The National Council for Adoption ([adoptioncouncil.org](http://adoptioncouncil.org)), Show Hope ([showhope.org](http://showhope.org)), and Adoption Learning Partners ([adoptionlearningpartners.org](http://adoptionlearningpartners.org)) are a few good places to start. Families have several important decisions to make during the research phase.

First, consider the adoption choices best for your family, such as foster, domestic, infant, older child, and international.

"I encourage couples to come at this question thinking, *What does a child need that I might be able to provide? What type of child could we provide for?*" says Linda Wrestler, branch director of Bethany Christian Services in Indianapolis. "Of course the child has to fit into your family, but we invite couples to stretch."

Jennifer Lanter, director of outreach and public information officer at The Gladney Center for Adoption in Fort Worth, Texas, suggests asking questions including, "Do we want a child with our skin color? Do we want an infant? Do we have a strict time schedule?" If the answer to these questions is yes, you may want to consider domestic adoption. Affirmative answers to questions such as, "Do we like travel and adventure? Do we already have and value diversity in our family?" may point to international adoption.

Second, consider whether you want to adopt with help from an agency or private attorney. Work with someone who advocates for the child, suggests Wrestler.

If you decide to work with an agency, Lanter advises seeking referrals from adoptive families you know. Then make a spreadsheet of your options, asking questions such as, "How long has the agency been in business? Is it licensed? Is it non-profit? How many adoptions does it do each year? Does

it have a building? Did employees return my calls and answer my questions in a timely manner? Do they offer post-adoptive support services?"

### STEP 2 Consider Funding

Next, consider your options for funding. The 2009-2010 Adoptive Families adoption cost survey ([theadoptionguide.com](http://theadoptionguide.com)) cited the average adoption costs around \$30,000.

"Yes, adoption is expensive," says Lisa Mosley, caseworker supervisor/director of Adoption Assistance, Inc., in Smyrna, Tenn.

"But there are many options out there. It might take longer than you thought and cost more than you thought, but in the end you are changing the life of a child."

Agencies like LifeSong for Orphans ([lifesongfororphans.org](http://lifesongfororphans.org)) or Abba Fund ([abbafund.org](http://abbafund.org)) are reputable sources for matching grants and low- or no-interest loans.

But many couples raise all the money for their adoptions without taking out loans. Mosley suggests doing fundraisers — a yard sale, selling T-shirts, hosting a silent auction, or partnering with a local restaurant to have a dinner and charging per plate. Remember that almost all adoptions qualify for the federal tax credit for adopted children.

**"It might take longer than you thought and cost more than you thought, but in the end you are changing the life of a child." — Lisa Mosley**

### STEP 3 Attend an Orientation

Many adoption agencies require parents to attend an orientation to learn about the adoption process from A to Z. These introductory meetings often include meeting agency staff members with whom you may be working, learning the application process specific to the type of adoption you choose, and possibly hearing from a birth mother panel. “If it’s an international adoption, families learn about each country’s criteria and what the journey will be like,” Lanter adds.

### STEP 4 Complete Paperwork

Requirements vary state to state, but whether domestic or international adoption, families must complete a home study, which is a detailed written report of the family compiled by a social worker. In domestic adoptions, families also compile a profile and write a birth mother letter so birth mothers can get to know prospective adoptive parents. In international adoptions, families complete what’s known as a dossier, which is paperwork requested by the foreign government.

“Take the home study step by step in terms of the documentation you’re required to gather,” Wrestler advises. “Be authentic and transparent with the social worker, who is there to help you figure out whether you’re suited to adopt or what type of adoption will work best for you.”

## Start an Adoption Ministry at Your Church

Many adoptive families turn to their church for support and guidance. Is your church prepared to help them throughout the adoption process? Blake Ring of Rosalynn’s Hope ([rosalynnshepe.org](http://rosalynnshepe.org)), a two-year-old orphan ministry at Ninth & O Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., offers these tips for starting an adoption ministry.

- Put it in perspective. Adoption ministry falls under the umbrella of orphan ministry, which can also include orphan care, missions trips to orphanages, financially supporting children, and foster care.

- Write out a clear plan, purpose, and strategy before you present the ministry to church leadership, making it as easy as possible for them to say yes.

- Ask leadership to let you facilitate an Orphan Care Sunday ([orphansunday.org](http://orphansunday.org)). Encourage your pastor to preach on the topic. Enlist people to give testimonies. Show a video.

- Plan about four events for the year where people with interest can get together and socialize.

- Take advantage of church members’ expertise by asking adoptive families to counsel families who are adopting.

- Don’t overdo fundraisers — strive for one per year.

- Continue the momentum. Don’t let people forget about your orphan ministry. Put regular announcements in the bulletin and on Facebook.

### STEP 5 Learn as Much as You Can

Most adoption agencies require prospective adoptive parents to complete related training before the adoption is finalized. Such training may cover bonding and attachment, understanding an adopted child’s grief and loss, how to be sensitive when adopting outside of your race or culture, and country-specific training. In fact, if you choose to adopt internationally, many countries will require you to complete at least 10 hours of training. To learn more about suggested training options, visit [adoptionlearningpartners.org](http://adoptionlearningpartners.org).

### STEP 6 Find Your Match

In a domestic adoption, a match occurs after the adoptive parents complete the home study and birth mothers review their file. If a birth mother is interested in a particular adoptive family, she and the family meet over the phone, then in person to get to know one another. When they mutually agree to move forward with the adoption, it’s considered a match.

In an international adoption, a match is called a referral, which is when an agency matches what they know about a family with what they have learned about a child from an orphanage and its caregivers. A referral can include photos, video, medical and developmental information, and background history about the child.

**“[Ask yourself] what does a child need that I might be able to provide?”**  
— Linda Wrestler

### STEP 7 Prepare for Placement

Wait times vary and international travel may be required, but after a match, the child is placed with his or her adoptive parents. After the child is placed in the home, the adoption is finalized in court.

### STEP 8 Forge a Bond

“Getting the child is just the start of the adoption,” Wrestler says. “Adoption is a lifetime event.”

Lanter says your adoption agency should provide support as long as you need it. “If there are problems, such as difficulty bonding, don’t be afraid to utilize the resources of your adoption agency. They won’t judge you. They’re like a doctor who’s here to fix a problem.”

Though you may face unique issues concerning bonding, parenting an adopted child is similar to a biological child.

“Be there while the child goes through the attachment cycle — crying because they need a diaper change, and you meeting that need,” Wrestler says. “That’s how the child builds a relationship with you. That’s so crucial in the first amount of time you spend together.” □

**Andrea Bailey Willits** is a writer in Nashville, Tenn. Writing this article gave her a birds-eye view into what many of her friends are experiencing with their adoption processes — and piqued her interest in adopting an older child.



# MOLLY LET ME GO TO SECOND BASE YESTERDAY



## BOYS WILL BE BOYS ... RIGHT?

Millions of boys grow older, but very few become great, godly men. And with so many influences from culture, friends, and celebrities, how can you be sure which category your son will fall into? Prepare to talk to him about the tough topics with Vicki Courtney's *5 Conversations You Must Have with Your Son: The Bible Study*.

Because even though knowing what to say—or how to say it—can be hard, there's no one better to teach him about life, love, and faith than you.



What may seem like an insignificant loss to one person can be an emotionally devastating loss to another.

## Question ►

Our family pet passed away, and it's been difficult for our kids. How can we help them deal with this loss?

## Answer ▼

The loss of a pet may be your children's first experience dealing with illness and death. Whenever you talk to anyone about loss, it's important to do two things. The first is to listen to what the person says and how he or she says it. The second is to exercise empathy. What may seem like an insignificant loss to one person can be an emotionally devastating loss to another, and when you minimize the loss, you risk minimizing the other person. This is especially true with children.

From a child's point of view, the death of a pet can feel significant. This pet may have been your children's best friend, someone they've spent hours playing with and talking to. With this pet they've learned important life values such as love, loyalty, compassion, safety, trust, empathy, and how to care for someone else.

Be sure to let your kids know that it's OK to be sad and miss their pet. Don't talk about the pet "going to sleep" or "passing away," but honestly say that it has died. Explain that it doesn't have

life in its body anymore, that someday every living thing will die, and that death and losing something or someone is very sad.

Some children will be angry because they don't understand the emotions they're feeling. This is a great opportunity to show them that emotions don't always have to make sense and that Mom and Dad are always safe people to talk to when feelings are confusing.

Remember that everyone deals with grief and loss in different ways and for different amounts of time, so don't be concerned if over the next several weeks or months it's something that your children periodically bring up.

Pick up a copy of *It's Okay to Cry* (WaterBrook), a book and interactive workbook for parents by H. Norman Wright, where you'll find biblically based insights and practical suggestions for helping children deal with a wide range of losses. □



**Gary J. Oliver**

is the author of more than 20 books including *Mad About Us: Moving From Anger to Intimacy* and *Raising Sons and Loving It!* Learn more about Gary's ministry at [liferelationships.com](http://liferelationships.com).





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## Conquer Kid Fears

**Millions of people** have to adapt to the challenges of non-custodial single parenthood. Use these three tips to banish your kids' fears that you will disappear.

**Be trustworthy.** Pick up your kids on time from school, after activities, and especially for visitations. Don't make promises you can't keep.

**Be available.** On average, kids spend 16 percent of their lives with the non-custodial parent. Exceed the average. Let your ex-spouse know that you can take time off work to help your kids through illnesses, with school projects, and to attend school trips. Make sure your kids know how to get in touch with you by phone.

**Be comforting.** Your kids need to have photos of you with them in the picture. Laminate one that they can take along to day care or school in their backpack. Write notes for your kids' lunchboxes and have your ex-spouse slip them in with the PB&J.

## Tough Questions

**Children are curious.** Like it or not, you're going to be faced with tough questions from little seekers. The next time you find yourself stumped by a child's question, keep the following guidelines in mind.

**1 ►** Encourage children to ask questions. Create an environment that allows kids to seek the truth. When you do, you foster a lifelong desire to continue learning more about God.

**2 ►** Pray for spiritual understanding. The Bible makes it clear that the concepts relating to God and His ways are not always easy to understand. Pray that your child's spiritual eyes, as well as your own, will be opened to God's truths.

**3 ►** Communicate at the child's level. Always take into consideration the child's age and maturity level. Use words and concepts that won't cause additional confusion.

**4 ►** Be willing to admit it when you don't know the answer. Children need to see that you're not a supreme know-it-all but that you, too, are still learning about God and growing in your understanding of spiritual concepts.

**5 ►** Help an older child look up answers himself. Pointing children to resources available to them lays the foundation for a lifetime of seeking answers to the hard questions.

Source: *lifeway.com*



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 with your child, "Give thanks in everything." Ask your child, "Should we only be thankful at Thanksgiving?" Have each member of the family tell at least one thing he or she is thankful for.



# [not required]

By  
Sophie  
Hudson

God covers our parental shortcomings, craft-related failures and all.

Last November our first-grader's sweet teacher sent home a note about an upcoming craft-related requirement. Since there are few things in life that cause me more fear and trepidation than a craft, with all that cutting and pinning and gluing and glittering, I was somewhat undone. Painting is one thing, but if you start to factor in items that must be assembled, I'm out. *Shut 'er down.* Mama's done.

It's not that I mind creative activities. For example, I like to cook because it's not an exact science, and I'll



even bake the occasional cake. But I avoid intricate, multi-step dessert recipes like the plague. Because if a recipe calls for something like alternating sprinkle colors, cutting 100 marshmallows in half, or making roses from icing, you'll probably have to put me on the prayer list at church. I may even require an at-home visit from the preacher.

Given my issues, I wasn't exactly sure how to handle the teacher's note announcing that Alex was going to need a red cape for his role as a Roman soldier in the Christmas program, especially since I don't have any idea how to operate a needle. Figuring red fleece was a good choice since it wouldn't require any sewing, I dug deep in my emotional reserves, drove to the store, and bought one whole yard of fabric. It taunted me for the next five days.

**The Wednesday before the program,** I knew I had no choice but to make the cape. Dress rehearsal was Thursday, and I couldn't very well let my little soldier be the only child who wasn't properly costumed. So I grabbed a cape we already had — I believe it was of the Darth Vader variety — and spread it out on top of the fleece fabric. (I even pinned it, y'all.) I cut around the Darth Vader cape carefully, sweating bullets every step of the way. When I finished I was understandably relieved.

Pleased, even.

The only little question mark in the back of my head was what the length should be, but since I had a cloudy memory of Julius Caesar that involved some soldier-type people wearing shorter capes, I aimed for something waist-length. I even used Google to confirm my decision.

Friday morning my husband and I went to our son's school for the Christmas program. We sat exactly where Alex had asked us to sit, and right after the music started, David nudged me and said, "There he is!" I looked to my right, and sure enough, there was my sweet boy, who's growing up so fast and who's the second-tallest young'un in his class and who's going to be 40 before I know it. I smiled at him, waved just a little bit, and reflected on the passage of time. I may have even hummed "Sunrise, Sunset."

Then I noticed that David's shoulders were shaking and that he seemed to be having trouble regulating his breathing. I looked at him to see what was going on, and he was downright tickled, venturing into the kind of laughter where you start to wheeze a little bit. I couldn't imagine what in the world had happened, but then David pointed in the direction of our child, and I knew. As soon as I saw Alex's back, I knew.

His cape was a full foot and a half shorter than everyone else's. All the other boys had on these long, flowing, dramatic red capes, and our precious one looked like he'd been cast as Little Red Riding Hood.

His mama's got skills.

David and I were laughing so hard that it felt like our entire row was shaking. And just as I was starting to regain my composure, David leaned over and said, "It's not so

much a cape as it is a *capelet*, really," which started the shoulder-shaking all over again. It was priceless and perfect and completely fitting, given my history of craft-related failures. I was just sorry that our offspring had to bear the burden of my shortcomings.

**Like so many mothers,** there are days when I feel like Supermom and days when I'm not necessarily at the top of my motherhood game (see The Unfortunate Capelet Incident of 2010). However, the farther I travel down the parenting road — and granted, I still have a long way to go — the more I realize how faithful and gracious God is to fill in our gaps. There isn't a single place in the Bible where the Lord tells us that the only hope for our children is to be raised by perfect people who craft and cook beautifully while simultaneously planning and supervising elaborate robot-themed birthday parties for a dozen 4-year-olds.

But His Word does tell us this: "Imprint these words of mine on your hearts and minds, bind them as a sign on your hands, and let them be a symbol on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that as long as the heavens are above the earth, your days and those of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your fathers" (Deuteronomy 11:18-21).

This passage offers such great perspective. What an encouraging reminder that even though we may

feel ill-equipped sometimes — even though we might miss soccer registration deadlines or overreact in the middle of the grocery store or struggle with an annoying tendency to worry about, well, practically everything — the heart of our calling as moms is to make much of Jesus. God's Word provides covering and direction for our families, and if we have Him, we have everything. Not even a too-short capelet can change that.

And by the way: Alex had absolutely no idea about the unfortunate length of his cape. He was as enthusiastic a Roman soldier as you've ever seen. When the play was over, he walked offstage, grinned like crazy, and gave us a confident thumbs-up. He's even been wearing the capelet at home; apparently it's easier to stage light-saber battles when there's no risk of your cape getting tangled in the weaponry.

See? I knew exactly what I was doing.

Exactly.

Maybe Mama has a few crafty skills after all. □

**All the other boys had on these long, flowing, dramatic red capes, and our precious one looked like he'd been cast as Little Red Riding Hood.**



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# improve

## Manage Your Life

Taste and see that the LORD is good.  
How happy is the man who  
takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 34:8



# When Multitasking Makes Sense

How to free up time for things that deserve your full attention



**Some people shun** multitasking, advocating instead being present in the moment. Maybe that's because they wore themselves out trying to do two or more things at once while attempting to give equal mental focus to all.

Granted, many things in life deserve undivided attention, such as listening to your spouse recap a rough day, quizzing your child on spelling words, or measuring ingredients for a cake. But multitasking makes sense when it involves doing things that don't require full focus and helps you finish mundane household tasks faster, freeing up time for activities that truly deserve your full attention.

## Get Your Family on Board

This kind of multitasking is a good practice for your entire family. Request that during TV time, your kids fold laundry or reunite a basket of toys with missing parts. Even a 3-year-old can fold washcloths and hand towels. Little ones may not fold them the way you would, but that's OK. They're learning life skills about housework, time management, and collaboration, which are far more important than perfection.

Here are other smart multitasking ideas that really work wonders around the house:

- Never walk through the house empty-handed. Pick up as you go. If you're going upstairs, take something that belongs up there with you.
- Encourage teenagers to start a load of laundry before tackling their homework. When they stop for a snack, they can move the clothes from the washer to the dryer.



- When laundering bed linens, put machine-washable stuffed toys in a pillowcase and wash them too.
- Team up by asking your children to dust baseboards with sock-covered hands while you polish furniture.
- Teach preschoolers to identify colors while learning to clean, first by picking up the blue toys, then red, etc.
- Return phone calls while you put away groceries.

Family multitasking will give you and your crew more time for what really matters: God and one another.

- Load the dishwasher or check for expired items in the refrigerator while dinner bakes.
- Unload the dishwasher and set the table at the same time. Remove clean utensils and plates and place directly on the table.

## \* Kathy's Tip of the Month

When kids help with housework, they learn life skills about time management and collaboration, which are far more important than perfection.

- Hold on to the kitchen counter and do leg lifts while you're waiting for water to boil.
- Make a grocery list while you cook dinner, checking the pantry as you go.
- Steam wrinkles from clothes by hanging garments in the bathroom while you shower.
- Prep for two, three, or four meals at once. Clean carrots for tonight's pot roast, afternoon snacks, and tomorrow night's salad.
- Double your dinner recipe and you'll have tonight's dinner and another for the freezer.
- Before you run errands, consider what else you might pick up or drop off along the way.

- Divide and conquer. On a trip to the store, give each adult or teen a separate list of errands to accomplish.
- While you're on hold on the phone, clean out your purse, purge expired coupons, organize a drawer, dust a piece of furniture, organize your wallet, clean the litter box, or update your Christmas card list.

A little family multitasking will give you and your crew more time for what really matters: God and one another. □



Take a quiet moment to teach your kids the importance of daily time with God. Use Psalm 1:1-3 to show that spending time with God and His Word deserves full focus.



**Kathy Peel** is the founder of Family Manager, a company that trains women in the art of family management. She is the author of 21 books, including *The Busy Couple's Guide to Sharing the Work and the Joy* (Picket Fence Press).



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# ~Easy Does It~

By Vanessa Dolberry

Liven up your Thanksgiving table with these simple projects.



## Thanks Centerpiece

### Supplies:

- 6 glass cylinders, jars, or vases (can be varying sizes or same sizes)
- White glue and water (2 parts glue to 1 part water)
- Cutout letters: T, H, A, N, K, S

Everyone knows a beautiful tablescape starts out with a great centerpiece. For Thanksgiving, we all are reminded of the blessings in life and the source of those blessings. Why not use the powerful word of *thanks* as the center of attention?

Cut out paper letters spelling THANKS. These can be created by you, or printed out from clip art websites. If your jars are round, you may need to snip the paper so



## Scripture Napkin Rings

### Supplies:

- Twine or raffia
- Cutout leaves, faux leaves, or small twigs
- 1 Chronicles 16:34 printed or handwritten on paper

This is a great way to dress up your napkins at the Thanksgiving table and remind your guests of the One who deserves our thanks. Simply print out 1 Chronicles 16:34 on your computer or handwrite it on small strips of paper. Tear the edges to give it a more rustic look. Wrap the paper around the napkin with the Scripture showing. Hold the Scripture in place by tying a piece of twine or raffia around the napkin and paper. Finish it off by attaching a leaf or twig.

PHOTOS: ALLEN CLARK



it will lay down smoothly on the rounded surface. Use the glue mixture to decoupage the paper onto the glass container. Paint a thin layer of the glue mixture onto the container, place the paper onto the container, and then paint another layer of the glue mixture on top of the paper, being careful not to tear the wet paper. For a daytime dinner, place a few flowers in each vase. For an evening meal, place one tea light in each container.

**Bonus ► Go to**  
[lifeway.com/homelifeonline](http://lifeway.com/homelifeonline) for  
 our cutout thanks letters and  
 1 Chronicles 16:34  
 templates.



## Kids' Tree of Thanks Centerpiece

### Supplies:

- Branches from your yard
- Vase
- Leaf shapes cut from scrapbook or construction paper
- Ribbon or string
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Crayons or markers



PHOTOS: ALLEN CLARK

Place branches of varying heights in the vase. Punch a hole in each leaf shape and attach a piece of ribbon or string. Have children write something they are thankful for on each leaf shape. Parents, get in on the activity and be an example to your children of being grateful for the good things in life. Hang leaves on the branches.

Consider starting this project at the beginning of November. Have kids write one thing per day they are thankful for on the leaves and drop them into a jar. Then, on Thanksgiving Day, the leaves could be attached to the tree for everyone to see. Make sure to talk about each leaf during Thanksgiving dinner and how even during hard times, we can be thankful for all the good things God gives us.

## I Am Thankful for YOU Place Mat

### Supplies:

- Clear plastic flexible cutting mats or place mat (1 for each place setting, available at the dollar store)
- Permanent markers of various colors
- Photo of each child
- White glue and water

Kids can't hear enough encouragement and praise from their parents. This craft will definitely have your child glowing.

Take the plastic cutting mat and place the photo of your child on the underside so that the photo will show through when the placemat is laid right side up on the table. Use the glue mixture (see recipe in Thanks Centerpiece) to adhere the picture in the desired spot. Then, get creative! Decoupage some of the leaf shapes used in the tree centerpiece around the photo, leaving space between objects for writing. Once the backside of the place mat is dry, turn it over and write your child's name. Write the



reasons you are thankful for your child. Is it because she is funny or because he is always a helper? Your kids crave your praise. So, don't be shy, let them have it. If you have younger children who can't read yet, you might want to draw pictures to show them what you love about them.



Cover the kids table in white or brown craft paper and leave a spot for the kids to play while they are waiting for dinner to start or if they finish long before the adults do. You could draw a few tic-tac-toe grids, make a word search using words like *thankful* and *gratitude*, or create a dot-to-dot.

**Vanessa Dolberry** is a writer, crafter, and mom to three kids in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Check out more projects at [vanessadolberry.blogspot.com](http://vanessadolberry.blogspot.com).





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# Crowd Pleasers

Prepare a small group meal without the stress.



**When it's your turn** to have small group over for dinner, does the thought of preparing and serving the meal feel overwhelming? It's OK. You're not alone. But I'm here to say it's possible to pull this off and actually enjoy yourself. The key? Plan and prepare ahead. Making lists and checking off items as you accomplish them is a tried-and-true system that will help group gatherings come together.

When planning the menu, avoid recipes that you haven't made before. You don't want any surprises. And this is important: Choose foods you can prep a day or two in advance.

Here are some of my favorite go-to recipes that fit this bill and need only minimal attention the day they're served. For an easy-to-serve dessert, find my recipe for Frosted Pumpkin Bread at [lifeway.com/homelifeonline](http://lifeway.com/homelifeonline). This bread is really special when topped with ice cream.

Being a calm and relaxed host is easier if you keep in mind that your goal is to show hospitality and love to your guests. This will shield you from one of the biggest stress-inducers: thinking you must impress and look perfect.

So go ahead and invite the group in for dinner. You will bless them — and yourself! ☐



Judie Byrd, founder of the Culinary School of Fort Worth, loves fun food that brings families together. Check out her FamilyNet cable TV show, "Judie Byrd's Kitchen," at [judiebyrdsKitchen.com](http://judiebyrdsKitchen.com).



## \*Judie's Tip of the Month

For a smooth, stress-free meal, plan and prepare ahead — more than you think you need to.

## Deep Dish Sausage Pizza

Makes 10 to 12 slices

### Ingredients

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 loaf frozen bread dough, thawed                         | 2 to 4 teaspoons minced garlic (to taste) |
| 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil                              | 1 cup pizza sauce                         |
| 1 pound sausage (Italian or regular with casings removed) | 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese          |
| 1 medium onion, thinly sliced                             | ¼ cup Parmesan cheese                     |
| ½ bell pepper, thinly sliced                              | 2 Roma tomatoes, thinly sliced            |

### Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray a 10-inch pie pan with nonstick coating. Roll out entire loaf of bread dough to fit into prepared pan, letting the edges of the dough hang over the rim. Pierce the dough all over with a fork and brush with olive oil. Bake empty crust 5 to 7 minutes. Meanwhile, cook sausage in a skillet with the onion, pepper, and garlic, until sausage is done. Drain on paper towels. Spread pre-baked pizza shell with half the cooked sausage, half the pizza sauce, and half the mozzarella cheese. Top with remaining sausage, pizza sauce, mozzarella cheese, Parmesan cheese, and tomato slices. Bake 10 to 15 minutes or until filling is hot and cheese is melted.

**Prepare ahead:** Pre-bake pizza shell; cool, cover with plastic wrap, and store at room temperature up to 1 day. Cook sausage mixture; refrigerate up to 2 days. To cook, preheat oven and proceed with assembling pizza and baking.



PHOTO: RANDY POWERS / FOOD STYLING: SANDRA WOOD



PHOTO: RANDY POWERS / FOOD STYLING: SANDRA WOOD

## Tossed Green Salad

Serves 8

### Ingredients

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 head romaine or leafy green lettuce | 1 package dry Good Seasons Italian Salad Dressing mix |
| 8 ounces Swiss cheese, grated         | 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar                        |
| 1 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced       | ½ cup olive oil                                       |
| 1 cup sliced almonds, toasted         | Juice of one large lemon (2 to 3 tablespoons)         |

### Directions

In a large salad bowl, combine lettuce, cheese, mushrooms, and almonds. Meanwhile, in a 2-cup jar with a tight lid, place dressing mix, vinegar, oil, and lemon juice. Shake well. Just before serving salad, toss with dressing to taste.

**Plan ahead:** Prepare dressing up to two weeks ahead. Refrigerate until needed.



PHOTO: RANDY POWERS / FOOD STYLING: SANDRA WOOD

## New England Pulled Beef Sandwiches

Makes 12 to 16 sandwiches

### Ingredients

4-pound chuck roast	2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons vegetable oil	2 tablespoons lemon juice or cider vinegar
Water	1 tablespoon salt
2 bay leaves	1½ cups beef stock
1 onion, chopped	Buns
9 cups thinly shredded green cabbage	Cheddar cheese slices
2 cups ketchup	Pickles for garnish
¾ cup Worcestershire sauce	

### Directions

To cook roast, heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a Dutch oven. Add roast and brown on all sides. When roast is brown, add water until roast is just covered. Add 2 bay leaves and 1 chopped onion. Cover and simmer on low heat for 2½ to 3 hours. Roast should be fork-tender. Place remaining ingredients (except buns, cheese, and pickles) in the Dutch oven. Cover and simmer on low 1 hour. Remove fat from cooked roast and shred the meat. Serve on hamburger buns with cheese and pickles.

**Prepare ahead:** Cook dish completely and reheat over low heat, stirring often, about 20 minutes.

## Baked Beans With Caramelized Onions and Orange Marmalade

Makes 12 servings

### Ingredients

12 slices bacon, cut into slivers	3 (18-ounce) cans baked beans
4 medium onions, chopped, about 2 cups	3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
¾ cup orange marmalade	½ teaspoon pepper

### Directions

In a Dutch oven over medium heat, fry bacon until crisp. Remove bacon and drain on a paper towel. Pour off grease but leave a light coating on the bottom of the pot. Turn heat to low, then add onions and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring often, until golden brown and caramelized. Stir marmalade into onions and cook 1 minute or until melted. Turn heat to medium and add beans, mustard, pepper, and drained bacon. Cook until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes.



PHOTO: RANDY POWERS / FOOD STYLING: SANDRA WOOD



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# What's Your Giving Plan

By  
Francine  
L. Huff

**Charitable solicitations** are a dime a dozen, especially toward the end of the year. You've probably received quite a few letters, emails, phone calls, and even texts trying to tug on your heartstrings. Though you may genuinely want to support all the groups that need help, it's important to put together a smart strategy for donating your dollars. Use the following tips to get started.

1

**Set a budget for giving.** The Bible instructs us to give 10 percent in tithes to the local church; anything above that amount is considered an offering. If you can give more than 10 percent, set up a monthly savings goal so you can write one check for the additional amount at the end of the year.

2

**Choose causes that mean something to you.** What are you passionate about — the homeless, cancer research, education? James 1:27 encourages believers to “look after orphans and widows in their distress,” so if you're not sure what types of nonprofits you should donate to, these two groups are a good place to start. As with all things, pray for God's direction and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading regarding where to donate wisely.



3

**Research charitable organizations.** Visit the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance ([bbb.org/us/wise-giving](http://bbb.org/us/wise-giving)) or Charity Navigator ([charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org)) for information about all kinds of nonprofit organizations. Look for groups with solid ratings that don't have many complaints.

4

**Find out how much money goes to the cause.** Ask for a copy of the charity's 990 tax form to see what percentage of each donation directly supports the cause rather than administrative costs (at least 65 percent should go to support provided services). If a group won't provide this information or is too new to have it, move on to another organization.

**"God loves a cheerful giver."  
— 2 Corinthians 9:7**

5

**Be cautious about unfamiliar groups that claim to be Christian.** Even though an organization claims to be a Christian charity, that doesn't mean it's reputable. Scam artists often target affinity groups such as churches to swindle people out of their money. Always check out an organization before writing a check.

6

**Deduct charitable donations on your tax return.** Any time you donate money to a charitable group, you should receive a receipt acknowledging the gift. For donations less than \$250, you can use a canceled check or credit card statement as proof when filing your income tax return.

There are a lot of groups out there that need your help. When deciding on a giving strategy, consider the wisdom of 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, which says, "Remember this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart — not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work." □

Francine Huff, a former news editor and bureau chief with *The Wall Street Journal*, is the author of *The 25-Day Money Makeover for Women* (Revell). To learn more, visit [huffwritess.com](http://huffwritess.com).

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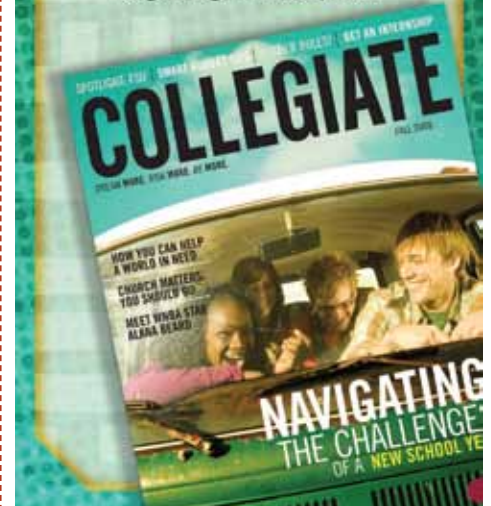
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### **VibrEAT** Cost: \$.99

**Compatibility:** iPhone

Gulping down your food will be a thing of the past when you use this app, which teaches you constructive techniques to eat slowly. The app's programmed timer tells you when to eat, when to take a break, and how long your meal should last. This app can teach you and your kids healthy eating habits.



**Limited availability.**

### **C25K** Cost: \$2.99

**Compatibility:** iPhone

Running is growing in popularity as the exercise of choice. Are you sitting on your couch reading this article and thinking, *Yeah, right, I'm never going to be a runner?* Take heart; this app was created just for you. C25K was designed to train the couch potato to run a 5K. You don't have to know anything about fitness to use this app, as it will walk you through each step.



**Only because of limited availability.**

### **Endomondo** Cost: Free

**Compatibility:** iPhone, Android, Blackberry, Windows, HP, and almost everything else

If you're already into a well-developed exercise routine of running, cycling, walking, skiing, kayaking, or any other sport that involves moving from one destination to another, you must check out this app. Not only does it keep track of how far you've gone, it tells you where you've gone, how fast you got there, and when you slowed down for a breather. Who knew a smartphone could be so smart?



**Wish it had more helps for beginners.**

### **My Fitness Pal** Cost: Free

**Compatibility:** iPhone and Android

My Fitness Pal is impressive from the first moment you try it. Enter your age, gender, height, weight, and work style, and let the application run its diagnostics. The app automatically calculates your optimal caloric intake, and it's loaded with information about your favorite restaurants and foods. You can track your daily caloric intake with its easy-to-use functions, log exercise, run daily and monthly reports, and access your data online. Best of all, you can share your progress with a friend, which helps in that all-important area of accountability.



**For all around awesomeness.**

### **Fast Food Calorie Counter**

Cost: \$.99

**Compatibility:** iPhone, Android, Blackberry, Windows

Want to get fit, but love to eat out? This app is perfect for you if you're always on the go and need to know how many calories you're consuming but don't have time to search through some of the more cumbersome calorie-counting apps. This one does exactly what its name says; it counts fast-food calories. Low-carb, low-fat, and high-protein diets are also supported, as this app keeps a daily log of each.



**Doesn't have as many features as other apps.**



### **YouVersion** Cost: Free with some costs for additional features

**Compatibility:** iPhone, Android, Blackberry, Windows, and more  
Make sure that all of the focus on your physical fitness doesn't take away from your spiritual wellness. YouVersion, one of the most extensive Bible apps available, offers a variety of free tools, such as a customizable daily reading plan, multiple translations of the Bible, easy search engines, and more. YouVersion is a must-download for all phones. With its great availability for most smartphones and free download cost, what are you waiting for?



**I love this app and use it all the time!**

Jeff Land is far from a fitness guru, but he loves his iPhone. He and his wife, Abbey, have taken the challenge to get more physically fit and have seen the inches literally shrinking from their waistlines. Find out more about the Lands at their blog [www.jeffandabbey2001.blogspot.com](http://www.jeffandabbey2001.blogspot.com).

**\* Audio and Visual**

**Galaxy Audio**  
[www.GalaxyAudio.com](http://www.GalaxyAudio.com)

**Books**

**Thomas Nelson**  
[www.thomasnelson.com](http://www.thomasnelson.com)

**Mission as Life**  
[www.missionaslife.com](http://www.missionaslife.com)

**Moody Publishers/Northfield Publishing**  
[www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com)

**NavPress**  
[www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com)

**SkillRite**  
[www.skillrite.com](http://www.skillrite.com)

**Thomas Nelson Publishing**  
[www.thomasnelson.com/consumer](http://www.thomasnelson.com/consumer)

**Tyndale Publishing**  
[www.tyndale.com](http://www.tyndale.com)

**Careers**

**U.S. Career Institute**  
[www.uscareerinstitute.com](http://www.uscareerinstitute.com)

**Church Resources**

**American Thermoplastic Company**  
[www.binders.com](http://www.binders.com)

**Mission as Life**  
[www.missionaslife.com](http://www.missionaslife.com)

**Spectorsoft**  
[www.spectorsoft.com](http://www.spectorsoft.com)

**Upward Sports**  
[www.Upward.org/Interest](http://www.Upward.org/Interest)

**\* Galaxy Audio**  
[www.GalaxyAudio.com](http://www.GalaxyAudio.com)

**First Steps Discipleship**  
[www.disciplinanothet.net](http://www.disciplinanothet.net)

**Education**

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[www.onlineatliberty.com/lifeway](http://www.onlineatliberty.com/lifeway)

**Boyce College**  
[www.boycecollege.com](http://www.boycecollege.com)

**The College at Southeastern**  
[www.sebts.edu/college](http://www.sebts.edu/college)

**Louisiana Baptist University**  
[www.lbu.edu](http://www.lbu.edu)

**Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**  
[www.sebts.edu](http://www.sebts.edu)

**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**  
[www.sbt.edu/future-students/](http://www.sbt.edu/future-students/)

**University of the Cumberland**  
[www.ucumberland.edu](http://www.ucumberland.edu)

**East Texas Baptist University**  
[www.etbu.edu](http://www.etbu.edu)

**Shorter University**  
[www.shorter.edu](http://www.shorter.edu)

**Evangelistic**

**How to Share Your Faith**  
[www.howtoshareyourfaith.com](http://www.howtoshareyourfaith.com)

**Mission as Life**  
[www.missionaslife.com](http://www.missionaslife.com)

**Samaritan's Purse**  
[www.samaritanaspurse.org](http://www.samaritanaspurse.org)

**Upward Sports**  
[www.Upward.org/Interest](http://www.Upward.org/Interest)

**Finance and Stewardship**

**Crown Financial Ministries**  
[www.crown.org](http://www.crown.org)

**ShatterPoint Entertainment**  
[www.shatterpointentertainment.com](http://www.shatterpointentertainment.com)

**Fundraising**

**Entertainment Fundraising**  
[www.entertainment.com/Lifeway](http://www.entertainment.com/Lifeway)

**Dutch Mill Bulbs**  
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**Gifts/Supplies**

**Above Rubies**  
[www.aboverubies.org](http://www.aboverubies.org)

**Collectibles Today**  
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[www.clarkenterprises2000.com](http://www.clarkenterprises2000.com)

**E. Burnham Cosmetics**  
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**Gravity Defyer**  
[www.gravitydefyer.com](http://www.gravitydefyer.com)

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**Premier Care in Bathing**  
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**Upward Sports**  
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**Homeschool Resources**

**American Heritage Education Foundation**  
[www.americanheritage.org](http://www.americanheritage.org)

**American Thermoplastic Company**  
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**Concise Curriculum**  
[www.concise curriculum.org](http://www.concise curriculum.org)

**Time 4 Learning**  
[www.time4learning.com](http://www.time4learning.com)

**Applied Grammar**  
[www.applied-grammar.com](http://www.applied-grammar.com)

**Math U See**  
[www.MathUSee.com](http://www.MathUSee.com)

**GWNews**  
[www.gwnews.com/Lifeway](http://www.gwnews.com/Lifeway)

**WORLD Magazine**  
[www.worldmag.com/26and26](http://www.worldmag.com/26and26)

**eTeacher Group**  
[www.eTeacherBiblical.com/3425](http://www.eTeacherBiblical.com/3425)

**Media Companies**

**Grace Christian Media**  
[www.gracechristianmedia.com](http://www.gracechristianmedia.com)

**Music and Videos**

**Rise Ministries**  
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[www.binders.com](http://www.binders.com)

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[www.spectorsoft.com](http://www.spectorsoft.com)

**Sure Payroll**  
[www.surepayroll.com](http://www.surepayroll.com)

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[www.apexmoving.com/sbpa](http://www.apexmoving.com/sbpa)

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**Space and Rocket Center**  
[www.spacecamp.com/museum/csi](http://www.spacecamp.com/museum/csi)

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[www.aboverubies.org](http://www.aboverubies.org)

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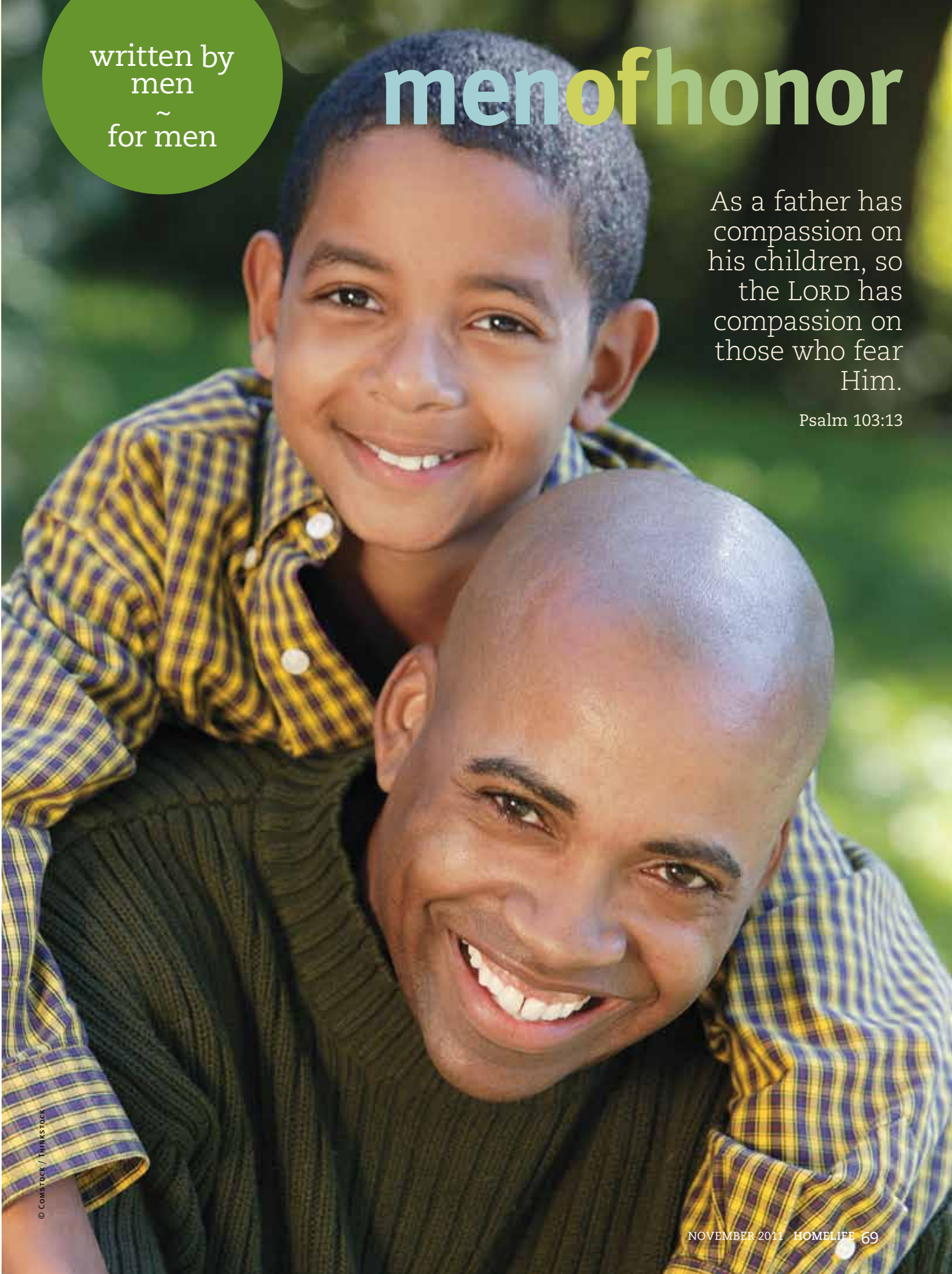


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A close-up photograph of a smiling man with a shaved head, wearing a dark green sweater. A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a yellow and blue plaid shirt, is sitting on the man's shoulders and smiling. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

written by  
men  
~  
for men

# men of honor

As a father has  
compassion on  
his children, so  
the LORD has  
compassion on  
those who fear  
Him.

Psalms 103:13

## ►A Dad's Heart

**As a personal growth adventure,** I decided to develop a blog. The first thing I had to do was choose my domain. I knew that most of my content would be birthed out of experiences with my family, so I chose to purchase *dadsheart.com*. The time I spend with my family goes far beyond a physical experience. It impacts my heart and soul. That's why time spent with your wife and kids should be more about quality than quantity. Any bum can sit on the couch at home and watch TV all night. However, the man who blesses his family with meaningful interaction and discussion about things that matter (on earth and in heaven) is the man who will connect with his family's heart. As my friend Bryan Davis, director of All Pro Dad, says, "When you come in from work and see your wife and kids, don't forget, to stop, drop, and roll." Stop what you're doing, drop what you have been thinking about all day, and roll on (spend valuable time with them). It will be a true blessing indeed. Check out the *Stand Firm* show at [lifeway.com/men](http://lifeway.com/men) or on Facebook at LifeWay Men to see what Coach Tony Dungy has to say about being a father.

*Jason Ellerbrook*

**The man who blesses his family with meaningful interaction and discussion about things that matter is the man who will connect with his family's heart.**

By  
Kenny  
Luck

## DADDY'S BIG MAN

*Receive the blessing of your Father's love.*

**I BROKE THE RULES.** I asked self-conscious Orange County men and women to stand in the middle of church. A good 10 seconds passed before one brave man stood, and then several more women and men joined him. The keyboard player began to strike some inviting chords, which infused the moment of freedom and healing with a safe spirit. A wave of people began to rise up out of their seats. Some were weeping, some were holding their spouse's hand, and others stood alone. The pure shock and awe of people letting their defenses down and making themselves vulnerable in a public way was powerful.

This burning bush moment began 40 minutes earlier when I spoke the words I knew had the potential to kindle a great fire in the hearts and souls of many: "I think all of us can agree that, for better or for worse, fathers leave an emotional fingerprint on our lives. I think that we can also agree that the love of a father can be transforming. And guess what? We don't outgrow our desire to be Daddy's big men or little princesses. You and I are created to be the special object of a father's love." I blew on that ember with a steady wind of spiritual truth, which transformed into, spiritually and emotionally speaking, a Southern California wildfire.

By the end, hundreds of big men and little princesses were consumed by God's desire for them. They were now standing to renew or receive the





## 4 THINGS EVERY MAN MUST EXPERIENCE PERSONALLY

**1. A special moment from a father.** Matthew 3:16 tells us, “The heavens suddenly opened for [Jesus], and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him.” Think spotlight. Each of us deeply craves a father’s special love. God modeled this.

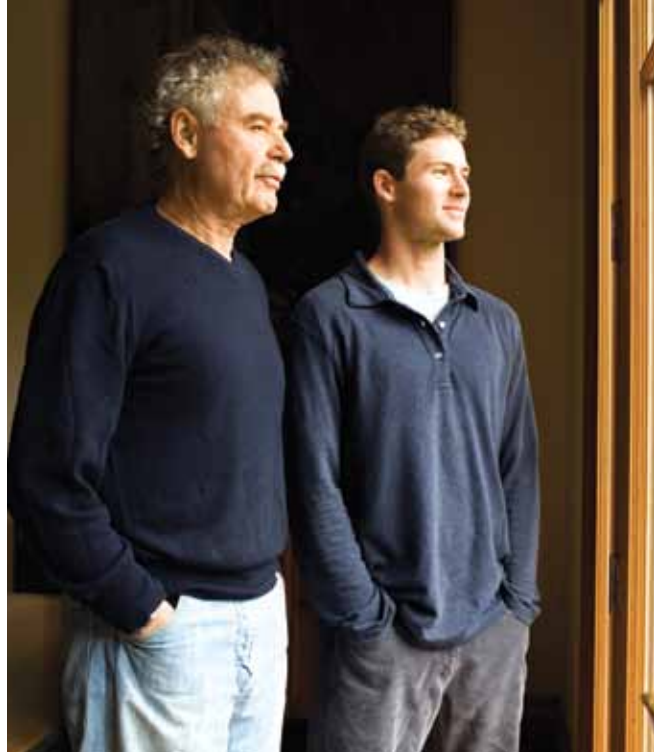
**2. A special name from a father.** Ever heard that phrase, “He’s

trying to make a name for himself”? We first want to be identified as a loved son. If that’s not there, we will begin a quest to find a name. We will find an identity, gang, professional title, or lifestyle that provides a label. The one we crave more than any other is the name “my son.”

**3. A special love from a father.** Well-formed love banishes fear (1 John 4:18). Since fear is crippling, a fearful life — fear of death, fear of

judgment — is one not yet fully formed in love. God the Father says to His Son, “I love You, Son.” God says to us: “I love you, son” to liberate us from insecurity as men and set us on a firm and mature emotional foundation.

**4. A special blessing from a father.** Though acceptance without performance sets us free from insecurity and fear, we also need affirmation of progression. It’s called encouragement — the kind



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that watches, observes, and draws the conclusion of “I take delight in [you]” (Matthew 3:17).

God was pleased with who Jesus had become as a man, and we need this same affirmation.

blessing of their Father’s love. By standing they were saying that they wanted to resolve the acceptance issue once and for all. They were saying that they wanted to end their quest for validation as men and women in unhealthy and destructive ways. They came

to their feet in order to experience healing from that deep fear in all of our souls of not being personally affirmed by someone significant in our lives.

They wanted exactly what God modeled. Observe closely.

“After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him. And there came a voice from heaven: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!” (Matthew 3:16-17).

What God models with His Son He wants to replicate with all of His spiritual sons adopted into the family through Jesus Christ. He knows that in order to escape deep insecurities, false names and identities, immaturity, and selfishness, all men need a

personal and powerful encounter with their Father. God wants us fully formed in His love so that we can help form our children in that same love. A man cannot give away what he does not possess to his children, his spouse, or others God has placed in his life to influence.

How can you experience this? First, personally see God’s heart for you as a Father (Jeremiah 3:19). Second, openly accept His blessing and respond to Him (Romans 8:15-16). Third, define your manhood by His acceptance alone (Romans 8:37). God wants you to stop searching for acceptance and start living in your Father’s blessing. □

**Kenny Luck** is the men’s pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., and the founder of Every Man Ministries, which helps churches and organizations develop healthy men’s communities ([everymanministries.com](http://everymanministries.com)).



## Choose Your Rut Carefully

**I love reading road signs.** Like the one welcoming you to Kettle Falls, Wash., the home of “1255 friendly people and one grouch.” In Hilt, Calif., a sign advises: “Brakeless trucks, use freeway.” But my favorite of them all is posted on an Alaska highway: “Choose your rut carefully. You’ll be in it for the next 200 miles.”

As a young father, I found myself spending 60 hours at work each week, speaking across the country on weekends, and wallpapering the house at night. I had three small children and one wife, and I was in danger of getting their names mixed up. Before I knew what hit me, I was burned out.

Three liberating truths have freed me from that rut. I think we should plant them as road signs along life’s highway.

❶ The fruit of the Spirit is not lemons. In the midst of my burn-out, my 4-year-old pounced on me and tickled me. I didn’t move. “Dad,” he said, “you don’t laugh so good anymore.” That night I made a conscious decision to change. God is a God of joy. He has given us a built-in escape hatch for the pressures of life. It’s our fun-bone. So let’s fill our homes and our workplaces with laughter whenever we can.

❷ Even ants have time to attend picnics. Recently we bought a puppy. Mojo cost us \$300, or \$100 per brain cell. Sometimes she curls up on my lap, her tiny heart beating fast. But when she drifts off to sleep, it slows remarkably. The Bible tells us that Jesus often took a break. No one in history accomplished more, yet He did so without acquiring an ulcer. Rest allows us to recharge our batteries and reorganize our priorities. The Creator of the universe rested. So must we.

❸ Even if you win the rat race, you’re still a rat. One night my wife and I strolled through a mall laughing at all the things we do not need. “Honey,” I said, “we are rich in relationships. Rich in memories. Rich enough to give some money away. And if we notice that the neighbor’s grass is greener, let’s remind ourselves that their water bill is probably higher, and they have to cut it more often.”

Recently, my eldest son left for Bible college. I said goodbye with a few tears, much thanksgiving, and few regrets. I wonder if I’d be able to say that had I not heeded these three roads signs. I still don’t live in perfect balance. But I’m learning to laugh, learning to prioritize, and learning to rest. If I keep this up I may even have time to wallpaper.

**Phil Callaway** is an award-winning author, speaker, and daddy of three. The best-selling author of 24 books, including *To Be Perfectly Honest* (Multnomah), he is a frequent guest on national radio and TV, and his humorous stories on family life have been featured in hundreds of magazines worldwide ([laughagain.org](http://laughagain.org)).

## Men’s Resources & Events

### Bible Studies

1. *Courageous Living Bible Study* by Michael Catt, Stephen Kendrick, and Alex Kendrick (B&H)
2. *Game Plan for Life Volumes 1 and 2* by Joe Gibbs (LifeWay)
3. *Men’s Fraternity: The Quest for Authentic Manhood* by Robert M. Lewis (LifeWay)
4. *The Man God Uses* by Henry and Tom Blackaby (B&H)

### Books

1. *The Resolution for Men* by Stephen Kendrick, Alex Kendrick, and Randy Alcorn (B&H)
2. *Courageous Living: Dare to Take a Stand* by Michael Catt (B&H)

All resources available for purchase at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

### Events

- 1▶ **Joe Gibbs’ “Game Plan for Life” Simulcast** (May 2012): Nationally known leaders and pastors will speak live from the Joe Gibbs race shop in Charlotte, N.C., to challenge men to be better believers, husbands, fathers, and community members. This experience is available to men in their local churches.
- 2▶ **All Pro Dad Simulcast** (August 2012): Fathers and their children will be guided through football-themed drill stations, where fathers will coach their children and share words of encouragement. Coach Tony Dungy and other All Pro Dad spokesmen will speak live from the Colts’ training facility in Indianapolis. This event is ideal for fathers with children in kindergarten through 6th grade.
- 3▶ **Festivals of Marriage Retreat (Ongoing)**: FOM is the perfect follow-up to your church’s *Courageous Living* Bible Study. FOM is a catalytic event that will encourage you, challenge you, and help you build a healthy marriage.

For more event information or other resources for men, go to [lifeway.com/men](http://lifeway.com/men).



## pass it on

Why do you read *HomeLife* each month? To be spiritually encouraged? To discover fresh ways to nurture your marriage and family life? As a discipleship tool? For all the ways *HomeLife* ministers to you, you have the opportunity to bless others by passing along this copy when you're finished with it. Need ideas? Here are some ways to **Pass It On**.

I work as a registered nurse at a local hospital. I take my *HomeLife* magazines to work. Employees and patients alike look forward to the new issues. Often I'm asked when the new copy is coming!

— Lisa Billings Smith, Facebook

I drop them off at the public library drop box and someone always takes it. I don't know who, but I hope it helps them like it does me.

— Ashlea White Davis, Facebook

In what unique ways do you **Pass It On**? Email us at [homelife@lifeway.com](mailto:homelife@lifeway.com).

## Motivational Savvy



**Stan wouldn't roll out of bed** to get ready for church, so my mom decided to motivate my little brother.

To truly grasp this story, you need a bit of family history: We Harringtons have an acute fear of spiders. Arachnophobia crawls through our veins, and if one of us sees a spider, we just about kill one another heading for the door. But none is more bitten by arachnophobia than Stan. Every nerve fiber in his body goes into flight mode when he sees a spider, even though Stan towers well over 6 feet and weighs in at 200-plus pounds. And if he sees a *hairy* spider, well, it takes him days to stop shuddering.

Now, Mom is no bigger than a minute, but pound for pound she really knows how to throw her weight around. And she's sneaky.

Very sneaky. That fateful Sunday morning, Mom had been eating grapes. She held in her hand the leftover grape vine, which, after she studied it a bit, actually looked like a long-legged spider. So Mom crept back up the steps into Stan's room and quietly placed the grape vine on his pillow. Then she sat down on the top step and waited.

A few minutes later Stan's snoring kinda snuffled and Mom could hear him flip over. That's when the screaming started. Stan's hand hit that vine, one sleepy eye opened just enough to perceive a spider in his domain, and the big boy got moving! Things were thrown, words were said, and Stan exited the room at break-neck speed.

And there to greet him was my demure mom, laughing her head off. When she could finally catch her breath and explain Stan's close encounter with a grape vine, she followed it with, "Now that you're up, get ready for church." And down the steps she went.

Mom does this kind of stuff all the time. She can think of ways to get her six kids moving in the right direction like no one else. I'm convinced it's a God-given talent, and throughout the years He most likely has gotten a kick out of watching Mom use her motivational savvy. Because it's effective. Very effective.



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