

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."—1 Corinthians 13:4-8

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Where Have All the Good Manners Gone?

By Larry Greider

What's behind the growing epidemic of selfish, crude behavior, and what can you do to counteract it in your children?



HAVE YOU NOTICED how crude and rude people are these days? Rarely do you find the polite, patient, chivalrous gentleman or refined lady in our fast-paced world.

Television shows do not help much. With the advent of shows like the rude, crude American comedy hit *South Park* that debuted a few years ago and the purposefully obnoxious *Jerry Springer Show*, it's no wonder our manners are slipping.



Newsweek magazine calls the TV comedy *South Park* “gleefully offensive and profoundly silly,” a show that “revels in juxtaposing cute and crude, jaded and juvenile.” The article described the show as the coolest schoolyard craze since MTV’s coarse *Beavis and Butt-Head*. What’s next? I shudder to think about it.

William Kilpatrick, in his book *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*, talks about the difference in problems facing educators today compared to a few decades earlier. In the 1950s, he said, the concern was “why can’t Johnny read.” Now, however, the problems run much

deeper.

Dr. Kilpatrick states: “In addition to the fact that Johnny still can’t read, we are now faced with the more serious problem that he can’t tell right from wrong... An estimated 525,000 attacks, shakedowns, and robberies occur in public high schools each month. Each year nearly three million crimes are committed on or near school property—16,000 per school day. About 135,000 students carry guns to school daily; one-fifth of all students report carrying a weapon of some type.

“Twenty-one percent of all secondary school students avoid using the rest rooms out of fear of being harmed or intimidated. Surveys of schoolchildren reveal that their chief school-related concern is the disruptive behavior of their classmates. Teachers have similar concerns. Almost one third of public school teachers indicate that they have seriously considered leaving teaching because of student misbehavior” (1992, p. 14).

Striking contrast in school problems

Dr. Kilpatrick contrasts what classroom teachers identified as the greatest threats to the educational process in 1940 compared to today. In 1940, the first problem on teachers’ lists was talking out of turn. Today it is *drug abuse*. The number two concern in 1940 was chewing gum; today it is *alcohol abuse*. In 1940, the third-ranked problem was making noise; number three today is *pregnancy*.

The fourth most-pressing problem in 1940 was running in the halls; today it is *suicide*. Fifth, sixth and seventh on the list in 1940 were getting out of line, wearing improper clothing and not putting paper in the wastebasket; today they are *rape, robbery and assault* (Kilpatrick, p.100).

“During the past 30 years, we have witnessed a profound shift in public attitudes,” says former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett. He refers to polls showing that “we Americans now place less value on what we owe others as a matter of moral obligation; less value on sacrifice as a moral good, on social conformity, respectability, and observing the rules; less value on correctness and restraint in matters of physical pleasure and sexuality—and correlatively greater value on things like self-expression, individualism, self-realization, and personal choice” (as quoted by Robert Bork in *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, 1996, p. 65).

“During the past 30 years, we have witnessed a profound shift in public attitudes...”

Former U.S. Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork goes on to say that “our current set of values is inhospitable to the self-discipline required for such institutions as marriage and education and hospitable to no-fault divorce and self-esteem training” (ibid.).

The problem is certainly greater than a lack of proper manners. Learning to respect other people and their property is fundamental to a civilized world. Our conduct should reflect the golden rule, treating others as we would like to be treated. Some great advice is given in the Bible: “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

Where does this wisdom come from? Recently someone gave me a book on manners written in 1932. In that book, the author apologized for having to write about things that were so well known. I remember hearing from my parents lots of instruction on proper behavior as a young man. Whatever happened to that old cliché “*Didn’t your mother teach you any manners?*” I’ve remembered that phrase and occasionally repeated it myself when my teenagers’ friends invaded our home showing just a little too much enthusiasm and too little refinement.

Guidelines for parents

A time is coming, under Jesus Christ’s rule, when right conduct and respect for others will be an integral part of civilization. Until that time arrives, parents should follow the clear teaching in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “...These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” These words referred to statutes and judgments or proper behavior that allowed ancient Israel to be well advanced in matters of morality, citizenship, decorum and even hygiene.

In later times, even the classic Greek philosophers noted that teaching children right conduct was vital. Plato, in his *Republic*, observed: “You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for this is the time in which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken... Shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?”

“You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work... for this is the time in which the character is formed...”

“We cannot... Anything received into the mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts... Then will our youth dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds, and receive the good in everything; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the eye and ear, like a health-giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from the earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason. There can be no nobler training than that.”

Teach your children well



Make a difference in the lives of your children. Teach them proper decorum in dress, including modesty. Impress on them the need to avoid lewd and crude behavior and do not tolerate it in your home. Perhaps censoring what appears on TV in your home would also be wise.

The path of western civilization seems to be following the decline of other major world powers of bygone centuries. The apostle Peter, when referring to the present evil world, asked an important question for Christians today: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in *holy conduct* and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11, emphasis added).

Resist the cold self-centeredness and rudeness of today’s culture, and strive to be as God would have us be—caring, respectful and courteous.

Please visit our Web site www.ucg.org to find other articles on child rearing and how to direct your children along the proper path in life. You can request free literature on this and many other subjects applicable to everyday life.

Say Thanks and Say It Often!

By Janet Treadway

Too often we do not take the time to thank others for their kindness. Let’s remember and appreciate those who make an extra effort to help us.



WHILE SHOPPING IN A GROCERY STORE a few weeks ago, I was going down an aisle and noticed a family coming toward me with their cart. One lady was being pushed in a wheelchair. So I pulled my cart over to one side to let them pass. It was a small thing, but I was a little surprised that they went on by without even a glance toward me or a thank you.

A few weeks later, I had another experience at the same store that was quite different. I was looking in the frozen food section when a young man who worked in the store came up to me to see if there was any way he could help me.

I asked him about the price of the pie I was looking at. He said I needed a savings card to get it at the sale price. Then he told me he would get me a card and even check me out at his lane. So I followed him to the service desk, where he filled out the information for me and then rang up my groceries. I received the savings I needed. I was warmed and grateful because of the time he took to make it easier for me.



If you are like me, you are normally so rushed in life that even taking the time to fill out information for a savings card can be taxing. The store clerk took the time to help me out and, by doing so, made my life just a little bit easier. Still, since we're so busy, it's so easy to take that service for granted and think, well that's his job; he is paid to do that. How many times have I overlooked the opportunity to say thanks? But this time, I gave him a big thank you! He certainly received my gratitude for being so helpful.

Are we living in the last days described in 2 Timothy 3:1-2? There we read, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

Have we become a society of demanding complainers, lovers of ourselves, instead of being thankful? In Romans 1:21 we also see, "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

Causes of ingratitude

In looking in God's Word and deep inside myself to see some of the causes of my ingratitude, I found some disturbing things. I found that ingratitude is actually a mark of immaturity. Unhappiness in some people is caused by ingratitude about who they are, or are not; what they have, or do not have; or what they do, or do not get to do. Being thankful, on the other hand, just makes us feel better inside. *A cure for unhappiness is being thankful.*

Are we living in the last days when... "perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves... unthankful"?

Ingratitude has its roots in pride. Someone who is not thankful thinks he should have had more. He believes he deserves better than what he has. Or he believes he alone is wholly responsible for all he has.

I had to consider whether I had an outlook that *expects* things from God just because I am a Christian and trying to obey Him. Do we overlook gratitude and think He should be giving us what we feel we need and deserve?

In Colossians 3:17 we read, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Psalm 100:4 states, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."

It is hard to be thankful when we are going through a trial and feel God is not giving us what we feel we deserve. How many of us feel we deserve a trial? Roy Holladay, president of the United Church of God, once said in a sermon, *“Be thankful we do not get what we deserve.”*

Ingratitude has its roots in pride. Someone who is not thankful thinks he should have had more.

Appreciation and a kind smile can lift a person up. By saying “thank you,” we tell others they are valuable and we appreciate what they do. Giving thanks keeps bitterness and hatred from taking root in us. Everyone was created to contribute something. By giving thanks, we begin to see them from God’s perspective and appreciate what their potential and worth is.

Being thankful not only lifts us up from our own despair, but it also lifts up others. *Being thankful is also a way to let our light shine in a very dark and gloomy world.* So, I’ve determined to say thanks and say it often—to my family, to my boss, to my coworkers, to people I come in contact with on a daily basis. I want to remember to say thanks to those who serve in the church. Most of all, I want to remember to say thanks to God who gives us even the breath of air we breathe. With that said, thank you for reading this article!

Please visit our Web site at www.ucg.org to search for more information on the topic of thankfulness or to request a free subscription to *The Good News* magazine.

Discover the Power of Forgiveness

By Larry J. Walker

Forgiveness can be a very sore subject for many. We have all experienced hurt or offense from someone. How are we supposed to react? Do we forgive and let the other person get away with whatever they have done? Recent research suggests we only hurt ourselves if we do not forgive. However, this knowledge is not new. For thousands of years, the way to forgiveness existed in the pages of God’s Word, the Bible.



A 29-YEAR-OLD POLICE OFFICER whose wife is pregnant with their first child is shot on the streets of New York. For days his life hangs in the balance. He lives, but the shooting leaves him a quadriplegic.

A young woman in Texas is brutally raped, beaten with a hammer, stabbed and left for dead. She lives, but the incident leaves her emotionally devastated.

A 7-year-old Cleveland boy lives through the mysterious murder of his mother. His father is arrested for the crime and convicted in a sensational trial that gains national attention. Ten years later his father is freed from prison after the real murderer is located. But irreversible damage has already occurred. The boy's childhood is over, his family shattered.

The victims in these three unrelated stories have more in common than having suffered tragic, brutal crimes. All three of them have been able to regain control of their lives by learning the power of forgiveness.

It has been said, "To err is human, to forgive is divine." According to new studies, forgiveness also provides a vitally important dimension of human life, especially for those who have been victimized by life-changing tragedies.

Social benefits of forgiveness

The effect of forgiveness on social and interpersonal relationships is obvious. In marriage and families, on the job and at school, forgiveness can mend relationships torn asunder by destructive words and actions.

Forgiveness has widespread social applications. Realization of its value has led to the development of the restorative justice movement, which initiates conferences between crime victims and jailed perpetrators. More than 300 such programs are now in effect throughout the United States, including a million dollar religion-based juvenile justice initiative in Florida.

Forgiveness and health

Recent research and examples such as those related above have shown that forgiveness also promotes emotional and physical health of victims. On the other hand, holding on to bitterness, hatred and desire for revenge can cause serious emotional and physiological problems that compound the suffering of the victim. Those who nurture these powerful emotions fail to realize the damage they are bringing on themselves. As one person put it, "Holding on to anger is like taking poison and waiting for someone else to die."

Holding on to bitterness, hatred and desire for revenge can cause serious emotional and physiological problems.

A leader of an uprising against the Warsaw ghetto described the bitterness remaining in his heart concerning how he and his neighbors were treated by the Nazis. "If you could lick my heart," he says, "it would poison you."

Researchers are discovering this statement may be literally true. Social scientists are learning forgiveness can help restore emotional and even physical wholeness to suffering victims.

Recent research on the benefits of forgiveness

As recently as 1980, virtually no data existed on the subject of forgiveness. The prevailing trend in counseling and psychotherapy has long been "the talking cure." Victims were encouraged to talk

about their experiences, but the element of forgiveness was lacking. So the suffering usually remained.

In 1984 theologian Lewis Schmedes wrote *Forgive and Forget*. This book caught the eye of social scientist Robert Enright, who was seeking to apply the biblical concept of forgiveness to social problems. Enright sought support for a program to teach forgiveness to prisoners, reasoning that by learning to forgive others they might seek forgiveness from their victims. For years his attempts were scorned and dismissed.

After 10 years of persistent effort gaining little attention or financial support, an article in the lifestyle section of the *Chicago Tribune* injected his efforts with new life. As a result of hundreds of phone calls, Enright and his wife began publishing a newsletter, set up a Web site and continued publishing findings of studies and research projects probing the value of forgiveness. This gained the attention of other researchers. Ironically, the world-renowned Mendota Mental Health Center recently approached him with an idea for rehabilitating prisoners by teaching them forgiveness—the same idea that Enright sought to promote years earlier.

Enright has since founded the International Forgiveness Institute (IFI) as “a source of promotion and dissemination of the most important research in the world on the topic of forgiveness.”



Research on forgiveness has continued to gain momentum, catapulting forgiveness out of its native Christian setting into the mainstream of scientific research. As stated in an article in *Time* magazine, “there is not only a religious impetus to forgive but also therapeutic, social and practical reasons to do so. This applies to victims of crimes as well as to those who must deal with... more common misfortunes—unfaithfulness, betrayal, ungratefulness and mere insult. In the past two years, scientists and sociologists have begun to extract forgiveness and the act of forgiving from the confines of the confessional, transforming it into the subject of quantifiable research... In short, to forgive is no longer just divine.”

According to the *Time* article, “A number of psychotherapists are testifying that there is nothing like it for dissipating anger, mending marriages and banishing depression. Just a few years ago, says Robert Enright, a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin and a pioneer in the scientific study of forgiveness, most secularly inclined intellectuals ‘trashed it; they said, “Only wimps forgive.”’ But now, Enright says, ‘psychiatrists, M.D.’s, scientists, lawyers, ministers and social workers can all be on the same page. We are really on a roll’” (“Should All Be Forgiven?” by David Van Biema, *Time*, Jan. 23, 2001).

“The field is just exploding,” says Virginia psychologist Everett Worthington, director of the Templeton Foundation Campaign for Forgiveness Research, an organization distributing \$5 million to scientific studies on forgiveness.

Health benefits of forgiveness

Funded by a \$75,000 Templeton grant, a forgiveness laboratory has been set up at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. The *Time* article reports that Dr. Charlotte van Oyen Witvliet finds “robust physiological differences” between nonforgiving and forgiving responses.

“Subjects’ cardiovascular systems inevitably labor when they remember the person who hurt them. But stress is ‘significantly greater’ when they consider revenge rather than forgiveness. Witvliet suggests that we may be drawn to hold grudges ‘because that makes us feel like we are more in control and we are less sad.’ But interviews with her subjects indicate that they felt in even greater control when they tried to empathize with their offenders and enjoyed the greatest sense of power, well-being and resolution when they managed to grant forgiveness. ‘If you are willing to exert the effort it takes to be forgiving, there are benefits both emotionally and physically,’ she concludes” (ibid.).

Clinical psychologist Dr. Joseph Neuman of East Tennessee State University is currently engaged in a research project seeking to learn more about the link between forgiveness and physiological health. Neuman observed, “When I treated patients with cardiovascular diseases, I was struck with how many were bitter, angry and depressed. It clearly affected their health and their ability to heal.” His experimentation seeks to document the cardiovascular benefits of forgiveness. “Theologically speaking, forgiveness is an Act of God,” says Neuman. “In terms of health care, forgiveness could save your life.”

By letting go of hostile, vengeful feelings and allowing God to deal with wrongdoers who have hurt us, we can move beyond our hurt to live happy, healthy lives.

Forgiveness and addiction recovery

On another front, the Forgiveness for Addiction Treatment Project, also funded by the John Templeton Foundation, has established an addiction treatment program based on forgiveness. Very positive results are anticipated in their treatment summary:

“It is expected that, as a result of participating in the intervention programme, clients will experience improved ability to value and accept their offender(s), which will contribute to a gradual replacement of an attitude of ill-will and malevolence with an attitude of good-will and benevolence. In this connection, depending on the degree of client progress, the inner experience of forgiveness can potentially be expressed behaviourally in terms of pro-social behaviour and altruistic action... We expect that victims who are successful at forgiving their perpetrators will experience relief from the cancer of bitterness (anger, anxiety and depression). This reduction in negative emotionality, should, in turn, result in a richer experience in awareness and fuller expression in behaviour of ‘Divine Grace.’”

What forgiveness is not

An important part of this treatment philosophy “assumes that forgiveness... be experienced and expressed in full realisation that an offender’s actions may not merit such benevolence.”

The “forgiveness” spoken of by these researchers does not depend on the attitudes or actions of the offender. Neither does it imply denying, condoning, excusing or condemning them. It does not

demand justice or compensation. Forgiveness is not equivalent to, nor does it require, reconciliation. The IFI explains forgiveness as “one person’s moral response to another’s injustice.” Reconciliation involves “two parties coming together in mutual respect.”

Many make the mistake of assuming forgiveness should be extended only if the offending party apologizes and makes amends for his or her actions. But, in order to experience the benefits of forgiveness, the victim must be willing and able to let go of resentment whether or not the perpetrator seeks or deserves to be forgiven. Otherwise, the victim remains at the mercy of the guilty party and continues to suffer from what the program calls “the cancer of bitterness.” This can include mental and emotional turmoil and even degenerative diseases. According to Dr. Glen Mack Harnden, forgiveness “releases the offender from anger, rage and stress that have been linked to physiological problems, such as cardiovascular diseases, high-blood pressure, hypertension, cancer and other psychosomatic diseases.”

What forgiveness is

Clinical psychologist Everett L. Worthington Jr. offers this definition of forgiveness: “Forgiveness is when an individual who’s been hurt or offended decides and practices giving up his or her desire to avoid the person who hurt him or her, or giving up the desire to exact revenge on the person, and also to seek reconciliation between the two people, if it’s safe and possible” (“The Practice of Forgiveness,” by Robert Owens Scott, *Spirituality & Health Newsletter*).



Many researchers offer this twofold definition: “Forgiveness is releasing the other person from retaliation and wishing the other person well” (“The Forgiveness Factor” by Gary Thomas, *Christianity Today*, Jan. 10, 2000).

The definition of forgiveness offered by the International Forgiveness Institute involves an integrated approach of thought, emotion and behavior. “It is a response to an injustice (a moral wrong). It is a turning to the ‘good’ in the face of this wrongdoing.” Their definition also includes: “Merciful restraint from pursuing resentment or revenge. Generosity or offering good things such as attention, time, remembrances on holidays. Moral love or contributing to the betterment of the other. It is the foregoing of resentment or revenge when the wrongdoer’s actions deserve it and giving the gifts of mercy, generosity and love when the wrongdoer does not deserve them.”

In short, forgiveness is an unconditional gift to someone who does not deserve it.

Forgiveness in the Bible

What these men have articulated is stated simply and eloquently in many passages of Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, the cornerstone of Christian teaching, Jesus tells us to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...” (Matthew 5:44).

The apostle Paul advises, “Ask God to bless everyone who mistreats you. Ask him to bless them and not to curse them... Don’t mistreat someone who has mistreated you... Don’t try to get even...”

If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat. And if they are thirsty, give them something to drink... Don't let evil defeat you, but defeat evil with good" (Romans 12:14, 17, 20-21, Contemporary English Version).

These admonitions undoubtedly appear unwise, unwarranted and unfair to a non-Christian. Even Christians have viewed this in terms of a unilateral obligation. Lewis Schmedes observed that "human forgiveness had been seen as a religious obligation of love that we owe to a person who has offended us. The discovery I made was the important benefit that forgiveness is to the forgiver." Schmedes believes "untold pain is brought about in the world by people's unwillingness to forgive and the corresponding passion to get even" ("The Forgiveness Factor").

Forgiveness is not easy. But it is the best way for all concerned. By letting go of hostile, vengeful feelings and allowing God to deal with wrongdoers who have hurt us, we can move beyond our hurt to live happy, healthy lives.

The greatest example of forgiveness

Mark Harnden believes "forgiveness is the core, [the] most significant factor in both spiritual and psychological healing." Forgiveness is also at the core of the gospel. If you have difficulty forgiving someone, consider the debt of sin that God has forgiven you of when you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us how to deal with someone who "sins against you." He enumerates a three-step conflict resolution process followed by forgiveness. Macho Peter apparently found difficulty with the concept of forgiveness. He asked, "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Peter probably reasoned that he could grit his teeth and utter words of professed forgiveness seven times if he knew after the eighth incident, he could take actions to get even. *But, Jesus told him forgiveness must be not only unlimited. It must also be from the heart.*

Jesus, the Master Healer, offered His life for the forgiveness of all the sins of all mankind forever. Never did He seek vengeance, in word or in deed.

To put the matter into a spiritual perspective, Jesus told a story of a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One of his servants who owed a great sum of money pleaded with the king for mercy. The master was moved with compassion and forgave him the entire debt, whereupon the forgiven servant demanded repayment from a fellow servant that owed him a very small sum of money. The debtor was unable to repay, and begged him for mercy. Instead of extending the mercy he had received for a much larger debt, the unforgiving servant had him thrown into prison. When the king found out, he was furious. "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" The king then rescinded his original forgiveness and demanded full payment from the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-34).

Jesus concludes the parable with the warning, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (verse 35).

Biblical perspective on forgiveness

This is how important God considers forgiveness. The point is not whether or not the other person is worthy. *Forgiveness is a fundamental quality of godly love that seeks the ultimate good of everyone.*

The IFI definition further explains forgiveness as going beyond the call of duty by the “overcoming of wrongdoing with good” to offer “a freely chosen gift (rather than a grim obligation).” The definition correctly promises, “As we give the gift of forgiveness we ourselves are healed.”

Forgiveness is fundamental to healing—physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus, the Master Healer, offered His life for the forgiveness of all the sins of all mankind forever. He set the perfect example of forgiveness to His dying breath. Never did He seek vengeance, in word or in deed (1 Peter 2:20-25). Instead He prayed regarding those who crucified him, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus knew most people do not realize the full consequences of evil. He also understood the evil potential of the human heart yielding to hostile, vengeful emotions (Mark 7:20-23). He wanted no part of the damage, for Himself, for His followers or for anyone else.

As *Christianity Today* concludes, “...for international, national, and even personal issues, researchers are finding that a practice taught by Jesus Christ two thousand years ago may be our most effective tool and response.”

To make certain we remember the importance of forgiveness, Jesus instituted a most meaningful ceremony to commemorate His death for our sins. As we partake of the symbols of bread and “the cup,” let us remember the magnitude of God’s forgiveness and seek to practice forgiveness in every aspect of our personal lives. Let us learn, practice and benefit from the power of forgiveness.

Long before restorative justice gathered steam, Aba Gayle, 65, learned to forgive and to let go.

In 1980 her daughter Catherine, 19, and a male friend were stabbed to death on a pear farm near Sacramento, Calif. Virtually disabled by what she called a kind of temporary insanity, Gayle attended the sentencing of Douglas Mickey as he received the death penalty for the killings. She left the proceedings “horrified” that such a sentence could be imposed so matter-of-factly. Yet when Mickey’s execution date was set, she asked for a seat as a witness, hoping to be able to see him pay for her daughter’s death.

Then one night in 1992, Gayle wrote her daughter’s killer a letter. “It just flowed,” she says. She told him she forgave him and was willing to visit him. “The instant the letter was in the mailbox, all the anger, all the rage, all the lust for revenge disappeared,” she says.

And Mickey wrote back. He told her that what he had done was an “unspeakable burden” to his soul. He said that if he could undo the night he killed Catherine and her friend, he would gladly give his life. Since then, Gayle has visited Mickey several times and corresponded with him regularly...

Gayle sees herself as a spark for smaller mercies. “People think, ‘If she can do that, maybe I can forgive my sister for what she did to me or my brother-in-law or mother—or whomever they’ve been holding a grudge against all these years’” (“Should All Be Forgiven?”).

If you would like to learn more about the subject of forgiveness, please contact us at our website www.ucg.org to request free literature concerning this and other important topics of the Bible.

Does God Believe in Tough Love?

By Jean Jantzen

Both Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura advocate it. There’s even an organization—Tough Love International—to help parents deal with out-of-control children. A practicing family psychiatrist has written a book calling for parents to use tough love. But the concept of tough love originated back in the first few pages of the Bible—long before the creation of any support group or self-help manual. Our Creator offers tough love to those He loves.



“The things which hurt, instruct.”—Ben Franklin

IN *The Epidemic: the Rot of American Culture*, Robert Shaw, a practicing family psychiatrist and head of the Family Institute of Berkeley, California, writes, “Far too many children today are sullen, unfriendly, distant, preoccupied... They whine, nag and throw tantrums and demand constant attention from their parents...”

Shaw lists 15 ways to “ruin your children and your life,” which include “give in to your child’s whims... let your child think he is the boss of the universe... and don’t supervise your child’s friendships.” In contrast, the antidote to the epidemic so many of us have witnessed is, Shaw writes, “a strong bonding experience, a routine, disciplined environment, moral training” and good old “down time.” He says his book is not a “how-to” book, but a “what is necessary” book.

One of Shaw's best observations is, "Today's parents seem to have absorbed the notion that a child's life should be totally serene, totally self-expressive and totally free from frustration. But creating an atmosphere that feels satisfactory to the child all the time does her [or him] a disservice."

Polishing rough stones into gems

Shaw says the solution is simple. More parents need to be as parents of old—like our parents and their parents before them. Most parents knew they were not around to be their children's best friend. Their job was to nurture them with a firm hand. Sure, there would be friction, but friction is how you turn rough stones into polished gems. In Proverbs 29:17,15 we read, "Discipline your son, and he will give you peace... the rod and correction impacts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother" (New International Version).



Years ago, most parents knew kids needed a set of moral boundaries, and they should face the consequences when they stepped outside those boundaries. They knew kids needed chores. They needed set times for family dinner, for bedtime, for waking in the morning and preparing for school. They needed structure.

Most parents knew they were not around to be their children's best friend. Their job was to nurture them with a firm hand.

I remember living next door to a couple with two daughters about my own age of 12. These girls had to do the dishes on a regular basis, make their beds and do other chores, all under the watchful eye of loving parents. I envied my friends. I wondered why my parents were so lackadaisical in their approach and did not make me do things as my friends' parents did. I equated the structure and discipline in their home to an act of love. And I wanted so desperately that kind of love.

So, why do we think we need to be soft toward those who require chastening? God says chastening is for our profit (Hebrew 12:5-11). Today's mush love psyche has practically wiped out the sensible understanding of biblical tough love. God's tough love splashed over the pages of both Testaments has been deleted as simply not fitting in with today's "modern" ideologies, especially with regards to child rearing.

And yet we desperately love our children and want the best for them. Then why is it we cannot see the truth in Proverbs 13:24, "If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them" (New Living Translation)? We'd do well to listen to Dr. Phil's timely advice: "Quit rewarding your children for bad behavior!"

Tough love in the Garden of Eden

Look at the example of God's love toward his first child, Adam. He had great plans for him. He talked to Adam about everything and told him how much He loved him. God expected Adam to look after the garden and name all the animals. Then God made Eve. They had much freedom and great joy in the garden and enjoyed a wonderful relationship with God, just as our own children do in our homes.

But, like any loving parent, God made rules for Adam and Eve. They had access to all the trees in the garden but one. They must have had certain chores. So what happened? Eve took of the forbidden fruit and Adam followed suit. Do you think God said, “Didn’t I already tell you not to do it? Let’s have a time out—go, just don’t let it happen again”? That sounds more like us, doesn’t it? But God only speaks once. Mankind had to know God meant what He said. So the penalty was carried out, not because He did not love them but because He did. Without further ado, Adam and Eve were escorted out of their beautiful home to make their way in the world. They were introduced to a rough existence, which required labor for survival.

God does not change... And God loves His children so much He was willing to die for them. He is also willing to use tough love to bring about a glorious end result.

A little further down the line we see when God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, He decided to destroy His human creation (Genesis 6:5-7). Yet the people were given an opportunity to change before the punishment was meted out. Then the judgment was made against Sodom and Gomorrah. This was also the case in Nineveh, but repentance occurred and a loving Father reversed the decision.

Many might argue things have changed under the New Testament administration, that Jesus Christ brought only a gospel of love, mercy and forgiveness. God does not change (Malachi 3:6). Jesus Christ is also the God of the Old Testament. And God loves His children so much He was willing to die for them. He is also willing to use tough love to bring about a glorious end result.

Jesus was not weak when it came to discipline within His Church. Remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)? God knew that “when evil people are not punished right away, it makes others want to do evil, too” (Ecclesiastes 8:11, New Century Version).

Society’s view on tough love

In the earlier years of our nation, Benjamin Franklin understood the wisdom of tough love. He remarked, “If we provide encouragement for laziness, and support for folly, may we not be found fighting against the order of God and Nature, which perhaps has appointed want and misery as the proper punishments for, and cautions against, as well as necessary consequences of, idleness and extravagance?”

Some still have common sense. Grant Hill, a member of the Canadian Parliament and a medical doctor, says, “Using force is a responsible way to discipline children but it must not go beyond reasonable force... Spanking and disciplining in this manner has been part of parenting for centuries. I do not believe that the social engineers and interfering law-makers of today know better than the generations of parents who reared their children using spanking.”

We can see the results of our namby-pamby approach to wrongdoing in escalating crime, violence in schools and deteriorating families.

But, for the most part, we have lost sight of what’s right and wrong. “As a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canada is obligated to make periodic appearances before the U.N.’s Committee on Rights of the Child, which said the country should ‘adopt legislation to remove the existing authorization of the use of “reasonable force” in disciplining children,’” the *National Post* reported (Oct. 9, 2003, WorldNetDaily.com).

We can see the results of our namby-pamby approach to wrongdoing in escalating crime, violence in schools and deteriorating families.

Biblical tough love, however, is based on eternal truth. Anything less than tough love won't get the job done. After all, Jesus was God. Can we do any less than Jesus Christ when it comes to tough love? He knew His plan would take a great deal of love and a great deal of getting tough. I think we need to appreciate the exquisite balance of God's mercy, love and justice in His dealings with each and every one of us. Yet in the end He promises us, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7). God speed that day!

If you would like to learn more about God's approach to parenting both for our children and ourselves, please contact our website at www.ucg.org to request free literature or the *Good News* magazine.

True Hospitality

By Robert Berendt

Hospitality seems to be a lost art in our modern times, but we must learn to offer something of ourselves to others. Not everyone shows hospitality in the same way, but we must learn to share as God has shared with us.



SEVERAL SCRIPTURES FROM GOD'S WORD, the Bible, show us God expects the characteristic of hospitality to be part of the heart of His children. We read in 1 Peter 4:9 that we are to "be hospitable to one another without grumbling." Titus 1:8 and 1 Timothy 3:2 list hospitality as part of the work and function of a minister. In Romans 12:13 Paul wrote we are to be "distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality."

Paul also wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." And in verse 12: "We command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread."

Clearly we can see the concept of hospitality has two sides: *offering it and receiving it*. Hospitality is defined as “being kind to strangers, and being welcoming and generous toward guests.” A responsibility also lies with any guest not to take advantage of the hospitality that is offered.

Proverbs 23:1-2 admonishes a guest to “put a knife to your throat” when dining as a guest. Do not overeat and thus abuse the hospitality. Luke 14:10 cites Jesus’ words when He said: “When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’” Thus, we see that a guest has a strong responsibility to use the gift carefully—always allowing the host to set the pace.

Helping those in need

When I was a boy, many family members as well as strangers were in need of help. This was right after the war and people were fleeing war-torn Europe and striving to get a fresh start. Our home welcomed family members who had only the pack they could carry. I recall three families who stayed with us. All three found jobs right away and as soon as they could, they found their own place to live.

The hospitality of my parents placed a heavy load on the family finances, but it was never regretted because of the wonderful attitudes of those we were able to help. I recall young men who also came and could hardly speak the language. My father would help them find work and feed them until they were settled. This help was never abused. A godly person cannot simply walk past someone who has an obvious need. James 2:16 tells us that.



Other sides to the story of hospitality abound as well. I recall a day many years ago when my wife and I served in the ministry in Europe. We were given several churches to serve and early in our visits we were strongly urged by one particular family to visit and stay overnight with them. The meal they served was sumptuous and the bed we slept in was very comfortable. Only the next day did I realize the parents had bedded down on the living room floor and given us their bed. The meal was one that was never served when guests were not there—and their children could only eat what was left.

When no guests were present, the food was meager and the cupboards bare. I learned much later the children resented this “visit” from the clergy and the whole family suffered. We determined to stay in a hotel if at all possible after that time. We were not in need or desperate, so this kind of hospitality may have come from the heart, but was wrongly directed and executed. The motive for this sort of deed was wrong. True hospitality comes from the heart and is not the same for every person.

In my case, I grew up in a very close family of eight, and family was important. When a need was obvious, it was filled. Furthermore, my parents and their siblings were refugees in the past and their need had been filled by others. The motivation to help was correct and from the heart. Nevertheless,

Clearly, we see the concept of hospitality had two sides: offering it and receiving it.

anyone who abused the help would not have been very welcome.

In Jesus' day, welcoming strangers into a home was common practice. Yet, the Bible tells us there is a time when this is not to be done. In 2 John 7, 10-11 it speaks strongly against welcoming a false teacher into your home. Churches were beginning to drift from the truth that Jesus Christ taught. Hospitality was being abused. We are expected by God to use our minds and not to foolishly extend a hand to those who would abuse our gift.

Lessons from Martha

God inspired a wonderful story to be included in the Bible. Luke 10:38-42 gives us a short story about Jesus' stay at the home of Mary and Martha. It was not only Jesus who would stay. He was accompanied on His travels by the disciples and some women. They would have bedded down in the garden, on the roof and other places, and Martha felt the need to serve this group.

True hospitality comes from the heart and is not the same for every person.

Needless to say it was a huge task and she was in "perpetual motion" trying to get everything done. Finally, out of frustration Martha approached Jesus and said: "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" (verse 40). Martha had grown frustrated—perhaps exhausted by the huge task before her—and she saw that her sister simply sat and listened. It was too much for Martha, but it was also in her mind that certain things needed to be done. Those offering to host others sometimes work themselves into a lather trying to put out the very best they have. The end result is they determine never to be a host again.

Jesus would never have abused the hospitality offered. In fact, He was a very close family friend. The entire group had the responsibility to know many hands make the work easy, and after Jesus' talk, in all likelihood all would have pitched in to help. Martha learned certain lessons and we too can learn from this story.

Hospitality begins in the heart

Not everyone is able to show hospitality in exactly the same way. Sometimes past experiences or present needs prevent a person from doing what needs to be done. In that case there may be another way, or another person might be able to do the task. People do have differing gifts and abilities. *In the heart is where the concept of hospitality must reside.* This is then reflected in the words and deeds of each person.

A beautiful story about one who had the right heart, but not the means, is found in 1 Kings 17:8-16. God sent His servant Elijah to a woman who had nothing. In verses 10 and 11 we can see what she could give, she did. It was only a cup of water. But, because her attitude was so good, God made it possible for her to feed Elijah as well as herself and her son. Her heart was right in this matter and God made it possible for her to act.

Not everyone is able to show hospitality in exactly the same way. People do have differing gifts and abilities.

It makes me wonder sometimes how my father, who had six mouths to feed on a coal miner's salary, could also support and feed so many more who had need. The small amount we had was always just enough.

To conclude, it is clear we must all have hospitality in our hearts. We need to understand what hospitality means. The Bible indicates that we ought to use judgment and discernment in our actions and make sure our hearts are not hardened. And when we have the means and the opportunities to do so, we will be blessed indeed if we extend loving hospitality.

Visit our Web site at www.ucg.org. You can request free literature or the *Good News Magazine*, both of which provide excellent resources for you and your family.

Rise Above Peer Pressure

By Jerold Aust

Finding true friends and dealing with unwanted pressures are challenges at any age. Where can teens turn for help?



TODAY'S TEENAGERS live in a far more complex and demanding society than what a lot of us older adults have experienced. My generation generally did not face pressure to use drugs, but today a dizzying array of drugs can be found in and around every high school. (Admittedly, alcohol was misused by teens in previous generations, just as it is today.) In the 1950s it was a rare thing to watch TV, and drive-in theaters were the place to be. Personal computers, HBO and R-rated movies did not exist. Life was simpler and less demanding.

In other ways, though, teens today are like teens of past generations. Let's focus on this *common link: a desire to be accepted by those your own age*. This is normal for people of all age groups, but it's especially important when you are young.

Incidentally, adults reading this know how you feel. We also went through this experience. Teens, let me offer a personal note to parents at this point: Studies show that parents still exert the biggest influence on their children's lives when it comes to morals and future goals. We dare not let them down. In the meantime, for you young people, there are peer groups to reckon with.

Years past, I often heard this sincere request in a variety of ways: "I don't understand myself, the way I give in to something other kids are doing. I know it isn't good, but I have trouble resisting. What can I do to help me and my friends?" If you have this question, there are steps you can follow to help improve your life in and out of your peer group.



Let's face it. Never in modern history have teens had to face such incredible peer pressure, made far worse by both electronic and print media. The media broadcasts terrible acts of violence, sex and profanity, and some few young people, looking for their day in the sun, pick up on those images and attempt to recreate them. It is a difficult age for the entire family, but even more so for you teens. Let me offer a strategy I have offered to teens over the years. It helped others. It might help you.

Group influence

A difficult thing for young people (and older people too) is to spend time with a group of friends, and suddenly find the group going downhill morally. What can be done in this situation, if anything? Maybe this strategy can help you.

First, be careful about following a crowd whose collective thinking begins to deteriorate. Often groups can get off-track because they act more on emotion than sound reasoning. When a group member assumes dominance among his (or her) peers, most people in the group will follow his influence, right or wrong. Before you know it, he has some of the weaker group members agreeing with him. This can result in what is called "groupthink."

Groupthink can go wrong very quickly. A self-appointed leader will often suggest something daring and risky in order to elevate himself in the eyes of the group, such as taking drugs, performing some act of violence, vandalizing or engaging in a sex act.

Notice carefully: *The leader will seldom risk himself, but will try to push others in the group to take the biggest risks.* If you see the signs of this in your peer group, it is time for you to leave. Knowledge is power. Knowing these signs can help you withdraw from a wrong group activity before it gets a full head of steam.



When you see this kind of thing building, quietly remove yourself. Suddenly you remember you have something to do somewhere else. This is a true statement, since you have better things to do with your time in some other location.

If you can leave without saying anything—better yet. Unless you happen to be very persuasive and understand the basics of social psychology, it probably will not help to try to stem the tide of a large group. Occasions exist when a teen can do this, but it is tricky and risky. The better part of wisdom is to step aside quietly and disappear from the group. The Bible tells us bad company can corrupt good character (1 Corinthians 15:33).

What is a true friend?

What is your definition of a true friend? If your friends lead you into breaking the law and doing harm to others, they are not good friends. A true friend cares about your welfare. A true friend will not lead you astray. A true friend will communicate with you in a way that upholds your standards. A true friend will protect your reputation when you are not around to defend yourself. A true friend respects you and your beliefs. *Does this describe your friends?*

The Bible speaks of choosing friends carefully: “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul [life]” (Proverbs 22:24-25).

A true friend cares about your welfare... will not lead you astray...

Commandments.

Jesus Christ chose His friends carefully—they were the ones who kept His commandments (John 15:14). God’s commandments are designed to protect everyone. This is the best place to start when choosing your friends. *Search for friends who respect the morals found in the Bible, based on the Ten*

Remember the definition of a true friend, and be careful not to assign the word *friend* to just anybody who comes along. Apply critical thinking when selecting your friends. Obviously, we cannot be too picky or we might wind up with no friends, but do look for good character in your friends.

The value of good character

Good character should be at the top of your list when choosing a true friend.

The Bible says we should choose to have a good reputation above great riches (Proverbs 22:1). We live in a world that is turning more and more to moral relativism. Moral relativism is an attitude that says, “I’m OK, and you’re OK, no matter what we think and do, as long as it does not harm the other person.”

Do not be fooled. Everything we think and do affects others, directly or indirectly. For example, if you watch TV violence or sex, this will become a part of your thinking and will weaken your resolve. On the other hand, if you read or watch positive things, it will be easier to remain strong when your peer group goes wrong.

A self-appointed leader will often suggest something that's risky in order to elevate himself...

Do not be deceived by someone who tries to convince you morals are a relative thing. Follow God's advice from the Bible when it comes to the value of good character.

Since we interact so closely with our friends, they will have a strong influence on our lives. It makes good sense to pick our friends carefully. Remember, they will help to shape the rest of your life.

What is good character? The word *good* comes from the word *God*. So, good character stems from God who is our truest friend. This same God is our creator, the One who made us. He gave us a manual to read and follow, one that always tells us the truth about any situation in life, showing us the best way to live our lives. The Bible is filled with advice on developing good character, and how to spot good character in others.

The best advice I can give you is to begin reading the Bible on the subject of good character. This is one of the greatest values of life. Learn it now and it will protect you through your teen years, and enrich your adult life. What you do today lays the groundwork for tomorrow. Do not treat this advice lightly if you want the best life has to offer.

Let God be your guide

I have talked a lot about God in this article as the source for choosing good and true friends. Without God, you and I would have nothing worthwhile, and that includes good friends. No, you are not going to find a good friend in every school hall or on every corner of your block. But you can become a good friend to others and set a good example for other teens to follow. Isn't this alone worth your efforts?

If you will do the right things, think the right thoughts, others will gravitate to you. Why? *Because you will be different and they will want to know what you have that they don't have.* Now, you should not flaunt your good character before others. Let it speak for itself, quietly, by example, and by offering good advice when the time is right. Who knows, you might even become the leader of your peer group. This has been known to happen.

Place a high priority on good character—value it more than anything else—and it will pay off for you, big time.

This is real. *Wrong peer pressure can harm you.* You know that. Remember to choose friends who have good morals and ethics. Let them become your peer group. Place a high priority on good character—value it more than anything else—and it will pay off for you, big time.

Finally, let God be your guide in all that you think and do. He made you. He knows what works best for you, for all of us. These are some of the basic strategies I have shared with other teens. They work. Begin today to rise above wrong peer pressure. You can do it!

Recommended reading

The Bible contains many fundamental principles about how to have a rewarding, satisfying and—yes—happy life. It is packed with advice about friends, family, finances, health, success and much more. We have gathered some of its best advice into a free booklet, [Making Life Work](#). You can order a copy or download it from our Web site.

Letters to the Editor

[Rejoice in Life!](#)



“[Rejoice in Life](#)” is one of the most encouraging articles I have ever read. What a brave and noble woman; she faced her moment in time with great courage. She knew and lived the scripture, “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

— Kay Barnett

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity