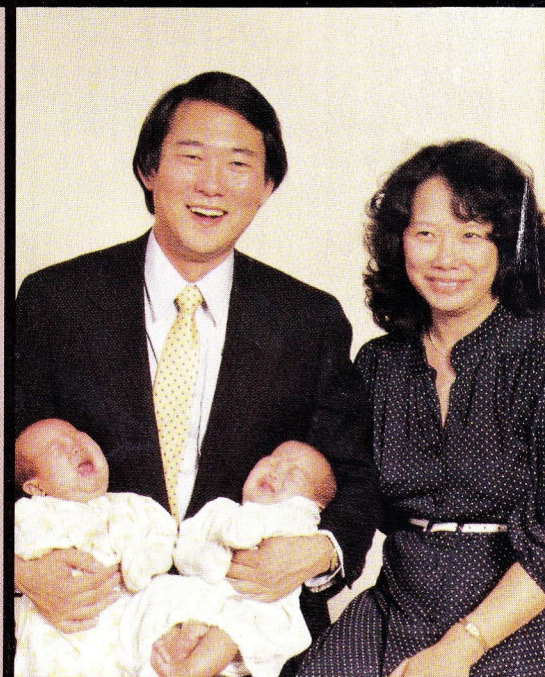


**Parents
Are
People
Too!**



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Parents Are People Too!

Parents would probably be the first to admit that they're human. Since they're not perfect, how should sons and daughters respond to them?

“They don't really love me—they're always getting on my back!”

At times it seems Mom and Dad can be unreasonable. Dad blows his stack or Mom becomes touchy over a seemingly minor mistake.

Aren't parents supposed to be kind, loving, tolerant and in control? True, parents should be consistent and loving, but they don't always act as they would like to. Sometimes they get tired and cranky.

Being a teenager isn't easy, either. The hormones are pushing the body through great changes and more and more pressures are placed on today's teens. It's easy to get upset, perhaps moody and touchy.

This combination of weary parents and growing teenagers can be explosive, leading to arguments that neither parents nor teens really want.

God commands us to honor our parents (Ex. 20:12). It may not always be easy, however, so let's take a look at some points that will help you minimize conflicts and develop a good relationship with Mom and Dad.

To do this we need to see what motivates parents—what makes them tick.

1. Remember—parents really care about their children. Parents want to see their children do well, be happy and have a better life than they have had. They want to see them avoid unpleasant experiences.

Sometimes parents want their children to succeed so much that they overreact to mistakes. It may not seem like it at the time, but the real motivation behind this is love for you.

2. Remember—parents need to know their children love them. Parents need to hear their children say “I love you” or to be given a big hug or a surprise—just to let them know that they are appreciated.

Think of all the things you have to appreciate them for: taking care of you when you were a totally helpless baby, feeding and housing you, buying you clothes, giving you toys, taking care of you when you were sick—the list is a long one.

3. Remember—parents have to battle with their human nature. Parents are not perfect. They make mistakes. They can let down the

standards they teach you. But it doesn't help anything if you follow or complain about a bad example. Why not concentrate on the good things parents do? You might be able to encourage them to win their battles!

4. Remember—parents relax when there is cooperation and communication. When the whole family works in harmony, obeying the family rules, with everyone pitching in to help around the house, life becomes smooth and happy.

Communication is important too. Parents want to hear about what's happening in the lives of their children. They want to talk about the things that are important to them.

5. Remember—parents are loyal to their children and deserve loyalty in return. If someone tries to hurt their child, parents are protective. When their child succeeds in school or sports, parents are proud.

Do you stand up for your parents? Do you take the right kind of pride in your parents' accomplishments?

6. Remember—parents want to have fun, too. They want to laugh and have a good time. So why not do things together? Parents really love to be with their most loved people—their children. So talk and joke with them, play games, go places, have picnics—do things together.

Above all, remember—parents are people too! They are the people who care more about you and your success and happiness throughout your life than any other people on earth.

Above all, remember—parents are people too! They are the people who care more about you and your success and happiness throughout your life than any other people on earth.

Appreciate them. □

Remember when you were young and you skinned your knee? Who comforted you and made it feel better?

What about your first attempt at baking something all by yourself? Who helped to clean up the mess and didn't seem to notice that what you had baked didn't taste exactly right?

Just last week, when you only had five minutes to be ready and your favorite blouse needed to be ironed, who did it for you?

It may seem like your mother has always been there doing things for you. Have you ever stopped and thought about how well you know your mother as a person? How can you build upon the natural closeness that you and your mother share?

Talking it over

One vital area in building a strong bond with your mother is simply talking—spending time together one-to-one. Maybe your relationship with your mother has been strained lately and you can't seem to talk to her anymore.

Do you remember coming home from school when you were younger and telling your mother everything that happened that day? Why not try it now? Though it may seem small, discussing the day's activities can lay a foundation for communicating other feelings.

When communicating with anyone, it is important that each of you know "where the other person is coming from." Make yourself clear, make sure you are being understood correctly and try to see the other person's point of view.

At times you may find it difficult to express how you feel. I remember on more than one occasion having a hard time saying what I wanted to say. Fortunately, my mom was patient with me. She filled in with the words I couldn't seem to put together and understood completely.

In talking things over with your mother, you may be surprised to find that she understands some of the pains and frustrations you are

My Mom Is a Real Person

experiencing. She remembers the things that were important to her when she was a teen and can relate to what you are going through.

The most important key is to be a good listener. Remember, a conversation is a two-way street. The whole purpose of talking with your mother is to draw closer to her and come to know her thoughts and her feelings.

There's so much to talk about, but it can be hard to break through the barrier if you're not accustomed to talking together. One barrier breaker is to plan things to do together. The planning will get you talking and pretty soon you'll wonder how you got onto all these other topics!

Things to do together

You can really add to that special kind of closeness with your mother by going places and doing things that you both enjoy. Maybe the rest of the family doesn't like Chinese food, but you and your mother love it. Make a point of going out for Chinese food together, or work together to make some for yourselves at home.

Visiting museums or other area attractions can be fun-filled for you and your mother. Perhaps there is an art or fashion show that you would both like to see.

Another activity it seems mothers and daughters everywhere enjoy is shopping. Mom can help you pick out clothes that fit well and are becoming to you. My mother and I have spent countless hours shopping together. Usually we make a whole day of it and include stopping for lunch at a restaurant

that we haven't been to before.

Certainly the one-to-one time spent with your mother doesn't have to be planned minute by minute. Leisure, unplanned and unorganized time often yields the best memories.

Learning from Mom

How many things would you guess your mother has taught you since you were born?

She has taught you to walk, to talk, to feed yourself, to tie your shoes, perhaps to ride a bike—the list is endless. The potential for things you can yet learn is immense.

More than likely, your mother is a good cook and homemaker. Why not ask your mother one evening if you can help her cook dinner? You will not only please your mom by helping her, but you will be learning at the same time.

By helping my mom harvest and preserve fruits and vegetables, I learned a great deal about gardening, canning and freezing. I also learned how to economize while at the same time providing nutritious food for the family year-round.

If there is a hobby you are interested in or special skill you would like to develop—sewing, knitting or perhaps needlepoint—seek your mother's help in pursuing your interests.

Soon you will discover that Mom is not just someone that has always been there to do things for you, but someone you share a special bond with. Let her know how you feel and that she is appreciated. The bond you are building now will last a lifetime. □

Confessions of a Busy Teenager

There's an old saying, "Before you judge a person, walk a few miles in his or her shoes."

In other words, before finding fault with others' actions or deeds, we need to stop and ask, "How would I measure up under the same circumstances?"

Have you ever taken time to think about what it will be like when you are old enough to marry and become a parent?

Sometimes we live such jam-packed lives when we are teens that we forget to take time to reflect on the many things we have to be thankful for. It's good once in a while to walk in the shoes of those people who provide for us and greatly influence our teen years.

What if you had your parents' responsibilities? What if you had to be *your* parent? Would you work as hard for and give as unselfishly to someone like you?

One of our staff members took some time to reflect about parents and sent me a copy of a letter that I would like to share with you.

Dear Dad,

Every year I buy you a Father's Day card, and maybe I scribble a couple of lines. But it seems I don't take the time to get across what I really want to say.

Dad, I know you haven't had an easy life. You've always worked hard and have had to face the trials of being laid off and of then being self-employed in a depressed econ-

omy. I really appreciated your taking me along to work with you, and your paying me more than I was worth.

I remember that first painting job you took me on. I worked day after day scraping and painting that short section of rusted iron fence, while you painted the whole house!

I remember your example of hard work. When we would get home, all I would feel like doing was eating or resting, but you would always take time to clean and take care of the equipment.

But, even more, I remember one time after you had helped me get my own summer painting business started. I was given a job to paint the inside of an apartment so it could be rented right away. I knew it was a big job, but as it got later and I got more tired, I realized I wouldn't be able to get it done. I got more and more frustrated, just wanting to give up and quit.

You don't know how much of a relief it was when you showed up and offered to help me finish. You'd already worked a hard day, and it was late. But still you found out where I was and came to my rescue. It meant a lot!

I don't think you know how important all the things we did together were to me: the hikes, fishing, the ball games we played, taking me to practices and even coming to my orchestra concerts.

You somehow survived my attempts to learn how to drive. "Don't go any faster than you can handle." "I won't." "You're going

too fast!" "I'm only doing half the speed limit!" "But that's faster than you're ready for!" (And you were right!)

You may not have known how many times I used your authority to get out of something my friends were trying to get me into: "My dad wouldn't let me do that." My friends probably thought you were really old-fashioned, but it kept me out of a lot of trouble.

A lot of my friends didn't have dads—at least not around where they could talk to them, learn from them, enjoy them. But, you might say I took you for granted. You were always there.

Your moderation set a good standard for me. I'm glad you didn't smoke—it never seemed intriguing to me.

I'm not trying to kid you—I didn't turn out perfect. But you made me want to do well so you'd be proud of me. Like I'm proud of you.

Dad, I'm beginning to see how much you gave up to be my dad. It took a lot of things like patience and selflessness—things I know I need to have more of before I ever become a parent.

When I pray (as you taught me the importance of doing), I thank my Father in heaven for giving me a dad like you!

Love,

Your child,

P.S. I love you too, Mom, more than words can express.

How about right now getting a piece of paper and pen and writing your dad or mom a note of appreciation? You do have a lot to be thankful for, don't you? I know I do.

By the way... when was the last time you gave your dad and mom a big hug and said, "I love you"?

I know you may surprise them, but believe me I know they both continue to have this need. Don't ever be reluctant to show love and appreciation to those who have given you so much in your teen years.

Remember, someday you will want your teens to do the same to you. □

UNWED, single parents, communal relationships, couples who choose other so-called alternative lifestyles—all are defined as families today.

Families aren't dying, we're told, they're just changing to survive.

In the United States, for example, recent government reports show the stereotyped traditional family, composed of a wage-earning father and a stay-at-home mother with children, belongs to an exclusive club of only 13 percent (other reports say 7 percent) of American households.

The accelerated change of the family structure in just one generation is alarming to those who are openminded enough to see the effects on the children involved.

And, more often than not, even the beleaguered, dwindling, two-parent families of today are not meeting the needs of their children. When both parents are more bent on acquiring material things than spending time with their families, their offspring are just as ignored and lonely as those of an overworked single parent.

What happened to old-fashioned parents who thought good parenting was one of the primary responsibilities of life? Have they all been relegated in two generations to a couple of television series, children's books and the memories of grandparents?

Loving, affectionate parents who wanted success for their children, but weren't domineering—who believed in education and quietly set high standards for their offspring? Are their like gone forever?

No, fortunately. There have always been those sure of their own moral and ethical standards. So sure that they could stand fast in a so-called enlightened age of child rearing, and continue to protect their children, stressing self-discipline, following and teaching biblical guidelines. Old-fashioned? Maybe.

But, ironically, social and psychological data now point up that such patterns of child rearing create a more confident, innovative

Whatever Happened to Old Fashioned Parents?

Why do so many, it seems, no longer consider good parenting as one of the primary responsibilities of life?

child, better prepared to go out and explore life on his or her own. The experts are finally beginning to understand what good parents knew all along.

Why aren't there more of these old-fashioned parents. Too many of today's parents are self-centered. They have no commitment to anything greater than themselves.

Happily some dare to practice what is termed "old-fashioned" parenting no matter what the current thought of their contemporaries. And some believe, out of the mishmash of modern, social change, the old-fashioned family will make a comeback. Significant numbers of young people today are yearning for close relationships of a more permanent nature than they've experienced in their own families. These young people are not taking becoming a parent so lightly as their parents did. To those young people this article is dedicated.

It's written by one reared by old-fashioned parents to encourage any of you who may one day dare to challenge the system and, against overwhelming odds, become the next generation's old-fashioned parents.

I had old-fashioned parents.

Wed as teenagers, they had to be separated temporarily during the war years, suffered together through loss of work and thus income at times, and never acquired great material wealth. Yet their marriage survived and their relationship matured and was strengthened through it all.

As children we weren't pressured toward success at any cost, and certainly not at other's expense. My parents quietly expected we would be successful in whatever worthy ventures we might choose. Good books were always available, but not forced on us. Cheap, sensational or vulgar material was not allowed. Our lives were filled with art, music and voice lessons, Scouts, school band, family activities and sports.

Emotional maturity, courage, honesty, thrift, love for God and country were insisted upon. Those who did not value these same principles were not to be emulated, no matter their status economically, politically or socially.

Though reared in a geographic environment of ethnic and religious bigotry, we were taught to abhor prejudice against our fellowman.

My parents had time for us.



Significant numbers of young people today are yearning for close relationships of a more permanent nature than they've experienced in their own families. These young people are not taking becoming a parent so lightly as their parents did.

Time to teach how to cook and sew, how to catch and throw a baseball, how to play a series of parlor games, how to drive a car and shoot a gun.

There was time to encourage whatever new interest might de-

velop, time to get involved in school activities, time to personally acquaint us with God.

Discipline wasn't a dirty word. But abuse was. If my parents didn't always fairly mete our correction, they were so merciful in so

of mankind, we must.

The Creator God does not take the responsibilities of child rearing and the maintaining of strong family ties lightly. After all, he created this oldest of social institutions—the FAMILY. □

many instances, we couldn't honestly complain. We didn't fear our parents—we feared to disobey them.

Father and mother had us convinced that any child of theirs must be rather special. After all we were certainly special to them. Home was a haven of love and protection against the sometimes cruel world. Old-fashioned parents made it that way.

We moved as a unit, worked together, played together and prayed together, trite as this may seem to many. We were solidly acquainted with grandparents on both sides of the family, and uncles and aunts and cousins. From this stable nurturing core we adventured without fear into life, fully confident of our support system—fashioned by our parents.

Our parents had no college or university-level training in child psychology. They had only their own experience and backgrounds to draw from. Their only guidebook was the Bible.

If there is a backlash development against the moral and ethical downslide so prevalent in our Western world, all of us, no matter what generation, should support every fledgling attempt toward that goal. For the sake of the future well-being

“My Parents Just Don’t Understand!”

Here is the story of someone who faced—and solved—this dilemma.

Did the Bible’s greatest hero, Jesus Christ, ever have difficulty with his own human parents? If he did, then what example did he set?

Joseph and Mary—Jesus’ parents—did indeed have problems understanding their gifted son. They knew he was going to be different because of the angelic prophecies concerning his birth. Luke 2 tells us how they marveled at what was said about him (verses 17-19, 33).

But, his family life would have been essentially normal—except for the difficult questions Jesus was probably putting to his parents—questions that they could not answer.

Ahead of His time

The Bible records a visit Jesus and his parents made to Jerusalem when he was 12.

During this visit Jesus was at the Temple in Jerusalem and became engaged in an absorbing question-and-answer session with the religious leaders. His growing thirst for knowledge was beyond their ability to comprehend. We read that they were “astonished at his understanding and answers” (verse 47).

Though only 12, Jesus was already responsible enough to be trusted to take care of himself and to follow instructions without having to be checked up on. This is evident in the example of his parents leaving Jerusalem and going a whole day’s journey before they were even aware that he was not with friends or relatives. They expected that he would have been.

They had not seen him all day in the trek out of Jerusalem back to Nazareth. When supper time came, they expected him to be where all healthy, growing 12-year-old boys would normally be—where the food is! But he was not. He was missing.

Now they were alarmed and began to retrace their steps. As they traveled, doubts, tensions, worries, concerns and anxiety must have begun to build up in what would burst out in frustration when they found him.

It was three days before they discovered where he was. We can imagine that Jesus spent perhaps two nights sleeping somewhere in Jerusalem. The Bible doesn’t say where. It seems his parents did not go straight to the Temple. It

would be logical to think he would be back at their last lodgings, playgrounds or even the police.

Eventually they went to the Temple. And there he was.

Did Jesus now get a stiff talking-to—a good telling off? Yes. Mary did reprimand him about what he had put them through in concern and worry. Was Jesus’ response—“Sorry, Mom”? It isn’t recorded as such. His response was rather: “‘Did you not know [here are parents failing to understand their son!] that I must be about My Father’s business?’” His parents, of course, could not comprehend, but his mother “kept all these things in her heart” (verses 50-51). Perhaps to Mary this was another unexplainable event in the life of her incredibly gifted son.

Jesus, at 12, was already conscious of his life goal—his mission in life. He was ahead of his time.

Subject to His parents

Notice Jesus’ reaction and response to Mary’s chiding and scolding. He became subject to his parents and obediently went home. Even though aware of his life mission at age 12, he still stayed with his parents and patiently waited 18 more years until events were ready for his role as our Savior.

While he was under his parents’

Jesus’ parents did indeed have problems understanding their gifted son. They knew he was going to be different because of the angelic prophecies concerning his birth.

authority at home, did it stifle him? Did it hold back his development? Did his parents’ lack of understanding inhibit him? No. Just the reverse. He increased in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and mankind (verse 52).

Honoring one’s parents shows an attitude and willingness to honor your greater Parent in heaven. □

Your heart is pounding. You wait somewhat nervously as your mother walks up the driveway with someone you still consider a stranger, although you have seen him many times.

The door opens and here you stand, face to face with the one who is now going to be a regular member of your household.

Who is he? He's your stepfather.

Because of the death or divorce of a natural parent, your mother or father has remarried, and you now face the uncertainty of getting to know a stranger in your home. What is your life going to be like now? Many young people today face this question.

This new parent isn't entirely a stranger to you. You possibly were able to get acquainted while your parent was dating your new stepparent. However, you probably didn't have a great deal of time to really get to know him or her.

How do you get along with a stepparent? In children's stories, stepparents aren't generally regarded very highly. Sometimes they are described as being really nasty and mean. Are all stepparents this way?

Certainly not. Some of our readers know they are not and do enjoy a good relationship. Others, however, may find difficulties at times with a stepparent. Most children and teens are going to have difficulties occasionally with their natural parents! So it shouldn't be a surprise that this new relationship may provide a challenge.

In many Western nations it is becoming increasingly common to have a stepparent. For instance, in the United States, there are an estimated 40 million stepparents. That's a lot of families!

The conditions before your parent's remarriage were no doubt traumatic. The family unit you once had was shattered, and as a young person, you found yourself more dependent on your single parent. You needed the warmth, security, attention and love of this parent.

But as your parent begins to date

Getting to Know the Stranger in Your Family

Dealing with a parent isn't always easy. But what if you now have a stepparent?



Adopting a Parent

“What right do you have to tell me what to do? You're not my real father anyway!” I said, as I ran into the bedroom and slammed the door behind me.

My mother's divorce was very confusing to me, but her remarriage affected me far more than I wanted to admit to myself.

As far as I was concerned, he was my mother's husband and nothing more. Never would I allow him to take the place of my natural father. No sir, he would never be my dad!

Well, it didn't take me long to figure out that I couldn't live like that. But what was I to do? There I

was, a confused little boy with two fathers. One who never seemed to have time for me, and one I really didn't want—or did I?

It's not so easy to just accept anyone as your parent. Especially someone you don't even know that well. Adapting to a new parent can be difficult. It's no wonder so many have a hard time.

If you're having problems with a stepparent, or a natural parent, or both, here are four steps I've learned that can help.

1. Learning to communicate is the first step and sometimes the hardest. Many times lack of communication causes

problems and misunderstandings. If you're having problems with your stepparent, communication can be the main key in solving them. Bring your problems to your stepparent and discuss them respectfully. Remember that arguing is not communicating.

2. Put the past aside. Holding a grudge won't get you anywhere. Everyone makes mistakes. Don't concentrate on past mistakes, but rather on how to solve ongoing problems.

3. Pray about it. I remember when I was having problems with my stepfather, I needed all the help I could get. When I prayed about my situation, I

got that help. Things worked out better for me.

4. Don't give up. Sometimes things don't change as quickly as we want them to, but, if you want to speed up the process, here's a hint. Meet your parent halfway. When he or she sees you putting forth effort, it will encourage him or her to do the same.

You have a choice: You can work to solve your problems, or you can add to them. A friend of mine added to his. He is now out of a home, out of money, but most of all, out of a mother and father.

So whether you have one, two, or even three parents; if they're stepparents or natural, work for a better relationship with them. Don't settle for less.

Editor's note: The author is 16 years old.

and show an interest in another person, you may feel threatened, even rejected. This other person may not be quite what you had in mind as an addition to your family.

But what can you do to enjoy a better relationship with your stepparent? Here are some tips.

Become better acquainted.

After all, the stepparent is a stranger coming into the family and it will take time and cooperation for everyone to get to know each other better.

What is it about this person that caused your parent to love him or her? You are going to be spending a lot of time together in the future, so get to know each other. You can really grow to love this person.

Accept your stepparent.

This person is going to be a major influence in your life, and even though you are not a direct physical descendant, you are now a part of the same family.

Family togetherness is vital for our happiness and security. Your stepparent can be a sympathetic, understanding parent and counselor. Becoming better acquainted is necessary for this acceptance.

We often fear and reject the unknown, so coming to know a person well increases our acceptance.

Rather than making life difficult for each other through rejection or hesitancy, do what you can to develop a close and loving companionship with both of your parents.

Because of the death or divorce of a natural parent, your mother or father has remarried, and you now face the uncertainty of getting to know a stranger in your home. What is your life going to be like now?

Avoid making comparisons.

No two people are alike, and in a family situation like this, it is easy to make comparisons with a divorced or deceased parent. Respect each parent for the way he or she is, and benefit from the unique attributes of this person.

Become friends.

It is good that we develop a

friendship with our parents, and we can do that and still maintain respect for them. But to make friends, we need to be friendly ourselves.

A real friend can be of immense benefit, and a good friend can even do more than someone who

is a blood relative (Prov. 18:24).

Every experience in life can be a growth experience for us if we allow it to be so. Family life will provide us with a stable foundation for the rest of our lives.

Even if our lives have been rocked by family tragedy, and a new family unit has been established, it too can be a secure and happy haven for us in an ever-changing society. □

“Dad, what’s this picture of?” I asked as I handed over a small black-and-white snapshot.

“Oh, that’s the first American military cemetery dug in France during World War II. I helped dig that with a bulldozer a few days after D-Day in June, 1944.”

He did? I’d never heard about that before, I thought, as I placed the wrinkled old photo back in the shoe box that contained dozens of old family pictures. Since boyhood, I had looked at that picture many times and had not known what it was. I had not asked.

That night, as my dad and I talked into the late hours, I learned more about his experiences in the war.

He also reflected on the 23 years he spent owning a small business, and the people he came to know during that time. He talked of his business decisions, some good, some bad.

He talked about friendships that outlasted the business and are still strong today. He talked and I listened. Slowly the mental image I had of my father came into sharper focus.

After all those years, I was learning things about him that I had not known. I went to bed that evening with a new appreciation and respect for my father.

Discovering Your Parents

How well do you really know your parents? Are there experiences from their lives that you don’t know about because you haven’t asked?

The time to begin talking and learning from your parents is now. Communication with your parents can be a tremendous source of wisdom and guidance. Listening to and learning from them can give you a solid

What I Never Knew About Dad

Going through the old photos, I began to wonder what else I didn’t know about Dad.

foundation to build a happy and successful future.

King Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, shows the benefits of communicating well with one’s parents, learning from them and following their instructions. Notice what he repeatedly says in the early chapters as he lays a foundation for the rest of his teachings.

“My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my com-

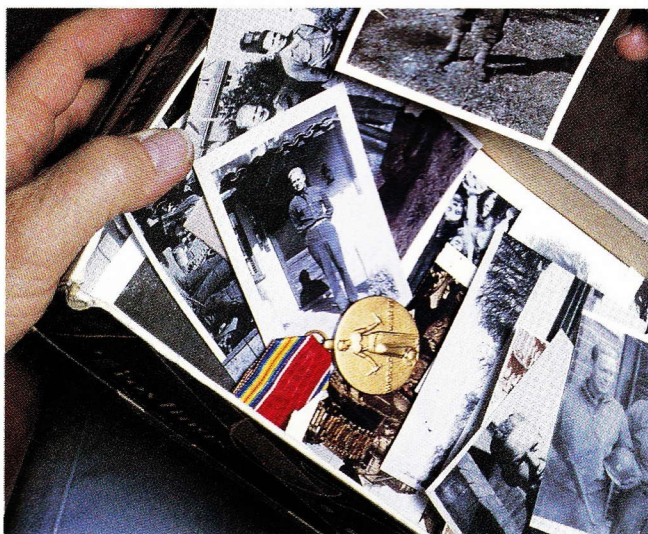
more benefits: favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man (verse 4), health (verse 8), plenty (verse 10), riches and honor (verse 16).

Solomon wrote these words from a wealth of personal experience. His own father, King David, had said the same. As David lay dying, he summoned the heir apparent to his bedside for some final instruction. After years of preparation, Solomon was about to inherit the throne of Israel.

His father admonished him to “keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn” (I Kings 2:3).

When he was young, Solomon followed his father’s advice and began the most prosperous reign in Israel’s history. For 40 years Israel was at peace with neighboring nations and the people experienced the highest standard of living of the day. During his reign the country was able to support the building of the world’s most fabulous edifice—the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

Solomon also sought guidance from his spiritual father—God. God gave him the wisdom that



mands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you” (Prov. 3:1-2).

A Wealth of Benefits

Solomon goes on to point out many



made him a leader among world rulers. Kings, queens and other government leaders traveled to Jerusalem to hear his wise words (1 Kings 4:34).

While Solomon followed the advice of his father, David, he and his countrymen prospered and enjoyed the favor of God. That part of his reign is an example of the Commandment that tells us: "Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut. 5:16).

Knowing More Than Dad

Many of you reading this may feel your parents—especially Dads—can't relate to your friends and that they don't understand the things that are important to you. You're not the first ones to think that way.

Stop and consider that your parents have been through many of the same experiences as you while

growing up. They also had friendships that produced peer pressure. They too faced difficult decisions and suffered through embarrassing moments. The lessons they have learned by dealing with people can be a deep well of knowledge for you to draw from.

What about job experience? How did your father decide what kind of work he wanted to do for a living? What experience has your mother had? As you think about your choice of a career, the guidance and advice of your parents could save you a frustrating trip into a dead-end job that provides you little fulfillment.

Are you looking for that first job? Ask your parents what they did on their first jobs. How much did they earn? You'll probably find the pay scale to be quite a bit higher today.

Love and Marriage

How did your parents meet each other? When they married what did they expect from each other?

What have they learned from their years of marriage?

Your parents could provide some of the best marriage counseling available. Their advice can be tailored exactly to your needs. After all, who else better understands your character and personality than those who have raised you?

Sit down and talk to your parents. Find out about their high school days—what did they do on their first date? Don't be surprised if you find some of their feelings and embarrassing situations are similar to yours.

Before another year passes, decide you're going to get better acquainted with your parents while you have the opportunity. Before you leave home, seek their advice and counsel on the important things in your life. And before you make an unnecessary mistake, listen to their experience.

You, too, may discover some things you never knew about your parents! □

That summer I was working with my dad in the woods.

Dad operated a small trucking business, hauling timber “props” to coal mines. These wooden supports were used to hold up the underground roof after the coal was mined.

One of those hot summer days as we were cutting trees, one didn’t fall completely to the ground. It lodged in another tree and seemed to be solidly stuck.

While the other men were cutting trees nearby, I walked around under the lodged tree. Stupid? Yes, but I was not even a teenager yet, and it didn’t seem stupid to me then.

Without warning the tree suddenly came crashing down and the top limbs knocked me to the ground!

When I woke up, I saw my dad’s face hovering over me and heard him saying, “Son, son! Are you hurt?” He was holding me in his arms and I’m sure he thought I had been seriously hurt or even killed. Thankfully I only had the breath knocked out of me.

At that age, I suppose I just passed the incident off. But looking back over the years, I can now sense the love and concern he had for me and his probable feeling that it was more his fault for not watching me more closely. At that time, did I appreciate this love and concern—his willingness to work in a hard and dangerous occupation to provide for his family, including me? The answer—no! Not as much as I should have.

Another event that woke me up a bit happened when I was 16. Rather than providing timber to coal mines, my dad was operating a small coal mine himself. We had what you might call miniature train cars

“Please Don’t Let My Dad Be Dead!”

Two incidents really helped me appreciate Dad. The first time Dad thought I was dead. Later it was my turn to panic!



that went underground by rails to haul the coal out.

Now, this is also a dangerous occupation. You must think of underground water, gas explosions and the roof caving in at times as you mine the coal. I occasionally worked underground, but mainly I worked the top, pulling the coal cars out with an electric winch. We had an electric bell system to let me know when they were loaded and ready to be pulled to the top.

Fearful accident

It was another summer day. Earlier I had let the cars down into the mine, which ran hundreds of feet into the ground, and now I heard the signal to pull the loaded cars out. As I started them moving, the bell rang again. Now what? I wondered.

I let them back a few feet and the bell rang

Appreciate Them Now

I can still recall my cousin Julie's words: "Lesley, learn to appreciate your parents now. Do the best you possibly can to help the three of you get along, because you never know when they may not be around any longer. We all think it will never happen to our family, until it does."

Julie's mother, my aunt, had died not long before.

Later another situation reminded me of what Julie said. It was a sunny, bright summer morning, in the middle of July. Debbie called—that was nothing unusual, as we called each other often. But her voice

sounded different this time. I felt as if something was wrong.

"Can I come over so you can French braid my hair?" Debbie said. I often fixed Debbie's hair when she had somewhere important to go.

"Sure," I said. After I hung up the telephone, it rang again. This time Debbie's mother talked to my mother. I watched my mother's eyes grow wide with surprise.

Then she was telling Debbie's mother how sorry she was. After hanging up, my mother looked at me.

"Debbie's father died."

Soon after there was a quiet knock. Debbie was

standing on our front porch, her eyes red and full of tears, her hair sloppily put up in barrettes and her model-like posture replaced by a trembling slouch.

There just wasn't anything I could find to say to my friend. All I could do was reach out and just hold her. She cried on my shoulder and hung on so tightly like a frightened little girl, not like the mature, confident girl I knew. I began to cry too.

Debbie was concerned because she hadn't told her dad she loved him. I reassured her that her father must have known how she felt about him because of

the care I knew she had expressed for him throughout their life together. Debbie looked at me, as tender tears ran down her cheeks. Choking on her words, she said, "Lesley, I love you."

Debbie and I were close friends. Her relationship with her father was much closer.

Two people very dear to me have experienced the death of a parent. I can only hope I have learned from them to appreciate the blessings I do have, especially my parents, and all they have done for me. □

Editor's note: The author was 18 when she wrote this.

and rang again. Frustrated, I ran down into the mine a short distance, stopped and listened. Faintly I heard: "Help! Help!"

Quickly I grabbed a miner's cap and electric lamp and started down into that sloping, dark, wet hole. Several hundred feet down I found my uncle, also a mine worker, who had crawled a long distance from another part of the mine with a broken leg. He told me there had been a serious cave-in. Fear welled up in me! My dad was back in that blackness somewhere!

My uncle told me to go quickly for help as there might be several men hurt. Even though I wanted to go to my dad, I knew I could do little by myself. As I was running back out of the mine, rushing off in the car to another mine a few miles way, I was asking God, "Please don't let my dad be dead!"

Thankfully, he wasn't. With the help of the other men I found, we were able to go into the mine and bring everyone out. My dad was only shaken up, another man had some minor back injuries and my uncle's leg healed after receiving treatment.

Appreciation of parents

Because of my dad's narrow escape from death, I did learn to show more love and appreciation toward him for what he went through for his family—facing possible death daily. And I believe he understood this. But I still must ask myself this question later in life: Did I really express as much appreciation at age 16 as I could have? Again the answer must be no.

Most of you have a dad and mother. Some of you might only have one parent and some may have no parents because of a terrible tragedy. Whatever the situation, I hope you have someone you consider your parent.

My dad and mother have died in the past few years after a full life. Now I think back to the many other things they did for me—giving and actually sacrificing so that I might have the physical things and an education.

Before their deaths, I was able to express some of my appreciation and love, but, you know, now I wish I had done this more often over the years. For now it's too late.

What about you? There is a commandment in the Bible that tells us to honor our father and mother that our days may be long on the earth (Ex. 20:12). Relating this with other parts of the Bible, we find that we should be showing love, honor, respect and appreciation for what they do for us. We should be obeying them as they point out the right way.

So while you can, show that love—let them know and feel your appreciation. Most of your parents are making great sacrifices for you. No, they're not perfect, but most are trying to do their best for you.

Tell them, and mean it: "Dad, Mother, I love you. I appreciate you." Thank them for the big and little things they do for you. Think of the positive—don't dwell on the negative or the things you don't have.

Remember, all of us owe our lives to them.

I believe in a future after death, and I'm looking forward to saying to my dad and my mother when I see them again: "Thanks again for all you did for me as I was growing up. I love and appreciate you!" □

The thought of becoming a widow makes most women cringe!

A girl dreams of becoming a woman, then a wife and mother, then a grandmother. But a widow? Never!

Interestingly enough, in a society where women generally outlive men, no real thought is given to preparing for what more than 10 million women in the United States alone now live in—widowhood.

In a news article a majority of women complained that television, for example, doesn't adequately cover such topical issues as widowhood. Does this lack of information exist because the word *widow* in our minds is connected with death—and death is a subject we don't like to think about?

Widow has never been a desired word in any context. In a card game it is a hand or group of cards not dealt to any player. In printing it is a word or group of words constituting less than a full line, generally considered to be typographically undesirable.

Yet how quickly a woman can pass from wife to widow! With her husband's last breath, the transition is complete.

Momentous changes

"And what relation are you to the deceased?" the mortician inquires.

"His wife," the bereaved solemnly intones.

"His *widow*," he writes, and the former happy wife has to face the sad fact that her exciting and productive life as her husband's wife and sweetheart has ended. It is now one of seemingly unbearable grief. Her life has suddenly taken a major overthrow. It appears crushed—she feels as dead inwardly as her husband is physically.

Shock and deeper pain than she has ever known well inside her. The world looks so artificial. Concerns that loomed so large pale into insignificance.

Major changes are ahead. She becomes numb with emotional paralysis. She has become what she never wanted to be—a widow. Weeping comes like a continual flood. It is essential.

Facing the challenges of life alone:

Woman...

Wife...

Widow

With all her being she fights to bring herself under control. She is the only parent now.

Lost instantly are the physical privileges of marriage, and added, also instantly, are multiplied responsibilities.

She is now, in a sense, both mother and father to her children. They need an explanation. They need comfort, guidance and love. Mommy must be ready to provide it. This is a facet of widowhood that must be faced squarely—and faced alone.

Explaining to children

Death must now be explained. Feelings of extreme pain and loss must be handled. Mother must give reassurance to her children. She cannot protect them from this knowledge of death.

Death is hard for all of us, but the widow has to try to explain it without engulfing her children in her own grief.

She really doesn't want her children to have this knowledge—they are so young! They see and hear her weep, and this they must see. These are the emotions of life they are being exposed to.

As they see Mother weeping deeply over Daddy's death, they see their father's worth to his family and Mother's high tribute to him. In a family all share the expe-

riences of the group. Now death, though unwelcomed, has entered. The life of that family is changed. Children cannot escape the reality of life and death.

She must hold her children close and talk about Daddy's death. She must be careful not to give them too much information at once, depending on their age. Day by day more will be added as family discussions go on. This helps bring the fragmented family together in their affliction.

They must develop a plan of action and work on it. They must continue living.

A child reacts to grief differently than an adult. Some children will show differences in behavior. Remember, their security has been shaken.

Mother must reassure her family that they will not be abandoned, as some children fear. Daddy is gone. Could not the same happen to Mother?

She must talk to her children and comfort them. The widow's words will begin to help herself.

Under her own personal pressure, the responsibility is great. But God never gives us more than we can bear, even though for some time it may seem so. Staying close to him in constant prayer is basic. The Scriptures are a widow's close companion. God,



through them, gives her strength to carry on.

Physically, her most intimate confidant, her husband, who would know how to comfort her in such a situation, is gone. The widow needs to talk to someone who understands and will listen to her for extended periods of time. But it is difficult to find a person who can offer more than snatches of time for this.

If such a real confidant is not available (and it must be someone who understands), the widow will often find that writing down her thoughts and feelings genuinely helps. She wants to talk about her husband. Many people do not realize this, and become uncomfortable when she does.

The financial aspect

Beside the emotional turmoil, the widow must face financial ques-

tions. Who is going to pay for the rent, the food, the clothing and the multitude of other expenses the family faces? In many, many cases, Mother now will—it has fallen her lot! She was the dependent. She is now the depended upon.

Working through bereavement (and it must be worked at—the hardest work a widow has to do), she must also work at comforting her family while working physically to provide for it.

She returns to the work force or, in many cases, enters it for the first time, usually at much lower wages than her late husband's. She treks home exhausted from grieving and from her job.

Communication with government agencies becomes necessary. In the United States, the Social Security office and the Veteran's Administration can provide valu-

able assistance for the children of a woman now financially alone.

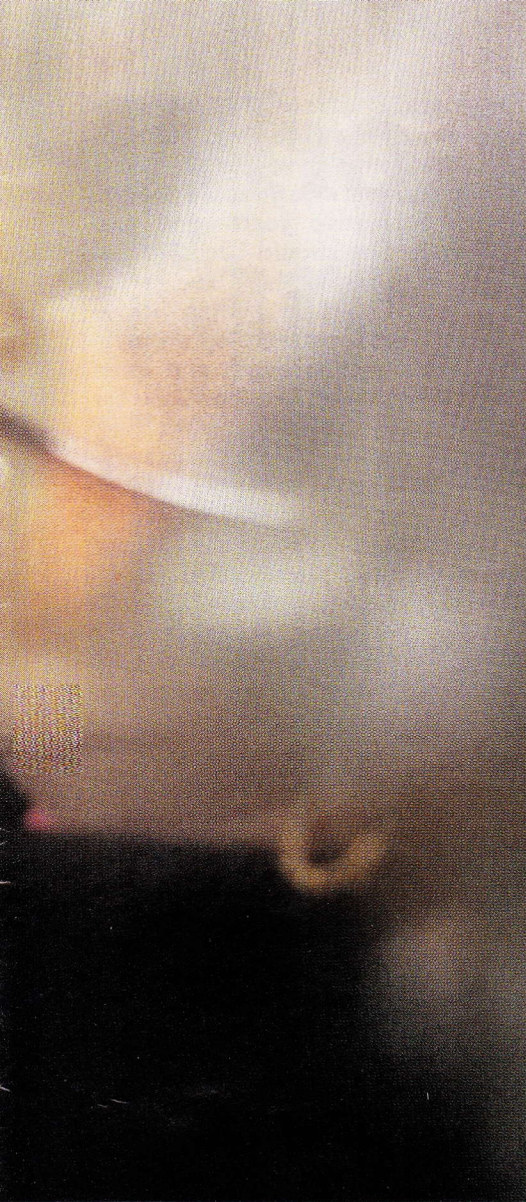
And, in addition to financial considerations, other responsibilities must be kept up: Shopping must be done, dinner must be prepared, the house must be cleaned, the clothes laundered and set out. She's exhausted, but . . .

What about the children?

Children can help the widow. At the same time, they are also a tremendous responsibility that is now all hers alone.

Rearing children in this world is a great responsibility even when both parents are involved, helping and encouraging each other. Now the widow must do it alone.

But it is not an impossible situation. Children who lose one or the other parent can and do develop into well-balanced, successful indi-



Whether the child realizes it or not, he or she is maturing through this sobering situation. A child can become more dependable and responsible. Death has touched his or her life. It can add a deeper understanding to living. The child can grow when the remaining parent makes a stable home. He or she contributes to the whole—is not merely a recipient. Jesus, as the firstborn, had this responsibility when Joseph died.

A parent, though now alone, really is not “single.” She cannot, and does not, return to what she was before she was married. She has all the responsibilities of marriage. She must see to her children’s spiritual, physical, mental and social development.

Voraciously devouring God’s Word at this time gives the widow the ability to cope—and hope. She finds that God is the God of the widow and the Father of the fatherless. Her reliance is now on God. Her husband is asleep, awaiting the resurrection.

The resurrection! The hope of the future! This is the vital reality that gives the widow strength. She *will* see her husband again. The hopes and dreams for their children that they mapped out early in their marriage will be viewed together in later time.

What will happen to their children? Now one parent is left to see the results worked out. The bereaved has no power to change the situation. She has to come to embrace it. She has to.

Accepting responsibilities

Acceptance may come slowly. Grief and shock may hinder it, but it must come. Then the continuation of their children’s development may properly resume.

The family becomes close, unified by the common enemy—death. Children, often more resilient than their elders, suddenly emerge with surprising strength, and offer positive, loving encouragement to their remaining parent. The strong, inner desire for life goes on. It is perpetuated by children. Their attitude can greatly inspire the mother, who may feel her life has ended along with her husband’s.

Now all the family must work together—helping, inspiring and encouraging each other. It takes time for grief to lighten. Day after day must be experienced and built upon, and it is not always a smooth path. The widow will find that setbacks will occur over what to others would be insignificant occurrences.

A stranger wearing her husband’s brand of after-shave passes her in the mall. A song that meant so much in courtship days wafts through the supermarket and memories come flooding back. She finds that she has set her husband’s place at the table—or she rushes to tell him of an event that has just happened and then realizes . . . !

These are the things she must fight. The weeping returns. Then she picks up. She starts again, though her heart is breaking.

The family has worked harmoniously in the past. It must now, too, with one vital member absent. The others must recall the goals of the family and press on to achieve. Together they must unify and conquer this great family trial.

The needs of children

Though she cannot physically be both father and mother, the widow must be responsible and reliable. It is to be hoped she has known her husband well enough to know his outlook on talking to, training and instructing their children.

She must oversee their academic growth. She must help them mix with their peers, some of whom will look at her children as different at first. She must be sure they have as much contact as possible with grandparents, uncles and teachers who can help supply the missing influence of their father in their lives.

Her children will be gaining balance by these necessary contacts. Just as both parents must control the environment of their offspring as much as possible, so must the only parent.

But now she has even more to watch for.

The widow must plan social development for her children. They must grow in happy times. She’s the lone hostess now as she invites others to her home, as well as the

viduals. (Two of America’s greatest presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, lost parents to death during their formative years.)

Helping children become balanced begins in the pattern set by both parents before the death of one of them, and by the remaining parent’s guidance and example thereafter. The early years in a child’s life set the stage for how the child will handle future life experiences.

After the death it is best to stay put, keeping the rest of your child’s life the same as it was, as much as possible, when Father was alive. The security of the same house, if monetarily possible, the same neighborhood and the same school help immediately after the death.

A widow soon learns there is no place to run to, anyway.

sole parent and disciplinarian. She must continually fight thoughts of self-pity as she deals with people whose lives continue as before while hers is so changed.

Whereas the natural tendency might be to relax rules of child rearing while grieving, a widow must work at not doing so. The guidelines the family had must not slip. She must display strength. The children should have long before learned to respond to the authority of both parents. Where would she be now in this situation if that were not the case?

A new life

The widow must learn to plan and balance her time for all that is now on her shoulders. She must set the family budget, write the checks, keep the family car in working order. Children must be transported to functions. Appointments must be kept. There are myriad other needs. Mother must now handle all of them.

And she needs time just to be with her children, to play with them, talk to them and shower them with love.

While a widow is supplying a social life for her children, she will find that hers is changed. She often will not be included in activities that she *and* her husband were in before. Living as a

wife, she was established. Now she must make a new life as a widow.

The widow will find that looking at the beauty of creation, meditating and pondering on the purpose of God, will help her reduce the excess tensions that may build up.

A widow must in her busy schedule try to find ways of relaxing. Walking, walking, walking is one of the best physical releases of tension.

As her children grow, a widow must instruct her sons through boyhood and adolescence. She

must provide the “father and son” talks, carrying out what she has learned from her husband, coupled with God’s way of life. She must seek out this information if she has not known it. And she must not be afraid of it! A woman speaks from the opposite vantage point of a man—a wise son will heed.

Of note, too, is how often, when the Bible says a man was successful, his mother is mentioned. Mothers have a tremendous influence on their children. As the old saying goes, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

The widow’s life is busy indeed. At the same time she is developing

the courage to read this far, since no woman wants to even contemplate becoming a widow?

She can learn to prepare for life in her formative years—and prepare well. She should become educated, building skills to use in her family, with others and in life in general. She must develop deep reserves of inner strength and quiet calm. She should develop vision for the future, and though she may never be a widow, she should know life has other challenges, turns, trials.

She should become thrifty, not throwing away money on unnecessary extravagances frequently, but buying necessities for family living. She should learn to care for possessions.

When she marries she should learn to love her husband and children. They are most precious gifts of God, given to her for so few precious years. She should cherish these wonderful gifts and enjoy every day and every minute. She shouldn’t let little insignificant problems get to her, but work them out and enjoy!

Marriage to the right person is a high physical pleasure. She should rejoice with the husband of her youth and enjoy all that God has given her in this life. She should continually thank God for her husband, his love, tender care and won-

derful qualities—be thankful that he is there to love, comfort, encourage, inspire, provide for, protect and make the final decisions.

Should a woman become widowed, the wonderful memory of her husband, his qualities of tenderness, unending love and devotion will far supersede physical death.

The Kingdom of God is ahead! Death and sorrow will be forgotten once and for all! Widowhood is a station of life for which no place will then be found. Over this no former widow will grieve. □



A widow must continually fight thoughts of self-pity as she deals with people whose lives continue as before—while hers is so changed. But she must display strength.

her children, she must not overlook her need for interests outside of the home. Eventually her children will be on their own and so will she.

The widow feels new emotions as different milestones of growth take place in her children’s lives. She must go through these emotions alone, while thoughts of her husband flood her mind, but on she goes. She is making it.

A message to women

What can a woman learn from reading this—that is, if she’s had

Who Will Care for the Elderly?

National governments are now faced with an ever-growing elderly population supported by fewer and fewer younger workers. What is the solution?

LIFE expectancy in 1900 was 47; today, it is about 74. Everywhere within the Western industrialized nations life expectancy has increased.

But with the ever-increasing life span, a major problem is developing.

People hear about the population explosion. The teeming masses of Calcutta and Cairo. China, India and black African nations grapple with swelling populations.

But from the Ural Mountains to the British Isles, the United States, Canada and Japan, the birthrate is well below the 2.1 needed to maintain the national population.

The "Other" Population Explosion

As low birthrates continue to deplete the ranks of the young, and life expectancies continue to rise, industrial nations face a serious population expansion within the ranks of the elderly. Within Austria, Sweden and West Germany, senior citizens already constitute at least 15 percent of the population. The developed nations worldwide face a senior citizen population explosion.

Longer life expectancies push up the costs of health care and old-age pensions, while a declining birthrate puts a greater tax burden

upon workers who must support the system. It's a major new dilemma for governments.

An ever-growing elderly population supported by fewer and fewer workers creates an inverted pyramid, expanding at the top while shrinking at the bottom.

If trends continue there will not be enough workers to contribute to the welfare systems that support senior citizens. President Ronald Reagan has warned of this problem. "There is a possibility—well, probability—that many people, young people now paying in, will never be able to receive as much as they're paying."

Whose Responsibility?

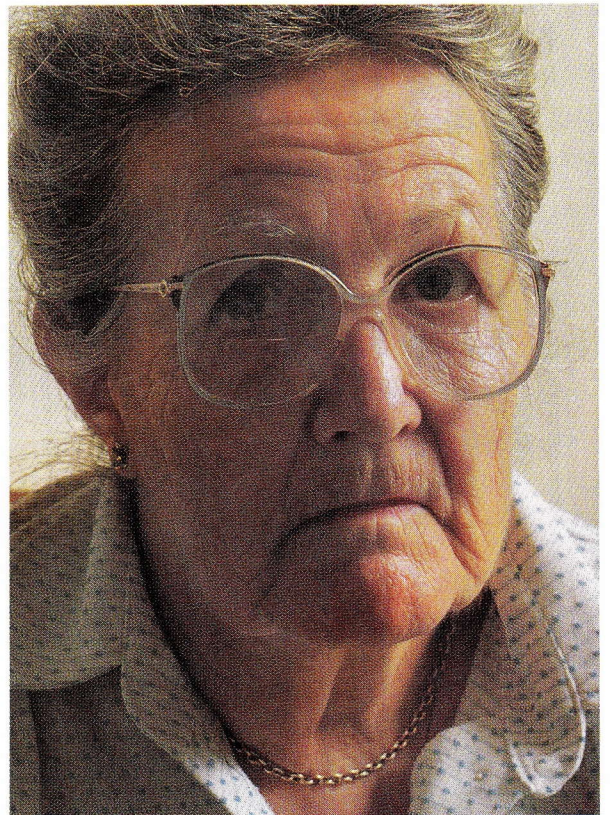
Governments with the best of intentions created old-age retirement programs. Governments also levied taxes for their programs. The State took to itself the responsibility, once exercised by religious institutions, of providing for the elderly. With increased availability of welfare and retirement programs came a lessening need for having

children care for elderly parents. The government would provide what was needed.

Young people free from their responsibility show declining interest in the well-being of senior citizens. "There should be some government program" or "If we only had more money for this" is the attitude. The aged increasingly are seen as dependents rather than as individuals.

What government overlooked is that the law of God, summed up in the Ten Commandments, puts the responsibility not upon government but upon the next generation—the children—to care for the elderly parents. "Honor your father and your mother . . ." is the command (Ex. 20:12, *New King James* throughout).

God's way is for the children to care for and assist their aged parents, who, in the meantime, should have provided for their own financial needs in their old age so children would not have that burden.



"For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (II Cor. 12:14). It is not primarily a respon-

sibility of politicians in government to care for the elderly!

The Neglected Solution

Man's government is inherently unable to deal effectively with the problem. This is not to speak disparagingly of governmental efforts to help aged populations. It is to say that the problem is too big for man to resolve fully.

Whenever a national leader proposes changing a social security-retirement system, the opposition creates such a political storm that no long-term, permanent solution can be enacted. Yet the permanent solution has been available to governments for a number of years. The book containing the solution probably sits upon government desks at this very moment.

The book is called the Holy Bible. Humans have neglected to observe that the Bible is a book containing sound economic infor-

An ever-growing elderly population supported by fewer and fewer workers creates an inverted pyramid, expanding at the top while shrinking at the bottom.

mation. There is not one single facet of life upon which the Bible does not touch and, in principle, show people what to do to make things work out right. Personal and national finances are clearly explained within this revealed knowledge from God.

God's instruction is, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children..." (Prov.

13:22). In today's mixed-up world this becomes, for many, almost impossible. Now the elderly have become overdependent upon governmental support, which younger taxpayers fund.

Governments have always reversed God's instruction. When social security-retirement programs were first created—some about a century ago—the government said in effect, "We will provide for your retirement."

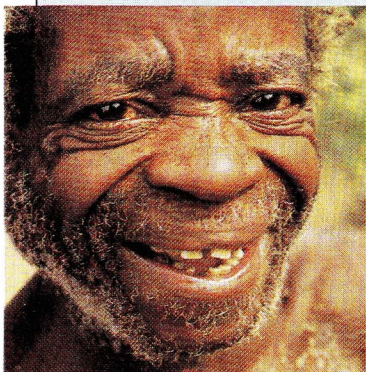
People, believing the promises and hopes of socially concerned leaders, often stopped saving for their retirement. And governments, by gradual inflationary practices, further reduced people's incentive to save.

Now most elderly no longer depend upon their savings or their families for support. They must rely upon a surrogate family—government.

Governments during the Great

The Elderly in Various Societies

For too many elderly people in Western industrial cultures, old age has been turned into a heavy burden, a distressing ordeal.



JEAN-PIERRE HALLET

Efé Pygmy elder, Ituri forest

By contrast, among some peoples and cultures, especially those in the Third World—the elderly have

traditionally occupied a position of respect, as reflected in the following quotes. (Even in many of these areas, however, the situation is being, or may already have been, altered due largely to political changes and the influence of Western culture.)

Thailand: "The Phooyai of Thailand are the revered elders, to whom all the important decisions must be referred. They take you each step of the way through life, and may even control the purse strings" (*World Health*, February/March 1982).

Southeast Asia: "In countries of WHO's South-East Asia Region, the elderly have traditionally enjoyed a privileged place. They have been revered and their advice... sought on matters ranging from the



PHOTOBANK—CARL PURCELL

At the Forbidden City in China

sowing of the next crop, a marriage in the family or the settling of a village dispute, to prescribing a remedy for a stomach ache" (*World Health*, February/March 1982).

The Bantu Tiriki of Kenya: "Right up until adolescence, grandparents and other old

people take a dominant role in the informal instruction of children... Grandchildren in their turn come to view grandparents not only as very kind and pleasant people, but as the storytellers and tutors of worldly wisdom, and, most important, as the people they can depend on to help most in times of real trouble or distress" (Sangree, *Peoples of Africa*).

The Mbuti Pygmies:

"... older people always receive respect as such" (Turnbull, *Peoples of Africa*).

The Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert: "Both the father and mother expect and receive respect and obedience from their children... As long as the father lives, he is the head

Depression regarded social security-retirement taxes as a quick-fix measure to balance then-burgeoning budget deficits. They never anticipated life expectancy would ever average 74 years. The system initially seemed to work because more workers contributed than retirees withdrew. Now this has changed.

Many people today, believing they will be supported by the welfare-retirement programs, *expect* the government to support them. They are no longer regarded as a safety net only for those in need. These programs are looked upon as a right.

Young people, believing parents would be supported by welfare-retirement programs, now expect governments to support the elderly segment of population.

A recent example demonstrates this point. One family committed their slightly

Young people, believing parents would be supported by welfare-retirement programs, now expect governments to support the elderly segment of population.

senile parent to an old-age home. In order to avoid payment the family members gave false names and addresses so they could not be traced. The parent—who gave them life, who cared for them, helped them when they were sick, supported them when they were young—is now left all alone. “I

have my own life to live” is the selfish attitude.

God foretold this pathetic attitude as a major trait for this age: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves . . . disobedient to parents” (II Tim. 3:1-2).

Humans in their ignorance have supplanted God’s command to respect aged parents. “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:32). God himself is, in fact, revealed in the Bible as the “Ancient of Days” in the book of Daniel.

Thankfully, God will soon supernaturally intervene in world affairs and establish his government on this earth and enforce his laws (Dan. 2:44-45).

The returned Jesus Christ will rule the nations with mercy and with justice for all (Isa. 61:1-3). □

of the family . . . Kung families are responsible for dependents. Thus old, dependent parents are unfailingly supported by their offspring” (Marshall, *Peoples of Africa*).

The Chagga in Tanzania: “Caring for and being cared for is part of life from beginning to end” (Kessler, *Human Behavior*).

The Aborigines of Australia: “The aborigines everywhere and on all occasions pay great respect to old persons” (Thomas Petrie, *Reminiscences*



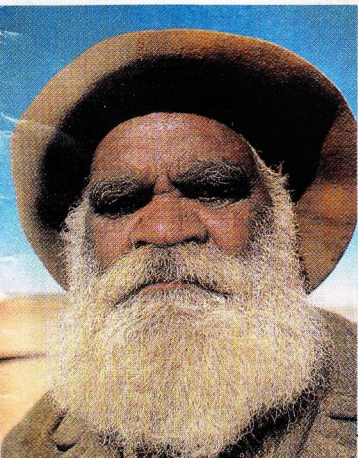
In historic Sarajevo, Yugoslavia

of Early Queensland).

The Peasant People of Yugoslavia: “While children may marry and leave the parental home, they seldom go very far—and almost always one of the offspring remains at home to care for the aging parents” (Kessler, *Human Behavior*).

An Arab student in Lebanon: “There is no greater disgrace than to abandon the old” (*The Family*).

Aborigine in Coober Pedy in Australia



PHOTOBANK—CARL PURCELL

PHOTOBANK—CARL PURCELL

proportionately few blacks and Puerto Ricans in nursing homes” (*Current* April, 1977).

Japan: “The Japanese consider it their natural duty to care for and support an ill or feeble parent; throughout the Orient, to neglect a parent or to leave a parent in the care of strangers is to disgrace the family name” (*The Adult Years*).

China: “Chinese philosopher Lin Yutang wrote a few decades ago: ‘How can one be thought wise unless one is thought to be old?’ . . . There is no shame attached to the circumstance of one’s being served by his children in the sunset of one’s life . . . The symphony of life should end with a grand finale of peace and serenity and material comfort and spiritual contentment, and not with the crash of a broken drum or cracked cymbals’ ” (*The Adult Years*).

The affluent Western world has a lot to learn!

The Bedouin: “Among the Bedouin, young men are expected to defer to the older generation at all times” (*ibid.*).

The Rajput of India: “Rajput women must cover their heads with their saris when an elder enters the room” (*ibid.*).

Immigrants and minorities in the United States:

“ . . . students of immigrants point to the value of the extended family (or clan) in providing day care for children and ministering to the health needs of the elderly. Indeed, there are

Do you want to be loved and understood? Of course you do! Everybody does. But many people live and die without ever having felt truly loved and understood. Why? What's the reason for this sad state of affairs?

According to statistics, a great number of those over 55 years of age do not participate in any of the activities of their community. They virtually have no social life. They are, for various reasons, social outcasts!

Why? Why should it be so? Does life stop at 55? Is seclusion from society a natural offshoot of growing old? Why should old age spell loneliness? A person doesn't only die when his heart stops beating, he also dies when he has nothing to live for.

Growing old, for many people, means recalling with nostalgia pleasant moments of the past, complaining about the present and worrying about the future.

When you shed tears over the good old days, you actually shed tears over your inability to cope with the present. But it doesn't help. Pitying yourself won't solve your problems. It cannot change anything. Although life is a struggle for everyone, particularly for those who are handicapped or aged, life always smiles at those who smile at it, courageously. As the saying goes, "A smile warms the heart of the one who gets it and doesn't cost a penny to the one who gives it."

Life is meant to be shared. True success is measured with the measure of help we give one another, the genuine interest we show each other, the love we express for our neighbor—no matter what the circumstances.

To know how to grow old is to know how to live!

Life Is to Be Loved

Recently, I heard someone say, "After all, death doesn't really scare me, because life doesn't interest me anymore!"

What a tragic statement. The man didn't understand what life is

The Good 'Old' Days

No matter how pleasant they may have been, there is much more to life than the memory of years gone by.

all about, neither did he know what happens after death.

Nevertheless, in his ignorance, he wished to die. No wonder he was terribly fed up with everything, unhappy and ungrateful toward the Creator who had given him life.

Life carries in itself a hope of fulfillment. So long as you are alive, you can hope to learn, to improve, to change, to accomplish your projects, even some of your wildest dreams.

Do you know what actually makes you lose interest in life? It is your vanity, your feelings of greed, jealousy and prejudice, as well as your complexes and fears. The sooner you get rid of them, the sooner you begin to live. As the French writer J e a n d e L a

Bruyere once said, "Most people spend the first half of their life making the second half miserable!"

"All this is fine!" you may say, "But just how do we overcome the fear of aging?" What is this thing called the art of living?"

First of all, be positive! There is always something you can do for

someone else, always something you can give him or her.

"The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. 16:31). So says the great God, the One who will live forever and the One who created the physical aging process in human beings.

God respects those who, further along in years, are striving to live His way in the face of the special challenges and trials with which they are confronted.

The apostle Paul wrote: "That

Life carries in itself a hope of fulfillment. So long as you are alive, you can hope to learn, to improve, to change, to accomplish your projects, even some of your wildest dreams.

the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands. to

love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands . . .” (Tit. 2:2-5).

This is the give way that makes life worthwhile, interesting and most exciting. It prevents you from wanting to isolate yourself from your community, which not only needs your participation, but may also show its own appreciation of you in times and ways you least expect.

An active life precludes boredom; it engenders hope, faith and love. Isolation, seclusion or exclusion engender fear. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (I John 4:18).

One of the most important lessons we all must learn is to *live the present* and not the past. Perhaps the greatest service older people can render younger ones is to show them by their own example and positive attitude that one can be happy at any age.

You—of all the people on the face of the earth—should be the least concerned about your age.

Never Too Old

We were born to *develop character*, which in itself is a lifelong process. Age has no power to stop it.

“But, how can we develop character if we have no longer the strength, the means or the ability to be useful?” you may ask. “Isn’t it a bit too late for us to grow spiritually or to develop character? Life is already behind us.”

You are mistaken! Life is not—and it *cannot* be—behind you. Life is *now*. It is never too late for anyone at any age to grow spiritually.

If you are unable to undo the past, you nevertheless have full dominion over the present. You can straighten your life, change your attitude, improve your outlook, control your thoughts and desires, discipline yourself—in short, get each day closer to God.

When God put the first man in the garden of Eden, He instructed him to “dress it and to keep it.” This commandment also applies to the care of our character. We must develop it and cultivate it until the end. Age does not enter into the

picture. God is ageless. His Spirit can be in you to help you keep your mind active, jovial and in good health. It can provide you the strength you need to endure your trials and difficulties.

You won’t be able to fulfill these tasks by keeping others at arm’s length or by isolating yourself. Love is sharing and giving, and you, a begotten child of God, have much to share and to give.



No one has even been or ever can be too old to sow the good seeds of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, perseverance and faith. Put God to the test. Sow daily those seeds, and you will reap the fruits, regardless of your age.

The help you give your fellowmen, your encouraging example, your cheerful words, your contagious smiles, your confident attitude, your prayers and your faith—all this is well *within your means*. You are never too old to sow these good seeds. □

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