



THERE'S A HIDDEN ENEMY IN YOUR HOME!

*Coming to grips with it
is vital to your happiness
and well-being!*

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There's a Hidden Enemy in Your Home!

Have we been overlooking the very first lesson in life?

There's an enemy in your home, probably. You haven't seen this enemy. He's right in your family—he's made you all suffer—he's broken up many families, caused untold suffering and a world of unhappiness.

But you never saw him. He's kept hidden from your sight.

It's high time you opened your eyes and took a good look at him, so you can recognize him for the villain he is.

The psychologists call him "emotional immaturity."

But that's something many people know nothing about. It's something "educated" people talk and write about, but seldom understand.

What is emotional maturity?

It is not something to be learned about by college graduates. It is something that ought to begin to be taught long before the first grade—in the home. It is the technical art of putting into practice the Ten Commandments. It is the real secret to human happiness. *But it is just not taught!* How, after all, can parents teach their children, when they themselves are emotionally immature? How can teachers instill emotional maturity in children when they have not all grown up emotionally themselves?

Yet here is the real secret of

ability to *live* the Ten Commandments. It's the real secret to Christian living and perfection. It's the real distinguishing mark of the truly educated person.

One author defines emotional maturity as development from the state of taking to the state of giving. Taking is the way of Satan. Giving is the way of God, and the principle of His law. LOVE is *giving*. A little baby learns, generally, only how to *take*. He will take his bottle, his rattle, his toy. It becomes his human nature to *take*. Humans know absolutely NOTHING at birth. But a baby responds to Satan's negative influence, develops a selfish nature and begins to reach out to *take* whatever attracts or tempts him. Humans must be *taught* to give. Giving is something that *has to be LEARNED*. But how many begin teaching their babies this principle—the very *principle* of God's law and of true love?

What we overlook

Let us define it further. All human beings are actuated by their emotions. But do we ever stop to ask and analyze what *are* these emotions?

An emotion is a strong *feeling*—a disturbance—a departure from the normal calm state of rational thinking and acting—an *impulse* toward an action that has not been reasoned and approved by the mind.

Among the emotions are such feelings or impulses as fear, anger,

disgust, grief, joy, surprise, yearning.

And first cousin to emotion are our *moods*. An emotionally immature person is usually one who is moody and has never learned to control his moods.

One of the most important truths we humans overlook is that human beings are not equipped with instinct, like dumb animals, to guide us into the proper course. Animals do not have the mind power, knowledge, ability to reason and mentally direct their actions. God endowed them, instead, with instinct that guides them along in the channel He intended.

God endowed man, in His own image, with MIND. Man must first learn and acquire knowledge. He is endowed, also, with capacity to reason from that knowledge—to think, to plan, to arrive at conclusions, to make decisions. God intended man's mind to direct his actions. But man must *learn* to do this, and he can never achieve God's PURPOSE in placing him on this earth until he does.

The development of right CHARACTER is the purpose of human life. And character is ability to come to right knowledge and wisdom and then to direct the mind and body into this right course. But we poor humans act as though we believed man to be merely the highest of the dumb brutes—as if man were equipped with instinct, and the purpose of life were merely to ENJOY such feelings, sensations,

emotions and moods as impulse attracts us to, *without thinking or mental direction!*

A tragic case

Consider a tragic example, a man highly educated, whose life had been devoted to the field of education, assuming readily the responsibility of teaching others, when he himself had not learned this central truth of life.

His mind was stored with knowledge of science, history, mathematics, literature. He had knowledge of facts about the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars. He had ac-

quired knowledge about many other *things*, but not about *himself*—his moods, his feelings, his drives, impulses and desires. He had not stopped to study and analyze them, let alone learn to control them.

As a child he had been pampered, petted, spoiled—permitted to have his way, never taught self-restraint, self-control or how to understand his moods, feelings and desires, and to control and guide them according to the sound reasoning of the *mind*, instead of impulsively following them without mental direction.

He was married, had a fine family, an honored position with rare opportunities. But letting *feelings, moods, impulses* dominate his mind, instead of making his mind rationally and wisely direct them, his marriage crashed, his home was broken up and he fled in fear from his high position and brilliant future.

He not only wrecked his own life, he forced great sorrow, unhappiness and suffering on many others. His emotions had so dominated his mind that he came to see circumstances through the eyes of his feelings, and his understanding became warped and distorted.

Physically he grew to normal maturity, and was reasonably proficient in athletics. He possessed a number of university degrees. He was mentally mature so far as this world's faulty education instructs. But, emotionally, he was still somewhere between ages 8 and 12! And, sadly, his spiritual age was no older.

The great tragedy of our generation is that nearly all people mature physically, perhaps half to two thirds mature mentally, *but very few ever grow up emotionally or spiritually.*

One is not a fully mature man or woman, as God intended, until *emotional* and *spiritual* maturity has been reached!

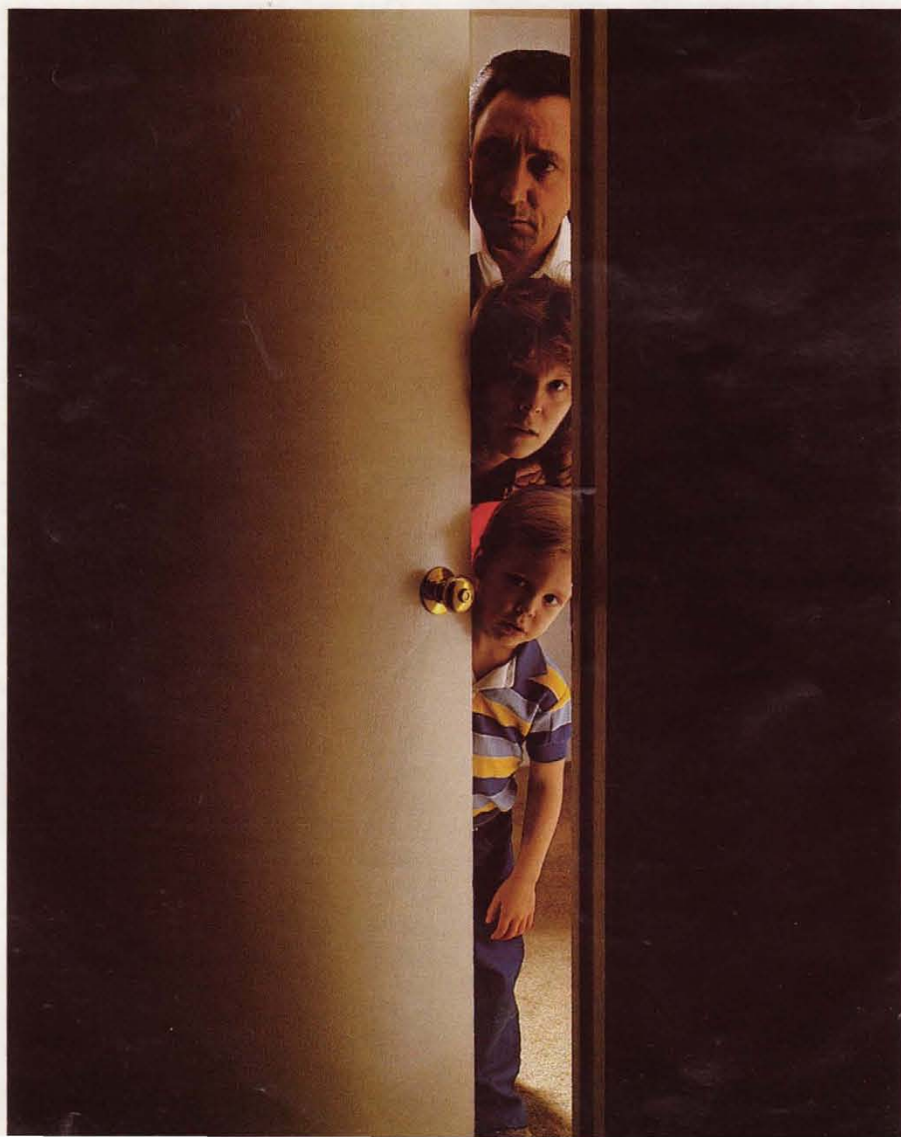
Should start in child training

The time to start this emotional "growing up" is the same time mental training is begun. It should be started *in the home*, within the first months of a child's life.

Parents, **STUDY** your own children. Remember that training of the emotions involves control and right direction of feelings, tempers, impulses. It means control over anger, jealousy, hatred, fear, grief, resentment, selfishness, vanity. And since the **RIGHT** direction is the way of God's law—and since that is the way of **LOVE**, and love is the principle of giving instead of taking—it means the teaching of your children to use their own minds to understand their moods and guiding them in the direction of **GIVING**—of love toward others, equal with love toward self.

Yelling, loud talking, bursts of

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NATHAN FALKNER—PT

temper, rudeness—all these are lack of emotional “growing up.” Emotional immaturity is simply letting human nature run sway without any control from a right-thinking, reasoning mind. Teach your children to let their MINDS direct their natures properly and wisely.

Emotion in religion

Surely no one can achieve real Christian growth and perfection until he has acquired emotional stability. Our tempers, feelings, emotions were given to us for a purpose! They are not to be nullified—merely intelligently *guided* by mind control into the proper channels of God’s law!

Of all the phases of life, there is none in which emotional immaturity is more apparent than in religion.

Here, too, people are prone to go to extremes. Either they deliberately work up the emotions to a frenzy or they make their religion a wholly mental expression, restraining the emotions and feelings entirely.

Many, usually the less educated, follow a religion that is almost wholly emotional. In “meeting,” the preachers say little that is thought provoking, but that which is emotion arousing. They do not teach or instruct, they generate unrestrained emotion.

Then there are the more quiet emotional sects—but who also accept the counterfeit of sentimentality and emotion for deep spirituality. Indeed it seems *most* fundamentalist groups accept one form or another of EMOTION in place of true spirituality.

But emotion is not spirituality. Emotion is *physical* reaction. While a certain emotional reaction *should* naturally follow true and deep spiritual experience, nevertheless it is a physical reaction *from*

that experience and is not, in itself, spiritual experience. Emotion is produced by the nervous system of the fleshly body. It is, therefore, of the FLESH, not of the SPIRIT!

The Holy Spirit of God is given only to those who OBEY God (Acts 5:32). Most religious bodies who mistake the emotional counterfeit for genuine spirituality preach that “God’s law is done away”—preach a doctrine of “salvation without works,” by which they mean without obedience to God or to God’s law.

No one is a real Christian unless he has received and is being *led* (in obedience to God’s law) by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 14), and the Holy Spirit *in us* is the LOVE OF GOD (Romans 5:5), which is the *only* love that fulfills God’s law. And also the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of a SOUND MIND (II Timothy 1:7).

True spirituality, therefore, is SOUND MINDEDNESS, for true spirituality can come *only* from the SPIRIT OF GOD within us. True spirituality is RATIONAL.

On the other hand, true spirituality is not a mere mental religion divorced from all feeling and emotion. There are the purely mental religions that do not even believe in the Holy Spirit of God.

And there are some of us, perhaps, who have come to know God’s truth—who have surrendered to God, truly repented of our own way, turned from the ways of the world and who are devoted to studying the Bible to learn *God’s* way so that we may *live by every word of God*—and who also pray a great deal, but who yet LACK the very second FRUIT of God’s Spirit—JOY!

NOT emotionless maturity

Emotional *maturity* does not mean emotionless maturity any more than it means uncontrolled emotion. The truly emotionally mature are Spirit-guided by sound Spirit-mindedness—by God’s Word—and

the emotions are CONTROLLED, but not anesthetized. The emotionally grown-up DO express enthusiasm, JOY, happiness. They DO *feel* and express gratitude, reverence, adoration in their worship of God. They do feel and express compassion, mercy, sympathy.

God is a spirit, and they that *worship* Him must worship IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH. One cannot worship IN SPIRIT unless he has received and is led by God’s Spirit. One cannot worship IN TRUTH without UNDERSTANDING of God’s Word with a sound mind. But this kind of worship is not devoid of *feeling* and resultant emotional expression. Even though the emotion is *physical* reaction, it does truly *accompany* or *react from* true spiritual experience. But it is not a substitute for it.

The emotionally mature will properly express sympathy in a most sincere manner, from the heart. They will express, on occasion, when called for, sorrow, anguish, compassion. And they will also express good cheer, happiness, enthusiasm, zeal and that happiness that is brimful and running over, called JOY!

It sort of sums up, then, that the emotionally mature *combine* the controlled expression of emotion *with* physical health and an educated mind that is Spirit-begotten and Spirit-led, doesn’t it? In other words, emotional maturity develops hand in hand with physical, mental and spiritual growth, the four blending into, finally, the perfect spiritual CHARACTER we were put here to become.

YOU probably have a long way yet to go. YOU have a grave responsibility, if you have children, in their EMOTIONAL training as well as their physical health, mental education and spiritual guidance. We shall all be called to account someday. How will YOU answer? □

Best Strategy for BEATING STRESS

Here's the one winning strategy to coping with this 20th-century killer.

HYPERSTRESS—excessive stress—has been called the silent killer. Why? Because it usually doesn't produce any apparent physical pain or other warnings before doing its ultimate damage.

But a killer it is, nevertheless.

Stress is a major factor in high blood pressure, in strokes, heart attacks and coronary-artery diseases. No other single force is more responsible for the worldwide epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse. Stress is often a central catalyst in health problems, in family problems, sometimes even leading to mate and child abuse.

How many of us have suppressed inner anger when we think the boss did something unfair?

Who hasn't worried over how to make ends meet in today's financially uncertain times?

Hasn't almost everyone suffered the loneliness of losing loved ones? The frustrations of pursuing what society calls success?

It all adds up to a condition that has sometimes been described as the disease of change.

What we need are effective guidelines for dealing with stress, because stress is not going to simply go away. The good news is that there is a *winning strategy* against stress.

Stress is not necessarily a negative force. Stress is not, after all, just what happens to us, but *how we react* to what happens to us. And how we react is controlled by our minds and emotions.

The Role of Stress

To be alive is to be under a certain amount of stress. As one author put it, no one constructs a building with the intention of just letting it sit empty. The building is meant to be utilized for some purpose—to withstand the reasonable stresses of people, furniture, weight and use.

So it is with humans. The right level of stress is perfectly acceptable and productive.

One of the world's foremost authorities on stress, endocrinologist Hans Selye, says: "Most people who want to accomplish something, who are ambitious, live on stress. They need it." The right amount of stress can push us to perform at our very best.

Stress also serves to protect us in hazardous situations. If we are driving along in fast traffic and another car swerves into our lane in front of us, a lot of things immediately happen in our bodies—in the brain, heart, muscular system. The body marshals inner forces and rises to meet the crisis, producing the positive condition of trying to avoid a collision.

But if the crises and pressures around us become so frequent and so intense that we are constantly

calling upon inner resources to respond so dramatically, the stress becomes debilitating. The body simply cannot meet such demands.

Says health educator Leo R. Van Dolson: "When individuals are repeatedly forced to . . . accept continual change, especially changes involving conflict and uncertainty, an adaptive reaction occurs that draws upon the hormones, causing chemical reactions throughout the body that damage its reserves of energy."

Having too much stress, which Dr. Selye refers to as *hyperstress*, can be destructive to both our physical and emotional well-being. And that is exactly what has happened in many cases in this hectic world. Excessive stress has become a harmful force in people's lives.

Researchers have isolated stress as a common factor in many cases of disease. Different ailments may attack more readily if a person has faced emergencies or disappointments first.

Stress-related illnesses cost American industry fully 2 percent of the gross national product. In Britain, 2 percent of gross domestic product is also lost annually. Up to 10 times more workdays are lost to industry through stress than strikes, with coronary heart disease accounting for half the cost of stress-related illnesses.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Many people are seeking to dull the pain of the 20th-century "disease" of stress by using alcohol and drugs. But the supposed cure has itself created an epidemic. Organizational development consultant Karl Albrecht aptly summarizes today's state of mind in these words:

"The use of mood-altering chemicals in America, and to some extent in other developed countries, has run completely wild.

"Cultures we are pleased to label 'primitive' all without exception reserve the use of tobacco, drugs and intoxicants for special occasions such as celebration and rituals. Only in the so-called advanced cultures do we use these chemically induced altered states of awareness as routine means for escaping reality."

Many turn to alcohol or drugs to anesthetize the stress produced by emotionally upsetting events or situations such as marital quarrels, poverty, fear, loneliness and job tensions.

These individuals fail to realize, however, that using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress only creates further stress, contributing to a vicious and harmful cycle in a person's life.

Using alcohol or drugs is not an effective measure for coping with pressures. It's like trying to kill a fly by exploding a stick of dynamite—the cure may be even worse than the original problem.

For instance, one important key to coping with stress is relaxation. More and more psychologists and physicians are coming to view occasional recreation not just as a help but as an essential part of a balanced life-style. Relaxing by a change of activity restores us.

People with drug or alcohol problems do attempt to relax, but only by turning to a bottle filled with either alcohol or pills. The drug abuser, rather than learning how to properly relax, relies on drugs to relax him. He is confronting his problems in the wrong way. Here is why.

Drug reliance, which can develop into addiction and cause a host of other related problems, spawns more stress. The drug user becomes trapped in the cycle. He uses drugs to cope with stress, and this use only creates more stress.

Relaxation should, rather, involve exercise, a change of pace, momentarily getting one's mind off whatever is causing the stress (and that by mental choice, not with self-prescribed alcohol or drugs). Alcohol is safely and temperately used only by one who is *already* mentally relaxed. Alcohol should never be used to regularly induce relaxation.

Physical Points to Consider

Since stress involves a person's mental or emotional reaction to external events, any effective program must involve, to one degree or another, a change of mind—a reorienting of life priorities. Besides relaxation, there are other effective measures for reducing the

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debilitating effects stress can have:

- *Be realistic.* Let's face it: We know we are going to have disappointments in life. None of us can succeed every time at everything we try.

The stressful person often fails to accept this simple fact. He may mentally magnify his problems out of proportion. He becomes so wrapped up in his difficulties, real or imagined, that he cannot see anything else.

Certainly, a person's problems may be real and serious—a broken marriage, unemployment and lack of money, problems with a child, illness. But dwelling on them to the point of becoming paralyzed by them—unable to take action—does not solve them. The solutions must come through emotional maturity, seeking wise counsel and getting control of one's life.

Complaining about constant hard work, for example, only reinforces the stress. Focusing on the reward obtained from the work, on the other hand, will make the work a source of satisfaction rather than tension. Developing this kind of positive attitude toward stress-producing pressures will ease inner tensions.

Don't be crushed when you fail, because you certainly will fail from time to time. If you indulge in self-pity, you'll not put yourself in any pressure situation again—and you'll never accomplish anything!

A person who increases his or her efforts to master a situation he or she can never control is bound to be frustrated.

For instance, consider the parent whose well-intentioned advice to grown children falls on deaf ears. If the children, now adults themselves, are unwilling to listen and

heed, the parent will only frustrate himself or herself by continuing to be assertive and trying to enforce his or her will in situations. It is a case of effort without accomplishment, and it produces stress.

The best course in this and other examples would be to act where possible, but also to realize and accept limitations when and where they exist.

People prone to battle on stubbornly in no-win situations sometimes know they have every reason to change, yet, through habit, they resist alteration.

If we become more goal oriented and look to the ultimate rewards for our efforts, pressures we daily undergo will not seem as difficult to bear. Take control of your life. Realize there are things you can do to make a difference. This knowledge—this freedom—can be a powerful source of comfort.

- *Manage your time.* Time management is important. It involves making optimum use of the time we have available to do the things that need to be done. Giving priority to tasks to get the most important—and, potentially, most worrisome—things done first, helps.

Managing time wisely to get things done is certainly better than retreating to a drug-induced state of euphoria or forgetfulness. When a drug abuser comes down from his high, the same problems still exist. The same tasks remain undone, and may by then be even more urgent. The person may choose, then, to flee once again to his private, "safe," drugged world.

The resulting sense of accomplishment from fulfilling responsibilities sensibly can produce its own circle of events—this one positive—encouraging a person to accomplish more.

- *Improve general health.* A healthy, physically fit person can cope with a vast amount of pressure. He is adaptable, positive and generally hopeful. Poor health magnifies the small irritations of life and prolongs a cycle of illness. Consider, in the matter of improving general health, diet, exercise, rest, getting plenty of fresh air and sunshine whenever possible and developing self-control.

- *Incorporate alternatives to*

stress. Life is filled with many sources of anxiety and unnecessary stimulation. We can simply choose to avoid some of these areas that induce stress unnecessarily, such as in the entertainment we pursue. When we stimulate our minds with an incessant barrage of loud, dissonant noise, and with themes that center on violence, crime and interpersonal tragedy, we voluntarily induce stress.

It may also be well worth examining our values. Is it worth pursuing some career goal if that pursuit could cost your marriage? While working overtime may be essential for some, in the long run spending time with your children has priority. What amount of money can buy back time that could have been shared with loved ones?

The Most Important Dimension

These physical techniques help ameliorate physical problems. But to completely eliminate hyperstress involves changing the basic way human nature functions.

The Bible offers the best strategy in relation to stress, emotional maturity and mental health. Here's the only approach that can help us win over excessive stress once and for all!

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad" (Prov. 12:25, *New King James Version* throughout, except where noted). What makes a person "glad"—positive, optimistic, have a constructive frame of mind? A constant, positive attitude and approach to life! Helping and encouraging others by your thoughtful words and receiving support from others are important.

"A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22). The medicine we need is not a chemical. It is this outgoing, optimistic approach to life and resultant interest in others' needs.

Time management is important. It involves making optimum use of the time we have available to do things that need to be done.

"A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion [*Authorized Version*: envy] makes the bones rot" (Prov. 14:30, *Revised Standard Version*). Do drugs really produce this "tranquil" state of mind—this general, continual attitude of contentment that gives "life to the flesh"—that promotes a successful, happy life? Hardly. As the above Proverbs showed, the Bible is not suggesting chemical solutions to human problems and stress. The answer is in one's basic approach to life.

The Bible reveals that pursuing one's own desires and creature comforts will not make one happy. Jesus Christ summed it up: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

There it is! Preoccupation with *self* only contributes to the hyperstress that has caused or compounded many of this world's problems.

Resolving hyperstress and its concomitant evils, then, is a matter of changing one's whole life-style from its general pattern of taking and selfishness to a life-style of giving, of service, of concern for others equal to or greater than concern for self.

Dr. Selye himself, as an endocrinologist, has frequently expressed that hate causes stress and love eliminates it. He asks, "If everyone loved his neighbor as himself, how could there be any war, crime, ag-

gression or even tension among people?"

Dr. Selye has noted one quality that he feels is more needed than any other if one is to cope with life's stresses: gratitude.

Think, in every circumstance, how you can be thankful. Learn to laugh. Above all, avoid hatred and the desire for revenge. Think well of others and try to bring happiness to them.

Psychologist Erich Fromm notes: "Not he who has much is rich, but he who gives much. The hoarder who is anxiously worried about losing something is, psychologically speaking, the poor, impoverished man, regardless of how much he has."

In comparing the giving, loving person to the selfish person, Dr. Fromm continues: "The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking. The world outside is looked at only from the standpoint of what he can get out of it."

But what the selfish person does not realize is that his own selfishness is the root of his troubles. His selfishness "leaves him empty and frustrated. He is necessarily unhappy and anxiously concerned to snatch from life the satisfactions which he blocks himself from attaining."

In short, if we give instead of take, our own problems and tensions are on the way to being eliminated.

Strange? It shouldn't be.

As we live this way of giving, debilitating stress will diminish—even disappear—from our lives. Then we can, as the apostle Paul put it: "Be anxious for nothing... and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). □

YOU MAY have heard the old saying: "Nothing is permanent but change."

Well, to a certain degree that's true. Change is constantly taking place all around us.

Yet, when it comes to changing habits—especially bad ones—it seems that no struggle can be more fierce.

Creatures of Habit

Stop and think: Much of what we do in our everyday lives is, to a tremendous extent, a matter of habit.

We eat at certain times. And the types and amounts of food we eat are fairly consistent. We sleep, whether too much, just enough or too little, at the same times—and most of us lie in certain positions when we sleep. We travel to work or school or the store usually by way of the same routes. When a relative, friend or fellow employee greets us, we most likely respond in the same certain way.

We humans are, in short, creatures of habit.

And that's not bad. Without habits, we could hardly function normally, let alone accomplish much.

But unfortunately, we also allow ourselves to develop bad habits—unthinking patterns of doing things the wrong way. Bad habits can range from stuttering, squinting and nervous twitches to dangerous driving techniques, smoking and drug abuse. They can ostracize us socially, overburden us with guilt and, in the more serious cases, harm us physically and even cost us our lives.

These serious, harmful habits—smoking, drug abuse and shoplifting among them—are what

YOU CAN Break that Bad Habit!

Plagued by a troublesome habit? Want to overcome it?

the Bible calls sin—the violation of God's great law of love (I John 3:4). And the



ART WORK BY MONTE WOLVERTON

result of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

How Habits Form

A habit is a learned pattern of acting—a way of behaving that has become routine.

Mathematicians comparing humans to the computer have calculated that in an average lifetime of 70 years, the human being can take in and remember about 100 billion bits. A bit is a measure of information—the simplest form of data capable of being stored in a computer.

That enormous number represents far more information than even the most advanced computer can handle.

A computer, when it receives as much information as it can deal with, simply quits receiving information. It cannot take in and process any more.

The human brain reacts similarly. When it has received as much information as it can cope with at once, it "turns off"—stops paying attention.

But this marvelous mechanism has the ability to receive and store, in long-term memory, information about how to perform routine tasks, and to recall and use that information without having to think consciously about it. We call these routine actions *habits*.

Consider: We normally don't have to think about tying our shoes, how to ride a bicycle, walking or remembering our address.

Thus the human mind, freed from having to consider mundane details, can concentrate on more demanding tasks. It can devote its attention to unfamiliar, and thus more challenging, stimuli. Habits enable us to distinguish what is new and potentially dangerous from what is tried and true or expected.

Apparently, from what researchers can determine, we record each experience we have—each response we make to various stimuli. The more times we respond to certain stimuli in the same way, the more "worn" the neural circuits

and pathways in the brain and nervous system become. At last the memory is able to trigger an automatic response, thought or feeling to a specific stimulus. Repetition is essential.

It follows, then, that doing something the right way enough times—properly executing a tennis stroke, picking up after ourselves or refusing that extra drink—builds good habits. Conversely, if we choose the wrong option enough times—procrastinate about doing needed jobs, eat too much, become impatient quickly when our children don't understand instructions—we will form bad habits.

Interestingly enough, the earlier the conditioning the stronger the influence. In other words, it is easier to make a good habit in the first place than to break a bad one later on.

Reinforcing Habits

The implications of this conditioning process, as far as habits are concerned, are tremendous. Consider, for instance, their application to child rearing.

How we learn, how we remember, how we perceive masculinity and femininity as we grow up—all these are matters of habit, and they are ingrained in us from earliest childhood. Even a syndrome of failure can be built into a child's psyche by unwitting, though perhaps well-meaning, parents. And after we grow up, unlearning bad habits instilled from childhood can be very difficult.

Parents need to reinforce good habits in their children: curiosity, patience, willingness to accept responsibility, eagerness to study. If a good family response is associated with the right action, the willingness to perform the right action is strengthened, and the right action soon becomes habitual.

Still, no small child can—or should—be completely conditioned like some preschool Pavlov's dog. Each child's own independent thinking processes and experiences come into play. But loving parents can steer a child away from devel-

oping habits that will harm him or her later on.

If an inexperienced parent, for example, gives a child something to eat (or puts a bottle in the baby's mouth, etc.) every time the child cries, the child learns that food is the cure for problems. Later in life when the child experiences sadness, depression or pain, he will be prone to developing a harmful habit of overeating.

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child is taught by wise parents to put toys, clothes and dishes away in the proper place as soon as he or she is through using them, and is praised for doing so, the child will develop a habit of neatness and a desire to take good care of others' possessions.

You can apply this idea of reinforcing good habits (and discouraging bad ones!) to many other child-rearing situations.

How to Produce Change

Here are several steps, to be followed in order, that can help break bad or harmful habits:

- *We must admit we have a bad habit.* This can be extremely difficult. But it is prerequisite to that elusive goal of personal change.

Habituation is the natural enemy of change; our habits actually program us to resist change. Once a habit is ingrained, it becomes invisible to the conscious mind, and the brain, free of paying attention to the action, will notice only if we do something different than we are accustomed to doing.

- *We must see why we do what-*

ever wrong action we are doing. Honestly evaluating ourselves is important.

How specific habits form is the subject of much debate, and in the space of this article we cannot attempt to examine the origin of every bad habit. But numerous factors come into play: childhood conditioning, subconscious desires, rational or irrational fears.

The downward pull of human nature affects us all; we are all constantly bombarded with the negative thoughts, ideas and attitudes broadcast by Satan the devil, the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan's evil influence is a root of every harmful habit mankind practices—warfare, sexual promiscuity, lying or any other.

- *We must realize that there is a way to break the bad habit.* No matter how powerfully motivated to follow some wrong pattern, it is possible for us to change course.

In the case of those bad habits the Bible calls sin, the urge to lie or to give up and keep smoking, overeating or indulging in sexual lusts can seem overwhelming.

The apostle Paul described this struggle with sin this way: "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:19-20).

One psychologist terms the battle to overcome a bad habit as a "struggle between the old and new order." Habit forming is highly conservative; change is profoundly disturbing. Trying to change the self into something different threatens the self, and the self sends up danger signals to try to get us to give up.

We may be dieting or trying to stop drinking to excess or trying to quit smoking. In every case the self—what Paul called the "old man" (Rom. 6:6)—tries to rear itself. A large part of us as human beings is programmed to resist change.

But we can change! God made us

of matter so we could. We humans can, after deciding to reject negative behavior, learn to follow right ways and ingrain these right ways into our minds and motivation. We call this developing *character*.

• *We must be convinced that breaking the bad habit is worthwhile.* Motivation is paramount. As one authority has written: "No one can master a habit who does not want to and who cannot find within himself or herself the resources and the determination to do so."

This, however, is not entirely true. To change from the selfish, inflowing way of "get" to the way of proper concern for ourselves and true, outgoing love for others ultimately requires God's help, in addition to resources we find in ourselves. But we must first want to change. If we don't seriously want to change our bad habits, we never will.

• *We must cease the habit immediately, not gradually.* Completely halting the negative behavior immediately is by far the most effective—though sometimes difficult—method of breaking bad habits.

You've read of heroin addicts who tried methadone and ended up addicted to methadone, or smokers who tried to beat smoking by eating candy and ended up addicted to candy.

There are far better ways to beat bad habits!

For instance, a person may create a new, competing habit to compete with the old. But he should make sure the competing habit he forms is a positive one. Instead of eating to cure feelings of sadness,

one could jog or play a strenuous game of tennis, for example.

Certain behavior modification therapies attempt to wear out the bad habit until personal disgust and exhaustion weaken its hold. If a person is addicted to a certain food, the therapist may attempt to associate the food with some unpleasant experience. This is known as aversion therapy. Its merits are debatable, though, in the absence of strong motivation on the part of

Habituation is the natural enemy of change . . . Once a habit is ingrained, it becomes invisible to the conscious mind, and the brain . . . will notice only if we do something different than we are accustomed to doing.

the person with the habit. As the old saying goes, "A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

It may be that a person will simply have to learn to tolerate a negative stimulus. For example, a person prone to overeating may simply have to steel himself against having an extra dessert—or any dessert at all—even if everyone around does indulge. After all, the temptation to overeat is going to be present throughout life. One can't eliminate the temptation—food—so one's habit of abusing it must be changed.

• *When we have broken our habit, we should be willing to help others who have the same habit.*

When someone who has "been there" helps someone who is still there, the motivational benefits to both are great.

Requires God's Help

All the steps outlined above are part of one group's successful program to combat wrong social habits. These points can be applied to overcome any bad habit—again, however, only by someone who really wants to change.

Changing from a negative, harmful way of life overall to a happy, productive, outgoing way involves changing human nature, and that requires the additional power of God's Holy Spirit.

God is interested in developing strong, right character in every one of us. He wants us to live the *give* way instead of the *get* way, and the way of *give* is the way to every happy, wonderful result man desires.

No one who has been overcome by bad, sinful habits—no one incorrigibly steeped in a selfish, harmful way of life—will ever enter God's kingdom (I Cor. 6:9-10).

To fulfill God's purpose for us, we must make sure that we "record" in our character the finest, most positive, most beneficial and give-oriented habits possible, rejecting everything that harms, is selfish or does not achieve right goals. For, in God's kingdom, there will be no bad habits in God's family!

When we live God's way we can say with Paul, in response to life's every challenge, including bad habits, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). □

The Way that Assures Peace of Mind

Developing good emotional habits can help us to get along with others much better. But how can we form good habits?

IN EVERY area of life, it seems, relationships between people are in serious trouble!

Husbands and wives too often find it difficult to get along together happily. Their marriages disintegrate into continual rounds of arguing, yelling and even physical violence or divorce.

Parents and children seem commonly to lack the skills to interact with each other, and thus generation gaps and juvenile delinquency replace solid families and proper child rearing.

Workers and bosses too often cannot relate amicably, and so companies suffer from petty politics, unhappy working environments and labor unrest and strikes.

And realize this: The problems exist not just on the personal level, but on a global scale. Nations are merely groups of people united together, and so entire nations can't get along with each other either! The result? Today's international strife and misunderstanding that threaten this world with nuclear annihilation!

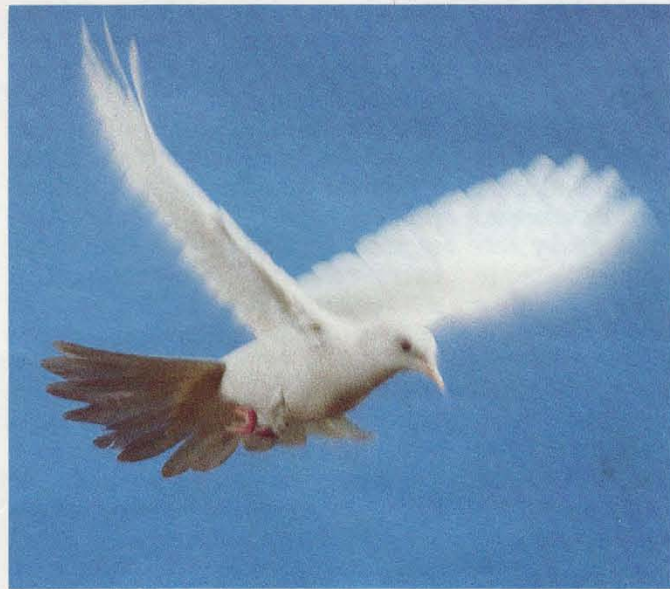
And yet mankind in the 20th century has achieved such astonishing progress in science, technology and industry as to make one's head spin.

Why the paradox? Why is it that people can accomplish such amazing feats with material things, yet

can't live at peace with each other?

Emotional Immaturity

A large number of the problems between people today are caused by unchecked emotion, thoughtlessness and misguided feelings—in short, emotional immaturity. But emotional immaturity is often overlooked as the cause of personal



WARREN WATSON G.A. BELLUCHE JR.—PT

problems. People blame all their difficulties on *other* people, life circumstances or bad luck instead.

Consider: How would you react if your boss berated you for someone else's mistake? Would you explode and give him a piece of your mind? Would you take the criticism, though you didn't deserve it, and resent your boss personally

from then on? Would you say nothing at work, but then take out your suppressed anger on your wife when you got home? Would you wait until you and the boss both calmed down, and then try to find a proper solution to the problem through discussion or other means?

Suppose, if you're a wife, that your husband criticized something about the way you keep your home. Would you become upset and depressed about it? Would you laugh and ignore him, not taking the criticism seriously? Would you cry when you are alone? Would you consider the criticism and ask your husband why he feels that way?

Why do we react to each other the way we do? How many of us have ever stopped to consciously think about *why* we do certain things the way we do?

The answer is that we *don't* think about a lot of the things we do, including many of our emotional responses! Our behavior is a matter of habit—automatic, unthinking patterns of action ingrained in the subconscious parts of our minds. How we react emotionally to various stimuli—

whether we retain our composure, laugh, cry, feel sadness or become angry and lash out—is as much a matter of habit as is smoking or lying or cursing or overeating.

Yes, the habit of emotional immaturity, or lack of emotional control, is the cause of much interpersonal woe today.

Emotional Maturity

What, exactly, do we mean by the term *emotional maturity*? The subject of emotion is much studied and much talked about but much misunderstood, especially in the Western world, today.

The truth is that few people mature emotionally. Some bottle up

all their feelings inside, never displaying any intensity of passion, upset or desire. Others, as the old saying goes, "wear their hearts on their sleeves" and go to pieces or boil over at the slightest provocation. Some can seemingly turn emotions—grief, excitement, anger—on and off like a water faucet.

But where is the balance? What is emotional maturity—what is the proper use of emotions? Psychologists and other authorities needlessly disagree on the subject.

Emotional maturity is exercising proper self-control over the psyche—the element that gives us intellect and free moral agency, as opposed to animals, which function on instinct.

As the Bible says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32, NKJ). This character trait of ruling one's spirit is the foundation of emotional maturity.

Emotional immaturity is allowing human nature free expression—seeing every circumstance through the eyes of feelings alone—letting emotions and not considered reason dominate the mind.

Social psychologist Carol Tarvis, speaking about uncontrolled emotion, says, "An emotion without social rules of containment and expression is like an egg without a shell: a gooey mess."

Uncontrolled emotion—emotional immaturity—quickly becomes habitual.

Emotions as Habits

A habit is a learned pattern of acting—a way of behaving that has become routine.

The human brain is able to form habits to free itself from having to consciously consider mundane, everyday tasks. We don't have to think about tying a shoe, walking, chewing. With these details han-

Emotional maturity is exercising proper self-control over the psyche—the element that gives us intellect and free moral agency, as opposed to animals, which function on instinct.



dled by habit, the brain can devote its attention to the more challenging, unfamiliar and potentially dangerous stimuli from among the thousands that bombard it every day.

The more times we do things or react to things a certain way, the more "worn" the neural circuits and pathways in the brain and nervous system become. This is how habits develop and become deeply rooted.

Thus, if a man reacts in anger every time his wife reminds him of some broken appliance that needs repair, he will develop a habit of snapping at her when she speaks to him. This poor emotional response does not foster a harmonious relationship.

A parent who does everything but stand on his head to stop a child from crying, every time the child cries, is teaching the child to manipulate others by misusing emotions. Or, the child with such a parent may come to believe that any display of emotion is wrong, begin to squelch feelings inside and become a walking time bomb later in life.

It follows, then, that we must develop self-control over our emotions. And we must practice that intelligent self-control until it becomes habit.

Anger, for instance, is one of the strongest emotions, and one of the most dangerous, potentially. How many murders have occurred among family members because anger was not properly controlled?

Today, in light of startling new evidence from psychological studies, a human debate is raging as to whether it is better to deal with anger by simply releasing it or by channeling it in different directions. Let's look at anger as an example of what we mean by emotional maturity.

Anger: Vent or Prevent?

The traditional assumption in psychotherapy is that anger should be ventilated; that is, expressed or "let out" to prevent stress and other health problems. The idea is that suppressed hostility is unhealthy and that one may "work off" hostility by hitting, breaking or throwing something.

But new experimental evidence challenges this theory. Social psychologist Carol Tarvis, in her new book *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, asserts that anger released, rather than anger suppressed or dealt with otherwise, causes stress and may well spawn more conflict.

Says Dr. Tarvis: "People who are most prone to give vent to their rage get angrier, not less angry. I observe a lot of hurt feelings among the recipients of rage. And I can plot the stages in a typical 'ventilating' marital argument: precipitating event, angry outburst, shouted recriminations, screaming or crying, the furious peak (sometimes accompanied by physical assault), exhaustion, sullen apology, or just sullenness. The cycle is replayed the next day or next week.

What in this is 'cathartic' [bringing release from tension]? Screaming? Throwing a pot? Does either action cause the anger to vanish or the angry spouse to feel better? Not that I can see."

Dr. Tarvis goes on to show that anger and stress are not necessarily related—people who deal with anger in more mature ways may well be healthier than those who subscribe to the "let it out" theory.

Reflecting about a situation that makes you angry, deciding on a reasonable, effective, calm response and then executing the response is far more effective and healthy than erupting emotionally, increasing your blood pressure and exacerbating tensions between you and whoever else is involved in the dispute.

Rethinking a provocation and deciding on appropriate, intelligent action is a more mature emotional response.

This conclusion sounds much like the advice offered by the biblical book of Proverbs:

"He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly" (Prov. 14:29).

"A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention" (Prov. 15:18).

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (verse 1).

The Bible offers much sound advice on building successful human relationships. The book of Proverbs in particular contains much useful information on self-control, much of it dealing with emotional maturity. You might just read through these proverbs sometime. They apply to everyday situations and are easy to understand, especially if you read in a modern translation. You may be surprised at the wisdom you'll find in them.

Lest anyone get the wrong idea, we must make this statement: We

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is allowing human nature
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are not saying there is never a time for the proper expression of anger. God created our emotions and all of them have their right uses.

The Bible shows that there is a proper time to show "righteous indignation." Even Jesus himself was angry on occasion, and with good cause.

But the type of anger Jesus expressed—the type we may express—is not selfish, depressing, resentful, hateful or violent toward other human beings. Righteous indignation seeks to teach people how to right wrongs. It feels stabbing sadness at the tragedies sin produces in this world. It is not destructive, but constructive.

Needed: Self-control

If our emotional responses are to function successfully with other people, we need habitually to make mature emotional responses. Good emotional habits can be formed just as bad emotional habits can, though breaking bad habits after years of practicing them can be difficult. Here are some practical points on forming good emotional habits:

• *Think before you respond.* Consider all the facts. If your child repeatedly asks for instructions about how to perform the same task, will it really help if you fly off the handle, raise your voice, do the job yourself or tell the child he or she is stupid? No.

If the child is sincerely trying to understand, you need to explain the instructions in a different way or determine specifically what your son or daughter doesn't understand, and carefully explain that part. Patience is a virtue.

A corollary to this point is to make sure you see the situation clearly. You should act on the situation, in other words, and not on what you may incorrectly *think* is the situation.

Perhaps you are waiting for someone to return a call from you,

and are growing more upset by the minute because you are sure the person is just ignoring you. Wait a minute! The person may be innocent. Are you sure he got your message and knows you want him to call back?

Work on being less impulsive—don't jump to conclusions. As Proverbs 18:13 says, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."

• *Be more tolerant of others.* Almost everyone has foibles and flaws—you may have some yourself! Give other people the benefit of the doubt and forgive their failures as long as they are really trying to overcome them.

After all, God will judge you according to how you judge others. Jesus said, "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

Also, when you react in a certain, habitual way to some irritation from someone else, you are actually allowing that person to control what you do. But why should you? Maintain your self-

control and don't be overcome by anger, resentment or impatience. You—not someone else or some bad emotional habit—should decide what you are going to do.

• *Ask for help.* When you are trying to develop a good habit, just as when you are trying to break a bad one, the support and encouragement of others can be invaluable. A reassuring word or wink from a mate or friend when you have properly controlled yourself in a certain situation can spur you to greater achievement.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. You are trying to improve yourself. That's nothing to be ashamed of.

• *Practice the good trait.* Hold your temper, but don't hold any resentment. Laugh when someone tells a good joke, and show proper sympathy when someone suffers a tragedy. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Performing the right trait enough times will ingrain it into your character as a good habit.

• *Replace the bad habits with good ones.* For most, developing emotional habits will first require that a lifetime's worth of bad emotional habits be broken. The struggle may be difficult, but it is not impossible to win. The only way to permanently free yourself from a bad habit is to replace it with a good one.

For example, merely gritting your teeth and absorbing provocation after provocation from some inconsiderate person is not going to develop a good emotional habit. You will only build up an inner rage—even hatred—toward the person, and eventually you'll probably do something you'll wish you hadn't, like explode. It's fine to learn to ignore the irritation, but at the same time you should learn to look at the situation differently, or ask the person to reconsider doing whatever he is doing, or avoid sim-

ilar situations as much as possible in the future.

• *Base your responses on God's way of giving.* In simplest terms, every effect in the world around us—broken families, wars, economic problems, poor labor relations, famine, loneliness—has a cause. Every effect is produced by following one or the other of two basic ways of life: the way of *give* or the way of *get*.

God's way is the way of *giving*—the way of love, helping others, serving, cooperating, thinking as much or more of others than you do of yourself. This is the way that produces every good result man could want. Remember Jesus' words? He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

The way of *get*—the way most people in this world follow—produces strife, unhappiness, conflict, war—and emotional upset! Emotionally immature people have not learned to base their responses on God's way of giving instead of the human, carnal way of getting. They tend to be selfish and view every situation only in terms of their own needs or desires. Emotionally mature people have learned to consider the needs of others and are, in general, more outgoing, secure and broadminded.

Giving, this last key to developing emotional maturity, is the most important and most far-reaching in its ramifications.

The Key: Outgoing Concern

This way of giving must be so strongly ingrained as a general habit that it is our complete motivation in every situation. Giving must be our central focus—it must, if you will, be our character. Giving in terms of emotion and every other area of life is a habit that must be learned.

Right character is, for those who

understand, God's character, and it is what mankind was actually created to develop.

Developing perfect, righteous character, including complete emotional maturity, ultimately requires living God's way, the way the Bible teaches, perfectly.

Living that way requires having God's Holy Spirit, which II Timothy 1:7 tells us is not "a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

God's Spirit, imparted to our minds, implants within us God's own mind and character. We change, through a process called conversion, from the selfish way of human nature, rejecting immature, carnal patterns of action, and begin to think the way God thinks, judge situations the way God judges them, act the way God acts. We practice God's way until it becomes our own nature—our constant habit.

It is the absence of God's Spirit and the giving way of life from the world in general that has caused every bad effect we see around us!

Think what a different world it could be! A world in contact with God, a world at peace—everyone happily cooperating with each other, under God's direction, to achieve ever greater progress and accomplishments. A world that knows no war, no violence, no broken homes, no mental illness, no emotional immaturity. A world built on solid families, love for fellowman and people getting along well with each other all the time.

The beginning of that world—the wonderful world tomorrow—is imminent. That is the message we proclaim. We all need to be preparing ourselves for that coming world, and we can look forward to it with joy and excited anticipation. □

For Married Couples . . .

Words that Hurt, Words that Help

Careless words do enormous damage. But you can root them out of your vocabulary!

“HOW many times do I have to tell you . . . ?” “What’s the matter with you?” “The trouble with you is . . . !” “How dumb can you be?!” “Can’t you ever do anything right?” “You *always* do that!” “You *never* . . . !”

How often do we hear persons demeaned—belittled—by such careless and harmful statements?

Or by these:

“If you’re so smart . . .” “All you ever do is . . . !” “Why can’t you be like . . . ?” “You look like a . . .” “You’d forget your . . . if it wasn’t . . . !”

These and many similar put-downs seem automatically to pop out of many mouths—perhaps yours—in some frustrating moment or difficulty with others.

Sarcasm, name-calling, put-downs, accusations, sweeping negative overstatements are all too common. Others do it. Perhaps we learned to do it too. Maybe they

are such a habit, we don’t even realize their harmful impact.

What we’re really saying is: “I don’t respect you. I don’t care for your feelings as a person. You’re below me!” The attitude behind put-down, belittling words is pride. It’s human self-exaltation!

Cutting, belittling words and phrases need to be rooted out of our lives. Repeated often enough, demeaning put-downs get through the toughest skin and cause anything from a distorted sense of shame to blind rage. Or mental depression, mental illness or suicide. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue,” warns Scripture (Prov. 18:21).

Parents to Children

Children too frequently bear the brunt of put-down statements or demeaning words from parents or others. Such words turn some youths into totally crushed, inward-looking persons. They feel worthless.

Other youths try to protect their tender egos from the hurts of such statements by hardening attitudes of disrespect to adults or shouting more demeaning insults to other

children. The vicious cycle proliferates.

The habit of saying, “You *always* do something wrong!” or “You’ll *never* learn!” can turn an able, talented child into a youth or adult of stunted intelligence and achievement; an individual with little confidence.

Dr. Selma Fraiber in her book *The Magic Years* says, “A child needs to feel our disapproval at times, but if our reaction is of such strength that the child feels worthless and despised for his offense, we have abused our powers as parents and have created the possibility that exaggerated guilt feelings and self-hatred will play a part in this child’s personality development.”

Words That Help

In your next aggravating situation, instead of spurring out a harsh, cutting or demeaning response to someone, put a governor on your mouth. Instead say: “Please . . .” “Please hold the door wider . . .” “Please be neater . . .” Please be more careful . . . Please let me show you.”

Please is a word that helps us show respect. It puts our minds in a more constructive frame. We deal with others in a more positive and beneficial way.

Maybe a child accidentally knocks over a glass of some drink (and who hasn’t?). An uncaring person might respond: “You careless kid. Watch what you’re doing!”

What’s so damaging about such a statement is that we are *branding* a child with a characteristic (carelessness) that may not be true at all. Maybe the parents have failed to set the table properly for children, or have failed to train the child to be more careful.

How much more helpful to quietly say in such a situation, “Now go get a sponge and clean it up. And please do be more careful.” The child isn’t branded as totally inept; instead we express faith in the child’s ability to solve the problem and be more careful.

So often we hear individuals retort in some frustrating situation with wild overstatements, such as “You *always* . . .” or “You *never* . . . !”

The danger with such statements is in creating a false or exaggerated reality. The person we are accusing probably at times does do what we want. "You never . . ." starts to program a false reality in the accuser's mind. That discourages the accused person from doing anything if the accuser so carelessly forgets the beneficial things he or she has done.

Why not say, "Please, I would appreciate it if you would. . . ." Or "Would you help me . . .?" Or "Would you please . . .?"

We're more apt to spout out some curt or hurting words when we're tired or emotionally upset. The children run up and shout, "Read us a story!" Or a wife says, "I need your help." Instead of a harsh "No!" or "Don't bother me!" say, "I am exhausted and upset. Please wait awhile first, OK?"

You've explained your feelings without putting someone down in the process. And you have not closed the door to positive help later.

Rather than responding to someone's mistake with a demeaning put-down, we can show disapproval but still be respectful by saying, "I don't like what you did." Be specific about the situation. Don't label the person with damaging names or shoot out a clever put-down. You only create or compound bad feelings, or another problem.

The key to saying helpful rather than harmful words to others is always to show *respect*.

Break the Cycle

If you've been guilty of expressing

demeaning, put-down statements to others, stop and ask yourself if you would like them said to you. Of course you wouldn't.



But if you now stop expressing hurtful words to others there may be some delay in favorable replies to you. People you've offended want to know if you've really changed. It may take time to heal

old wounds. If others respond with cutting words, resist the temptation to retort.

Break the vicious cycle of careless put-downs. Show respect and care for the feelings of others. In time others will show more respect and care for you.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). And, "Heavenness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad" (Prov. 12:25). "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life . . ." (Prov. 13:3).

What about you? Do your words wound and hurt others? Or do they help and edify?

The uncontrolled tongue, said the apostle James, "is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God . . . and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:8-10).

Keep in mind what Jesus Christ said: "... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things [including good words]; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things [including evil words]. But I say unto you, That every idle word that

men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:34-36).

Strive to make your words, words that help—not words that hurt! □

ROLAND REESE—PT

And for Teens . . .

Are You Sure EVERYBODY'S DOING IT?

Here's a subject of vital interest to all young people.

"IT'S going against everything I believe in, but there's still this thought in my mind that it's going to happen, sooner or later. . . ."

The letter was from an attractive teenage girl, a subscriber to *Youth*, our magazine for young people. In spite of the pressures of her friends at school, the permissive society we live in and the constant bombardment of immoral television and movies, she set certain sexual values and standards for herself.

But now, approaching her mid-teens, Cindy (not her real name) finds herself weakening. She is confused and worried about her fluctuating desires and feelings. Is she really old-fashioned in her thinking like some of the young men she dates say?

"They expect me to do things I go against. They expect me to go to bed with them, and when I tell them no, they tell me to grow up."

How would you answer Cindy? I've read and reread her letter and I believe there are more Cindys (and Susies and Tonys and Bills) out there, with moral standards they're having a difficult time upholding, than we might think.

Who's Old-fashioned?

Feeling good about yourself,

whether male or female, and desiring to maintain a certain sense of self-respect, is not old-fashioned. That's a natural and right emotion for every human being who has ever been born.

On the other hand, a lack of concern for others' future sexual lives is as "old as the hills" too. We didn't create sex and lovemaking in the 20th century.

Cindy continues: "As far as getting to do the same things as the other kids in high school, I believe I should wait and share my body with the guy I really love and devote my life to." How many of you teenage fellows, when you're ready to begin a family and home, wouldn't like to meet this girl? Or have you given up on there being any Cindys left?

"Everyone talks about making love, but it makes me sick. If they really loved each other, they wouldn't have someone else every other week." Very perceptive, Cindy.

Is what's going on out there really love, or is it the not-too-cleverly disguised counterfeit *lust*? Too often it's lust—a total lack of real love and concern for another. We need to get our definitions straight!

Everyone needs to love and to be loved, and not just by one's family. As Cindy matures physically she realizes that more and more.

"Maybe I'm just lonely. I need someone to hold me. I want to feel like someone really loves me. And

sometimes parents, family and friends don't fill that longing. What should I do?"

Cindy is at a turning point in her life. She's being pressured into making decisions that she shouldn't have to face until she is out of her teenage years.

But this is the real world. You young people are being forced to grow up quickly. You're being expected to make adult decisions daily, not only by your friends, but by adults. Why is Cindy at her tender age alone with young men so immature in their thinking that they've labeled her body some sort of personal sexual experimentation zone?

And you young men, realize that there are certain girls who will experiment with your feelings and cast you aside like an empty soft drink can. That's the way you feel afterward: crushed, empty and used—a worthless piece of litter.

They'll compare your performance with others. You're just someone for them to make fun of with their friends. A humiliating experience? You bet. One that neither you nor anyone else, no matter what age, should ever have to suffer.

Be wary. It's an experience that can pervert your feelings about the opposite sex and affect your sexual life, even in marriage.

A Gift From God

Sex is a beautiful gift from God. These warm, titillating sensations didn't just evolve from nowhere. Those almost overpowering needs for love and companionship were put there for a divine purpose. God meant for you to experience them. He's not trying to keep you from having a good time. His guidelines are so you can experience to the fullest extent what he designed for you to enjoy.

Does that sound strange? Haven't you sometimes felt that God doesn't want you to have fun? That isn't true.

Do you know what God really wants for you? He wants you to be the attractive, healthy, wholesome, talented person you hardly dare to dream about. Well-balanced, popular with both young and old—that's what he wants for you. He

wants you to be looked up to and respected. He wants you to find the most wonderful fellow or girl to date and finally marry. He wants you to experience the most satisfying, exciting sexual moments with that person that can be experienced. He designed you to have that kind of life.

The problem is most people don't believe it. Their thinking is all turned upside down. They think moral guidelines are there to keep them from full enjoyment of their senses. No, they're there to protect, to shield from what would certainly ruin those beautiful years ahead.

Hanging in There

Cindy (you know who you are), I hope you hang in there.

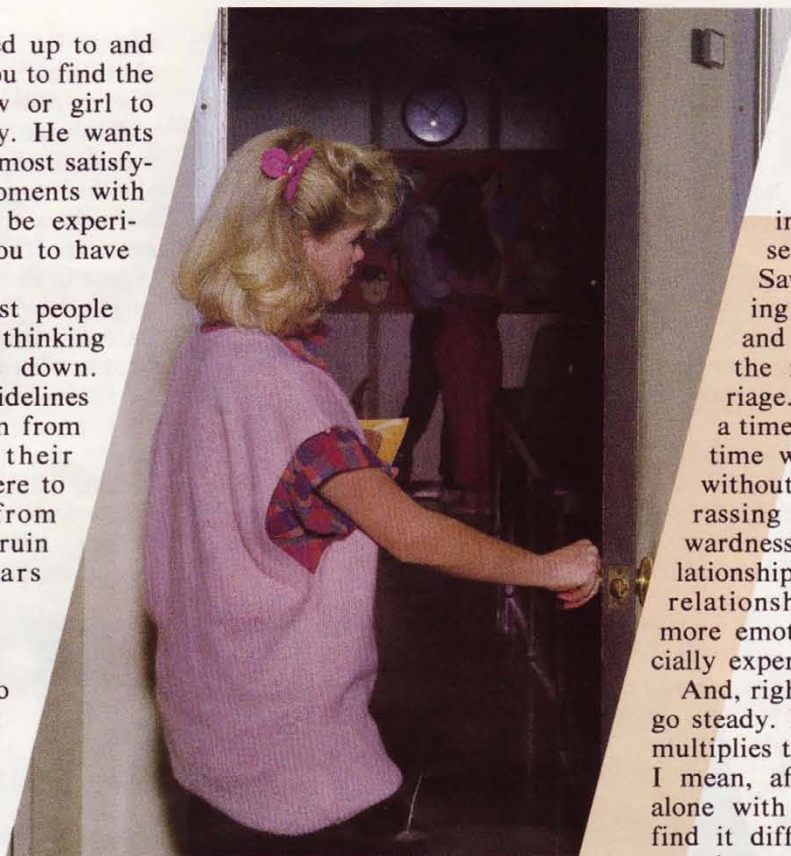
I hope Cindy doesn't make the big mistake she's seen her friends make—

the unwanted pregnancies, the ruined lives. It won't be easy. It's easier with parental support, but in many instances teens are not getting this support because parents are confused too. Many have just given up on their kids. I'm sure Cindy's parents would be surprised to know how she really feels.

But, teens, give your parents a break. They find talking to you about sex is one of the hardest things they have ever tried to do. So they procrastinate. Finally when they realize you're past puberty and growing up fast, some self-consciously offer you, male or female, birth-control advice. If that's happened to you, I'm sure you felt confused. You may have wondered: What are my parents trying to tell me? Is it OK to do it as long as I don't get pregnant or, if a fellow, if I don't get someone else pregnant?

Parents mean well, but many times they have been intimidated by the society we live in. Parents are pictured by the media as fumbling, bumbling fools who are having little success governing their own sex lives, let alone those of their children. And parents have come to believe it.

What a travesty. If parents have



made serious mistakes, that should be all the more reason to instruct their children and to try to protect them from the same pain.

Young people, if you're determined to have that bright future that can be yours, the one that God has designed for you to have, you're going to have to take charge of your own life and have a plan.

If well-meaning adults, doctors, nurses or parents, offer you birth-control aids, realize their motivation is to protect you. But also know that sexual intercourse is much more than the physical act they imply. Sex before marriage is not OK, even if nobody gets pregnant or contracts a venereal disease or STD as they call them now.

Sexually transmissible diseases—I guess that sounds nicer. But there's nothing nice about contracting one or several of the venereal diseases rampant today.

It Won't Be Easy

In today's society, saying no to sex is not going to be easy in every circumstance. Nothing worth having is ever easy to attain. It takes personal courage and determination on your part. We're sexual beings. Sex is a most powerful

driving force in our lives. Respect that force. Don't underestimate its power in your life.

Put off until later going out on dates by yourself, just the two of you. Save this one-on-one dating for when you are older and are ready to consider the responsibilities of marriage. Your youth should be a time to have a relaxing good time with a group of friends without the oftentimes embarrassing discomfort and awkwardness that a single-dating relationship can bring. Save such relationships for when you're more emotionally mature and socially experienced.

And, right along with that, don't go steady. Dating only one person multiplies the pressure to have sex. I mean, after hundreds of hours alone with one another, you can find it difficult to maintain your moral standards. You have the freedom, while you're a teenager, to get to know and learn about the personalities and likes and dislikes of a lot of people. So why cheat yourself. You'll only be a teenager once.

Get involved in positive activities that you can enjoy with a lot of young people. Spend time developing your skills in a sport or activity that will round out your personality. Make some money; learn how to enjoy your work.

You may even be alone while you're developing certain of your talents, but believe me, once you've done it, the sense of self-respect you feel and the recognition of your abilities by others is well worth the price. Be the best at whatever interests you most.

Avoid Frustration

Did you know the lovemaking that precedes actual sexual intercourse is a part of that sexual act? This touching, prolonged kissing and fondling is a vital, integral part of sexual intercourse in marriage. God did not intend for people to indulge in these acts before marriage—another good reason not to date alone or go steady.

Such lovemaking was designed

to heighten the sensations of the physical union of two bodies. To try to experience as much as you can and go as far as you can without going all the way, kidding yourself that you are not doing anything wrong, is stupid—and pretty frustrating too.

Some older teens, after deciding they're ready for marriage, justify their sexual activities by convincing each other they are just checking out their sexual compatibility before they marry. Oh, really?

Sexual compatibility is developed over a period of time. Not taking this into consideration can make you believe you're not compatible. Many a close relationship has been ruined by introducing sex into it prematurely. You can lose a person you love deeply that way.

Remember, whether male or female, to respect that sexual drive in your bodies and realize you can't play around with it and not get hurt in a very intimate, devastatingly painful way.

Avoid pornographic literature and movies.

Pornography distorts your perception of sex, and an obsession with it can pervert your mind into weird notions of what sexual enjoyment is all about. Pornography and the abuses that often go along with it dull sexual senses and steal pleasures awaiting you in marriage.

Also avoid destroying good judgment with alcohol and drugs. Don't ruin your entire life for one evening of chemical euphoria.

Those of you who have already made some mistakes, chalk them up to learning the hard way. But learn the lesson, don't keep repeat-

ing the same mistakes. You can straighten out your life.

Talk to Parents

Try to talk to your parents about your feelings. Ask for their support. They may not understand that when they allow you to be alone and unchaperoned with a friend of the opposite sex, they are placing you in a compromising situation that you may be unable to control. Parents tend to think of you as their little boys and girls still and avoid facing up to the fact that you now have strong sexual drives.

Ask them to help provide opportunities for the balanced social and recreational opportunities you and



your friends need. Parents may be tired and filled with problems of their own, but it would be difficult for them not to respond when you point out the need. Of course, don't expect your home to become a total entertainment center at all hours, day or night.

Choose Friends Wisely

Now comes another hard part—getting yourself out of the entanglements you are already involved in. Be honest. Go to the person you may be steadily dating and tell him or her how you feel. Tell your friend you're not turning against

him or her as a friend, but make it clear that what you want is a friend, not a lover.

Evaluate your friends and their moral standards—even if you're in the "in" crowd. In the long run it's not who's in the "in" crowd that matters. It's your success and happiness in the future that matters. It might be interesting to ask your parents whatever happened to the people who were in the "in" crowd at their high school. Where are they now and how successful and happy are they?

This is not going to be a long dissertation on the dos and don'ts of sex. It's too broad a subject. However, young people might wish to write for a book that covers the subject in depth—*The Missing Dimension in Sex*. It discusses going steady, dating, the best age for marriage and other instruction vital to the happiness and fulfillment of teenagers and adults. It is absolutely free. It is also available in many libraries.

By the way, you can request your own free subscription to *Youth*. This high-quality full-color magazine for teenagers has articles on dating, sexual morals and a wide variety of subjects of interest to young people.

We do care about you, Cindy, and all you others out there who are bucking a crowd on its way to venereal disease, unwanted pregnancies, unhappy and broken marriages and a generally miserable, unsatisfying life. You have the opportunity to avoid these painful problems and, instead, to have the enjoyment now and the tremendous marriage later that God intended.

Cindy—stick up for your values. You're definitely worth it! □

JUST mention child rearing and the familiar questions begin. How exactly do we successfully rear our children, especially in this 20th century, and particularly now in the '80s and the approaching '90s?

A recent survey¹ shows that how to be a good parent is the most important element reflecting what success is. So let's put the emphasis in child rearing where it should be: on parenting.

Are there positive steps we can take to ensure success? Yes, there are five key principles of positive parenting. And, if followed, they will pay handsome dividends.

Time was when childhood for most typified a marvelous golden age of excitement, discoveries and good times; a time to learn about life with all of its beauty and complexity, and to enjoy living surrounded by love and concern, patience and delight.

But times have changed. This world and its ways make children old before their time. What has happened to childhood?

It is time we looked at five valuable principles concerning the parent-children relationship that have stood the test of time. They've been proven for thousands of years, and they can work for you. They are found in the Scriptures.

Interestingly, they're being validated by many of today's social scientists. Far from being out of date, they show us the way to begin solving the dilemma of how to be a good parent now.



Positive Parenting in Five Steps

God has so much to teach us in this crucial area of life, and we owe it to our children to examine his teachings.

What we discover are attainable ideals toward which we can work. The closer we get to them, the more successful our parenting will be. These principles are both simple and profound.



Provide a Positive Environment

You only have to

look at those war-torn areas of the world, where violence is a daily occurrence, to see the effects on children. Millions of children today grow up knowing nothing but hatred and violence.

And all too soon, it is time for them to take *their* place on the battlefield.

But what about *your* home? Is it a mini war zone?

Abusive, violent parents produce, in most cases, more of the same. A house filled with resentments and quarreling simply will not produce stable, loving, balanced children.

Notice this scripture in Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (*New King James* throughout).

And look also at Ephesians 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Provocation of a child can produce anger and discouragement.

A peaceful, constructive environment is so important to our children's well-being. It's something we can all provide. It doesn't take money, but it does take self-control and a sense of responsibility.

Think about your home environment. Is it a haven of peace and stability, or yet another battleground?



Provide Positive Instruction and Correction

Perhaps the most familiar verse in the Bible about

children is found in Proverbs 22:6, reading from the Jewish Publication Society translation: "Train up a child in the way he should go,

¹ *Crime and Human Nature / The Definitive Study of the Causes of Crime*, by James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Herrnstein.

and *even* when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Here the emphasis is on training for life. Notice that the verse reads, even when the child is old—that is to say, right into the later years early training has its beneficial effect.

What specific kinds of instruction should we be pursuing with our children? Whatever makes for a well-rounded, balanced, cheerful, hardworking, sociable, cooperative, law-abiding person. And here we must raise the subject of guidance and correction of behavior, and the parents’ attitude of mind in performing these tasks.

One important study on child-rearing practices showed that parents can be classified as either permissive or restrictive. They can also be described as warm or cold.

The combination of these characteristics gives us four possible types of parents: 1) warm-restrictive; 2) warm-permissive; 3) cold-restrictive; and 4) cold-permissive.

What this study also showed were the results of such parental approaches.

The warm-restrictive parents produced rule-conscious, law-abiding children who valued adult approval.

The warm-permissive parents produced children who were self-confident and very sociable, but would twist the rules. They were friendly, but spoiled.

The third group of parents described as cold and restrictive had children who were willing to obey, but were anxious and tended to be angry with themselves.

Finally, the fourth group—cold and permissive parents—raised hostile children who more often than not became delinquents.

Notice the preferred children were raised by warm yet rule-conscious parents—parents who set some bounds and rules for behavior, and combined that with love and affection.

Significantly, this finding from the social sciences completely supports what the Bible has always taught—that parents must teach the standards given in God’s revealed Word with love, and then maintain them by correction when necessary.

Unfortunately, the word *discipline* has negative connotations today—yet its original root, the meaning in Latin, is concerned with teaching. The word for a student, or pupil, in Latin is *discipulus*, meaning one who is taught, or one who is learning. Discipline or correction, when rightly understood and practiced, is simply another aspect of teaching.

Speaking very plainly, the book of Proverbs shows how far afield we’ve gone in our 20th century understanding of parenting. Chapter 13 and verse 24 teaches the very opposite of what many parents believe to be right. It says of a father’s relationship with his son, “. . . he who loves him [and notice that—loves him] disciplines him promptly.”

Many have been taught that discipline equals hatred, not love. Yet the Bible is very clear that discipline is simply a part of love.

We’ve been very greatly misled by too many so-called experts who want to tamper with this time-honored and God-given principle.

Notice the end result of a lack of speedy correction. It’s found in Ecclesiastes 8:11: “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

It’s important to stress that correction should never be done in haste, or in a fit of temper or anger. God requires us as parents to exercise great care in our child-rearing methods. But it should be done promptly.

Ephesians 6:4 gives the balance in this matter. “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Significantly, the word *training*, or *nurture*, includes the concept of discipline. Remember, too, the results of that study of warm, loving parenting accompanied by restrictions. Children from such homes are the most well adjusted.

The study also focused on the causes of crime: “Delinquents were also much more likely to come from homes with a quarrelsome rather than affectionate or cohesive atmosphere. The combined effect

of these two factors—warmth (or its absence) and consistent discipline (or its absence)—was powerful.”

So positive instruction and correction within a warm, loving family is our second major principle.



Provide Sound Spiritual Guidance

Provide sound spiritual guidance is our third positive parenting principle.

Training for life involves more than physical training and just training of the mind. It includes guidance in the spiritual aspects of life, things that determine our values, ethics and morals.

Many agree that the basis of Western society’s ethics and morals and its legal system is to be found in the Ten Commandments. Now the Bible shows that after these laws were given, specific instruction was also given to parents on relating these 10 great laws to children.

Notice in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “And 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.”

The emphasis here is on teaching moral principles continuously in the various experiences and activities of the day.

As we have opportunity to communicate with our children, to help them grow and develop, we must not neglect this vital spiritual area. Parents worry over whether they should even teach their value system to their children. Often they will leave it to someone else.

So many children today grow up without any moral foundation, without any real understanding of right and wrong. That is why our families are in crisis today.

Let’s now come to our fourth principle concerning positive parenting.



Fathers Must Be Fathers

The role of father

in the family is a much disputed and changing one. Throughout history, societies have swung from one extreme to the other. Sometimes men are excessively in control; and in others, women exert most influence.

Today, we find the father figure very much diminished, and the father's role in the family is weakened by his own lack of leadership and by the trends in society.

But the Bible shows that the father's role in the family is vital and nonnegotiable. It is not interchangeable with the mother's role, despite modern attempts to make it so.

How then do fathers become fathers? The answer is by taking up the reins of leadership in the family.

The Bible teaches that the father is meant to be a loving authority figure—the head of his home, his wife and his children. Notice, though, I said a *loving* authority figure—not an inconsiderate, selfish tyrant.

Many men come home from work and spend the evening in front of the television set. They fool themselves that they are home with the family. It is possible to be present and absent at the same time. And who suffers? Everyone! Wife, children and husband.

God does not take this abdication of responsibility lightly. He puts a lot of the blame for the fracturing of society on the father.

About 2,300 years ago, the prophet Malachi spoke of our day. He warned of the consequences of fathers not doing their jobs. Read it in Malachi 4, beginning in verse 5: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

The Hebrew word translated as *curse* is rendered "utter destruction" elsewhere in the Moffatt translation of the Bible. God is telling us through Malachi that complete disintegration of the earth and its social fabric will strike unless fathers start doing their jobs, unless there's a return to

right family relationships based on his law.

That is quite a statement. Why would God say that? Because fathers hold the key to the problem. They are supposed to lead. And when leadership is weak, a power vacuum is created, and the fabric of society begins to come apart.

One of the major problems of today's families is the lack of warm, loving, fatherly leadership.

There are many families that don't have a father as the head. I know there are many widows, divorcees and single mothers who must be saying, "Then what can I do? Are my children destined to fail?" The answer is no.

But the single or widowed mother must compensate powerfully for the lack of male leadership in the home. She must seek out opportunities to show her children positive examples of such leadership. She must let them experience such families in operation. It *can* be done.

The ideal, of course, is to be married to such a man. But in circumstances where this is not possible, God makes a number of powerful promises.

In Psalm 68:5-6, God promises to be this: "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity. . . ."

I know from personal experience that God keeps these promises. God *does* hear the cry of the widow and the fatherless.

Our fifth and final principle of positive parenting is the companion to number four.



Mothers Must Be Mothers

A few years ago, the cry went out to radically alter the role of

women. But it has not paid off.

A number of the pioneer feminists are now reversing their earlier advice. What they fought for 20 years ago, they now acknowledge was harmful to women. But the damage is done.

Listen to this remarkable state-

ment about traditional families in *Commentary* magazine: "The fact remains that families of this sort experience far lower rates of divorce, poverty, and other forms of social pathology. In short, women do best when they raise children with a hard-working man. By the test of experience, sexual egalitarians have lost the argument."

A fulfilling life seems to elude many part-time mothers. There's something wrong, many think—and they are right! It is simply this: A basic spiritual law is being violated, and women and families are suffering as a result.

The New Testament shows older women have a role in teaching younger, married women how to succeed. We read that in Titus 2:4-5.

In today's society, circumstances beyond our control can make aligning ourselves with God's laws of the family difficult. But remember, we *can* improve, we *can* change, with God's help!

As Jesus himself said in Mark 10:27, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." This is a remarkable statement, an unbreakable promise you can claim in setting your family on the right track.

Clearly, a woman's ideal role is working together with her husband and giving proper time and attention to their children. If at all possible, the mother should be at home with her children.

The results of doing so are clearly shown in Proverbs 31, beginning in verse 28:

"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.' . . . a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

It is critically important that a mother have the time to spend with her children. The father cannot neglect his responsibility either. It has to be a team effort.

If you spend the time to put into action and apply these five points, the results will be so incredibly rewarding. □