

Singles Seek God and Get Family

Some people think singles have all the time in the world, so they ask them to do more than they can do, causing chaos in their lives. Some singles think they have time to do everything and end up with chaotic lives when they run out of time. There are also singles who spend huge amounts of time either in efforts to be married or in coping with sadness over not being married. All of the above can land them in need of the order God gives in His Word.

Along with God's Word of Truth, there are many Christian resources from books to support groups that offer advice to help singles face struggles. Some of the best advice we found was offered by singles for singles because they speak from experience. The best advice came from one single who said, "Seek God first and everything else will fall into place" (Matthew 6:33).

This does not mean singles who seek God first will not face the feeling of someone or something missing from their lives or, worse yet, a world expecting them to get married. It means God will help them face every struggle and lift them up when they are down. And God does the best lifting up through His Word, where we read passages that say single people have the ability and time to serve God and others better than married couples who often have the responsibility and concern for others that can hinder their service to God (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).

So, congregations can encourage single people in their service to the Lord. Do remember that some singles can have more responsibilities than married couples because everyone calls upon them for help. Before giving them more to do, encourage them in what they are already doing to help and serve others for the Lord.

Single people can be by far some of the most valuable members of society and of our congregation. Be sure your congregation tells singles how important they are. Give them this article. Encouragement can keep their spirits high and their service in Jesus' name coming willingly and joyfully. Everyone will be blessed.

If you are single or know someone who is, check out the following suggestions for singles from singles:

- If you feel alone, reach out to someone else.
- If your life is filled with all you love to do, but you still feel empty, reach out to help others and you will be filled with all good things.
- And don't be afraid to spend time alone, especially if you are going to spend it with God. Alone time offers valuable opportunities to think, pray, define, and plan how to seek God first so that everything else will fall into place.

The world is a busy, active place that rarely leaves time for being alone. But, rather than become stressed out by busy-ness or even saddened by loneliness, enjoy your time alone with God. Certainly, God loves us and desires us to come to Him, but we actually need Him more, we need to come to Him alone and often to receive His order and peace. Without these, life is chaos.

God has given singles all that is necessary to be single and happy. There is definitely no need to sigh when a happy family strolls by because we are all members of God's very large family. As brothers and sisters in Christ meet together in joyful service to the Lord their lives and faith and joy become complete.

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Prevent Single Parent Explosions!

Single Moms sometimes start out hoping they will be the kind of women whose children give them roses on Mother's Day and a new five-eighth inch crescent wrench on Father's Day. Single Dads tend to hope for similar gifts that seem to prove they can be both mom and dad to their children. After five or ten years, single parents usually realize their thinking may have been somewhat naive. Single parents cannot be both mother and father to their children no matter how hard they try.

Perhaps there was a time when almost all moms were home cooking and making a cozy home for their families and almost all dads were out working hard to support their families. Indeed, there still are families who function that way, and this is wonderful! However, the number of single parent families is growing. All of the cooking, cleaning, coziness, supplying of food and clothing and repairs fall into the hands of one person - the single parent.

If single parents fall into the chaos of trying to be all things to all people, their lives can explode. The demands can leave them unable to sort things out logically. They may lose control and discover the best they can do is survive one day at a time.

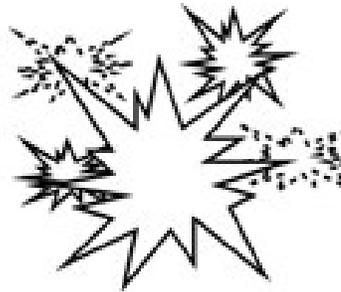
Some days, single parents in survival mode are too tired to say "no" - to set limits - to get involved at school - and "yes," even to discipline. That's why single parents and even some married parents need help to keep themselves from the chaos that causes explosions that hurt them and everyone involved. Congregations can help them by sharing this article.

The following tips come from parents who have been single and have learned to survive and thrive! The tips from Christian parents are the best!

- Make time for God and He will supply the time you need. While you are taking care of your family, God will be taking care of You.
- Don't swim against the tide and try to live by the standards others unwittingly set for you.
- If you cannot do a task, consider whether it actually needs to be done in the first place.
- Most single Moms know they no longer need to sew their own clothes and finish a hand stitched quilt. Single Dads do not have to

cook elaborate meals or perm their little girl's hair. You will find more time to be the parent God desires you to be if you limit yourself to doing tasks you can actually accomplish.

- Let the laundry go for a day and take a walk with your kids. Bring home some fast food once in a while. Spend the time you save by not doing these tasks "right away" with your children. Give them something they crave, your attention.
- There is a concern that children of single parents tend to grow up too soon and have too much responsibility placed on their shoulders.



While we need to be cautious and considerate of our children's needs to be children, there are far too many children who are not being taught responsibility. Being a single parent offers an opportunity to lovingly teach children early and well the kinds of responsibilities that can help them succeed in their adult lives.

So, go ahead and ask your kids to help you cook and clean. Working together as a family gives children a sense of purpose and belonging in a world where too many children are growing up feeling like they have no purpose and like they do not belong anywhere. Your lavish praises and sincere thanks for their help make them feel good, needed, proud, and very loved.

Don't forget to leave the house dirty once in a while and go play in the sandbox with your kids. They will love it - and it can help to keep you from exploding whether you are a single parent or not.

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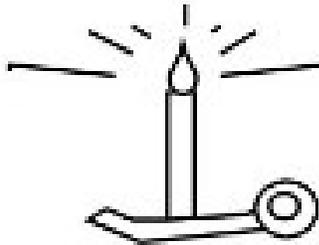
A Light For the Widowed and Divorced

DID YOU KNOW? Those experiencing divorce or death can share the same pain that comes from grief. Congregations can help by being the light and strength of God's presence in their pain over loss.

When grief over the death of a loved one is not expressed, the grief can grow and cause the chaos of overwhelming sorrow. When we do not acknowledge the pain of divorce, others may not realize divorce is devastating and decide to divorce not knowing the painful chaos it causes. So, congregations who help widowed and divorced people express their grief can help to prevent the pain and chaos death and divorce can cause. Both separate couples and that separation hurts because God has joined two people together and made them one (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7-8, Ephesians 5:31). Divorce can pierce the soul just as painfully as the death of a loved one.

And There's More:

- Congregation members send Christian sympathy cards in times of death. When divorce occurs, send cards that share God's help and strength in times of pain.
- Those touched by divorce or death often need time to just talk. Be willing to listen. Don't be alarmed by displays of anger and/or guilt or try to resolve them. Just listen and let their pain flow out so there is room for healing to come in. Don't be afraid of tears. Be ready for them. They are healthy and actually hold healing qualities.
- Divorced and widowed individuals usually need to take over the responsibilities of the person they have lost. This is when chaos can arise. They can become overwhelmed, confused, and can make bad choices that add to their pain. Lending a hand or just being there for support can be of tremendous help. Leading them to God for the order and peace only He can give is the best help of all.
- In death or divorce, a tragedy has occurred, but it is never very helpful or wise to try to explain why it happened. Nor is mention of remarriage or loving again particularly helpful or comforting to those experiencing this loss.



- Children no matter how young should be allowed and lovingly encouraged to talk about how they feel about death or divorce. Set a quiet time aside to be alone with them. Talk about things in general at first and move slowly into asking how they feel about the death or divorce.

- Let children know it's OK to feel angry or sad or any way they feel because that's exactly how death or divorce make people feel. Deal with their feelings according to how mild or severe they may be. *Don't hesitate to seek out a trusted counselor to help children deal with death or divorce.*

- **Never** consciously or subconsciously assign the role of the person missing due to death or divorce to the oldest son or daughter.

- **Never** attempt to replace the missing person. If remarriage does occur, help children accept an additional mother or father or friend.

- **Above all** remember that sharing love - God's love and yours - can heal the deepest wounds and be the light and strength of people dealing with death or divorce during some very dark times. Be patient, understanding, and most of all available. Trust God to guide you in all that you say and do. Continually share that God will heal the pain of death or divorce over time because that is exactly what He will do.

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Make Good Christmas Memories

Not Just For Blended Families

Christmas should be filled with joyful memories. In reality, it can be pure chaos. The fast pace of normal family life can turn the rush of Christmas into a rat race of stress no one will want to remember. That is why this article was written, to help families create good Christmas memories they will never forget!

Christmas can be especially chaotic and frustrating for blended families wanting to retain the old while they need to make new memories. However, blended or not, if your family Christmases have been an experience you want to forget, try the following suggestions to create memories of Christmas you can remember with great joy:

First, bring your entire family together and pray. Ask God to bless your family with a true understanding of God's love for all people and the opportunity to share it this Christmas.

Next, ask, "Who wants to experience the best Christmas ever?" Before anyone can answer, explain, "This Christmas is not going to be about us. We have done that. This year let's try something different, something wonderful! Let's do something for others!"

Go on to explain, "This Christmas, only things that absolutely need to be done will be done. Everything else will be left undone or done later, after Christmas or even in the New Year! Instead, we will spend all of our time doing things that spread the true meaning of Christmas." Assure them that their efforts will be blessed with Christmas memories they will never forget.

Now, the something wonderful you and your family do can be big or start little. Most importantly, let each member make their own decision in the matter.

Offer suggestions like:

- invite someone from a nursing home or even a homeless shelter for Christmas dinner.
- collect food and raise money for a local food pantry.
- serve food in a soup kitchen on Christmas day.

- buy gifts for a needy family - contact the Red Cross or Salvation Army for the name of a needy family.

- Go "Christmas Caroling!" Ask your pastor for names of shut-ins from your congregation. Ask friends and neighbors for names of people who are struggling, ill, or lonely, and even ask them to join you when you go caroling.

- Think of more ways to help others this Christmas, and throughout the year. Regardless of how many opportunities your family discovers, try to do them as a family. Begin each activity with a prayer, thanking God for sending each person in need to your family and ask for His help in meeting their needs.

If money is required for a helpful act:

- think of ways to earn or raise money.
- use money earmarked to buy your family members Christmas gifts to help others.

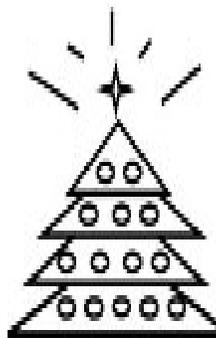
If time is required, give up:

- watching TV, computer, iphone, etc.
- time with friends or ask them to join you.
- things you like to do.
- THINK OF MORE...

Spend your extra time:

- baking Christmas cookies for others.
- setting up a Christmas tree for someone else.
- THINK OF MORE....

Your Christmas Will Be
Unforgettable!



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But, I'm Retired. I Just Want to Go Fishing!

When they retire, some folks just want to go fishing and forget about the crazy chaos that is often a part of working for a living. Everyone needs to rest, and that includes people who have worked hard all their lives. They deserve the peaceful retirement they have been dreaming about.

At the same time, Grandma Moses was 78 when she began painting. At 77, Albert Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Little-known Mary Denting was 82 when she began a telephone ministry for shut-ins. For these people, retirement was not an end to their life's work. They finally had the time to do the things they wanted to do all their lives.

So, get rid of the chaos in retirement, but don't get rid of all the things you have been wanting to do, especially the work God has for you to do. Today, healthy and active people are living to be over 100 years of age. That leaves them with lots of time to grow tired of just going fishing. Worse than growing tired, of course, is the possibility of growing old - fast.

So, as you retire, choose a slower pace. Take time to enjoy life and the people around you. "Stop and smell the roses" and by all means go fishing to your heart's content. Just remember how much you can still accomplish on top of all of that during retirement.

Never retire to do nothing. Keeping body and mind active are keys to remaining happy and healthy and *young at heart*. You don't need to stay so busy that your life is chaotic. Just **stay needed**. Not feeling needed is a chief cause of emotional and physical problems in people of all ages. Retired persons are extremely susceptible.

Helping others will help you feel needed and keep your mind and body healthy. People who help others have little time to think of themselves. They don't have time to get depressed and they have the least chance of becoming senile or debilitated because their bodies and minds remain active and vital.



If you are looking for something to keep you active and feeling needed, find a mother desperate for help with her young children. Look for people who need someone to talk to. Speak with your pastor about what you can do to help him or others in your church. As you help others, especially out of love for the Lord, He will give you His peace each day of your retirement, peace that brings order and keeps chaos away.

Now, active retired persons will tell you that staying active is not a matter of finding something to do. There's plenty to do. It is a matter of wanting to do something. You have to pick yourself up and get yourself going. The more you get involved, the more you will want to be involved, and the more needed you will feel.

And don't limit yourself to physical activity. Remain spiritually active too. As you remain actively involved in God's Word, He will lead you to His order and give you peace even when chaos raises its ugly head. He will also help you pass on His peace to bring order to generations of chaos.

The happiest and healthiest retired people are the ones running all over the place, doing this and that for others, contributing here and there. The most content do it all in Jesus' name. They are needed, they are loved, and most of all, everyone wonders how the world ever got along without them before they retired.

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Hey, Who Brought us This Difficult Baby?

Difficult babies can very quickly bring chaos into their parents lives and they have been doing so for generations. One of the greatest blessings in life can become one of the greatest challenges for parents of difficult babies. Here are a few ideas to help bring order to the lives of parents with difficult babies. They have worked for generations, so be sure to pass them on.

When their baby is born, parents rejoice! They may also stay up night after night listening to their baby cry. While they know in their heart they are blessed their mind is muddled from lack of sleep. They may find themselves asking, "Who brought this difficult baby?"

In serious cases, parents can begin to feel powerless to please or calm their baby. Some cannot form a close bond with their newborn. Frustrated and exhausted, they may even have thoughts of mistreating the baby God has given them and can become overwhelmed by guilt. Ashamed, they withdraw from people who can help them.

Any feelings, serious or not, that keep parents from caring for their babies need to be dealt with. One night or 20 nights of listening to their baby cry can bring parents to tears. These parents need to hear that some babies cry - a lot! Once it is determined they are not ill or hurting from discomfort that can be relieved, any negative feelings parents struggle with over caring for their baby can be resolved as they talk about them and learn more from others about how to cope with the constant cries of their baby.

If you are a parent of a fussy infant, talk to people who have raised children. Congregations are a great place to find these people. This article is a great way for congregations to share help for crying babies.

You may be relieved to hear that you can leave a baby cry provided all emotional and physical needs are met. *For example:* Make sure diapers are dry, baby is fed, and nothing is causing the baby pain. Check for a fever or any sign of illness. Then, cuddle and love this wonderful gift from God amidst the crying for a short time before you place your baby tenderly into a crib and leave the room.

Check every few minutes to make sure your baby is safe and warm. Give a back rub and speak gently. Then leave. Keep yourself calm amidst babies crying by playing Christian music all day and all night. It will help to fill you with God's love that grows love in you for your baby, who will in time fall asleep.

Constantly pray for your baby and yourself, asking God to guide you. Seek His guidance in His Word even if you can only read a few verses in between the cries of your baby. Check local and online Christian bookstores for resources on parenting that can help you better understand and care for your child.

Knowing what to expect in terms of behavior and development can help to calm you, and your being calm helps to calm your baby.

Parents experiencing serious frustrations that could lead or have led to mistreatment of their baby or whose frustrations have not allowed bonding between them and their baby need to have these frustrations resolved by seeking professional counseling immediately. Contact a Christian family counselor your pastor may suggest or visit: parentsanonymous.org RIGHT NOW!

Congregations can help by providing Bible Studies, resources, and support groups for parents. Other Christian parents continue to be a good source of help and advice when caring for babies. Then, whatever is learned can be passed on to bring God's order to present and future generations of parents coping with the chaos that comes with difficult babies.

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Parents of Toddlers Deserve An Award

Parents of toddlers must deal with the chaos of tantrums, cleaning up one mess on top of another, and hearing the words, "no" and "why" every second. Then, all of their efforts are rewarded with an absolute refusal by their toddler to do anything they ask. These parents deserve an award and as a Christian congregation you can help them receive it! Share this article with them.

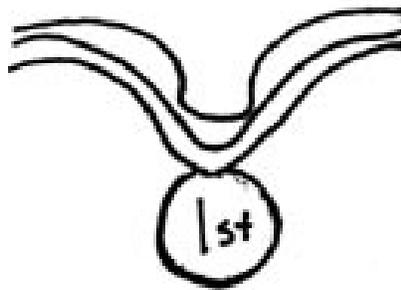
Parents of toddlers need God's guidance and the encouragement of fellow Christians to teach their toddlers to sit still when they want to run, be quiet when they want to scream, not spit out food they claim to hate, share toys they clearly do not want anyone else to have, and not punch other children even though other children may punch them first, *or so they say*.

Toddlers have a need to be negative and rebellious and their parents need help to remain positive. Congregations are the perfect place for parents to receive help, strength from God, and ideas from other parents to help them with their toddlers.

Congregation members can assure parents that when their toddlers say "no," it is a natural part of asserting their independence, not a personal attack on their parental authority. Did you know the "terrible two's" are often repeated during adolescence as a natural part of teens asserting their independence? It's true! All the work parents do to raise their toddler merely prepares them for parenting that same child during adolescence. All they need to do is survive parenting their toddler first.

Parents and toddlers receive strength from God to survive and thrive as they attend worship because that is exactly what hearing God's Word and singing hymns do for everyone who attends. So, invite them to worship, and help parents with their toddlers during worship. Provide Parenting Bible Studies and Christian books to help them understand their toddlers and to teach loving Christian parenting skills when they leave worship. Even provide Christian music to take home to strengthen them in faith and fill them with love for their child.

With Christian support, parents of toddlers can learn to change their toddlers ugly "no" attitude into a positive "yes" attitude with a smile, a joke, or a gentle but firm directive. They can learn to use words that understand the toddlers point of view but do not necessarily agree with it. They can endure the question, "Why?" more than they thought possible and even do the things they did not get done during the day (while caring for an active toddler) at night when they probably need to be sleeping.



Students studying to be doctors often work two or three shifts without sleep. Parents of toddlers work two or three years without ever getting enough sleep. They also have the great responsibility of determining the medical condition of their toddler long before a doctor ever enters the picture. They are not only earning an award, they are earning their degree - no their doctorate! It comes in the form of a child who has learned the lessons of faith and life well. It does not hang on a wall but, rather, it is written in their hearts where God resides and gives them His peace that brings order to their lives in the midst of chaos. As these parents pass on what they have learned from God and other Christians they help to bring order to the chaos in the lives of parents of toddlers in every generation.

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Stay on Target With Teens

During those turbulent teen years, parents may feel like they are beginning to lose their teens and in some ways they are. Teens have a healthy need to separate themselves from their parents to become independent adults. In the midst of what can be some pretty chaotic times, it is easy to forget that the teenage struggle for independence is necessary. Staying on target with and understanding where teens are at can ease the struggle and chaos.

During these chaotic years, congregations can help to bring God's order to parents and their teens by encouraging parents and teens to stay close to God and His Word for guidance to build strong, loving relationships with each other. This relationship can help to make the transition from teen to adult as smooth as possible. The teen struggle will still exist, but the chaos it causes can be limited by strong, loving relationships.

Congregations can also help parents stay on target with their teens by encouraging them to be available for them. It is easy to think teens don't want parents around. While that is an accurate description of what teens might think or say they want, it falls miles away from what they need. Teens need to talk to parents so they can make decisions about their faith and lives based on what their parents say. And knowing that they can talk to their parents *whenever they need or want to* builds security and stability into the often radically changing lives and hormones of teenagers

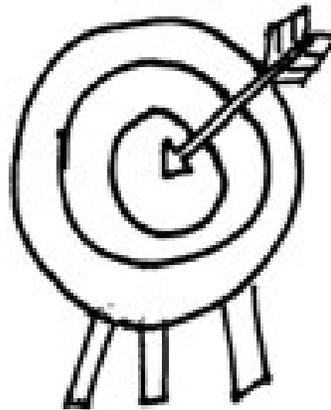
Being available for your teens requires rearranging schedules and leaving things undone just like when they were toddlers. It can reek havoc with what parents want and even need to do. Parents may not understand why or believe their teens need them so much. Congregations can share this article to help parents understand that being available is one of the most worthwhile steps parents can take to stay on target with teens, understand them better, and help them become independent adults.

Parents who are able to recognize and affirm that life for teens today is different from what it was in the past are on target with teens. Today, teens must make decisions their parents never had to make, cannot understand, or never even know exist. Parents

are better able to help their teens through their struggle for independence and into adulthood when their teens know they understand or are trying to understand what their lives are like today.

Too many teens die physically and spiritually every day after making a decision based on what the world says "is OK because everybody's doing it." It is critical for congregations to help parents and teens search the Scriptures and apply them to their faith and lives. Then, they can make decisions that please God and keep them safe physically and living eternally.

Along with searching and applying the Scriptures for spiritual help and strength, try the following practical suggestions for staying on target with teens:



- Don't try to be perfect; *be real*. Apologize when you are wrong or when you make a mistake.
- Laugh at yourself and your teens will laugh with you.
- Be honest and your teens will be honest.
- Above all, constantly place yourself and your teenager before the Lord in prayer to receive His guidance, strength, and peace.
- Share this article to keep parents on target with their teens and close to God, who alone can bring His order to the chaos caused by the teenage struggle for independence.

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Try these....Easy and Fun Ways To Teach Children God's Word

Help make the command from God to teach His Word to our children in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 fun for children and adults alike.

- Hang Scripture on Your Walls. Hang posters with passages from God's Word on walls, refrigerators, and wherever you have room. Read these passages and have your children repeat them as you work together until they can say them by memory. Refer to these passages frequently when speaking with your children and use them to not only teach your children God's Word, but to share what the passages mean and how to apply them to their faith and lives. Let your children know how much you respect and depend on God's Word for guidance and strength. They will learn to do the same.

- Make a game of memorization. One mother turned memorization into a playful competition while packing the dishwasher and putting food away with her children. First, she would help them repeat passages. Younger received a point for repeating passages, and older for completing passages she began. Winning points were determined ahead of time for prizes like a trip to the park, a friend overnight, or even getting out of the dishes. Her children learn the Scriptures and the dishes always got done before anyone knew it.

- Play a Card Game. Print Bible verses on 3 X5 cards. Each family member chooses a card. Those who recite their passage correctly at the end of the week get one point. Have younger children recite words of the passage according to their age and ability for one point. Players of all ages can choose more than one card each week to accumulate more points each week. As they do, they will learn more passages. Make prizes valuable to children but inexpensive for you like spending time with Dad or Mom alone, getting out of chores, choosing food they like for a meal, having a friend over, etc. As a family, even decide how many points each prize is worth. Then, players can choose prizes with their points.

- Make and Play a Board Game. Draw a game board making references to where Bible passages are found in the Bible (book, chapter, and verse) along a path that begins at the bottom of the page and moves up to heaven or to the end of the game. Give each player a penny to move along the path. Throw dice to determine moves. Players must look up and read the passages they land on. Read passages to younger players and have them repeat them after you. The first player to heaven wins. Remind players that by God's grace those who believe in Jesus will all be heaven.

Determine prizes as a family ahead of time.

Don't forget to play Bible trivia and Junior Bible Trivia, too!

God's Word Brings Order to Generations of Chaos!

The time you spend creating fun ways to teach your children *and yourself* God's Word will help to bring God's order to your family. As you pass it on, you will be helping to bring His order to generations of chaos.

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Congratulations!

Your are engaged!

An engagement is a time when the world can stand still as two people move together into a beautiful union treasured by God and adored by mankind. Sadly, it can also become a difficult time of sexual temptations. Pastors and families can help couples who are engaged prepare for a lasting marriage by sharing this article with them.

Living together as a married couple before marriage is turning faith and lives into spiritual chaos because it is out of God's order of sex after marriage. Sexual sin is one of the most harmful sins to commit because it is committed against our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18-19), but it is forgivable. However, the consequences recorded in studies of couples who have lived together are turning out to be painful and far reaching and are shared in this article for the benefit and learning of all who read it.

While engagement is a promise of commitment, it is not the strong and binding commitment of marriage. Without the commitment of marriage, one or both partners who engage in sex outside of marriage can report feeling used and even abused. These feelings are ending engagements immediately and marriages over time if they are not dealt with.

In God's eyes, two people who engage in sex outside of marriage become one (1 Corinthians 6:16). They are connected in an intimate spiritual bond that causes pain deep in the soul if they decide not to marry, pain that can be equal to the pain of divorce or death. When they remain together their sexual sin separates them from God and hinders them from being commit to God and each other. Even if and when they say their marriage vows, the commitment to God and each other is missing until they are able to repent.

Another consequence that plagues engaged couples who have sex outside of marriage arrives when they realize that *"their honeymoon is over"* before it ever began. What should have been an incredible time of discovery feels old and unavailable to them.

During pre-marriage counseling, pastors wisely advise sexually active couples to refrain from sex from that point until they are married and to ask God for the forgiveness that will restore them to the purity only He can give. They are attempting to help couples avoid the disappointments that arise from having already engaged in sex before their wedding night.

Other consequences of sexual sin outside of marriage may raise their ugly heads later in the marriage when as couples find out the time they spent engaging in sex prevented them from getting to know each other personally. It is tragic when these couples find out that they do not share the same goals, dreams, values, or the faith necessary to hold their marriage together.

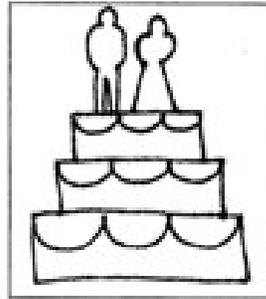
Extremely devastating is the distrust that can occur because one or both partners had sex outside of marriage. Uncertainty of who will be sexually faithful inside of marriage feeds the seed of jealousy and threatens to destroy their love and married life until they are able to commit to God and to each other and create

a spiritually lasting bond.

When God requires us to remain pure (Hebrews 13:4), He isn't limiting our freedom. God is protecting our relationship with Him and with our intended spouse so that we can be free of obstacles that keep us from forming and enjoying a lasting marriage. God offers forgiveness to all who confess their sins for the same reason. His love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) and when it lives in married couples, their vows and marriages remain strong in spite of all sins.

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Building a Marriage That Will Last

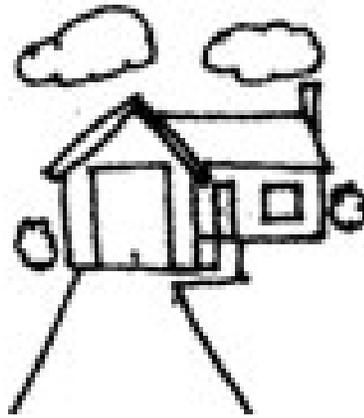
Incompatibility or poor communication and conflict resolution sparks a record number of divorces every year. Consequently, there are tons of resources available to aid married couples in learning how to communicate. Congregations can and should check out, refer couples to, and even purchase resources that reflect their faith views and then make these available to married couples and make sure couples receive a copy of this article.

Good communication requires your time and constant attention. Once you begin, *and you must begin*, you cannot ever stop. Communication is a life long process that must grow if it is going to be successful. The good news is, you can start small.

Half of the battle of being able to communicate is finding time to be together. The other half is knowing what to say or do when you are together. Begin with a determination to find time to spend together. Don't let anything stop you!

The world is good at convincing us that we need to feel good about ourselves before we can establish good relationships with others. While this is partially true, selfishly seeing only to our own needs instead of the needs of our spouse doesn't leave us feeling very good about ourselves and it doesn't help us to establish a good relationship with our spouse. We need the healthy balance of love for self and others that God's love fosters to build good communication skills and marriages that last.

So, never hesitate to place the needs of your spouse above your own. Strong Christian marriages that last are built on giving up everything for each other, *out of reverence for Christ* (Ephesians 5:21). As you do, you will be placing your love and obedience to God first. Daily ask Him to help you truly love each other as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Then, as the Scriptures say, everything else in your marriage will fall into place (Matthew 6:33).



To build strong marriages that last place God and each other first:

- Pray together daily as a couple.
- Attend Church Worship together.
- Study God's Word together.

As you grow closer to God, you will very naturally and lovingly grow closer to each other and you will know exactly what to say and do when you are together. You will also grow stronger in your faith in and love for God every day. You will communicate through His forgiveness, understanding, and compassion, as His order and peace fill your lives and souls and marriage.

On a practical level, use communication and relationship building comments like - I love you - Thanks - That's neat - Great job - Thanks for marrying me - Let's eat out tonight - You look super - I'll help - Our kids couldn't ask for a better mom/dad - Like a back rub? - Let's do something fun together... a movie or a walk? - I need your help.- Are you feeling alright?- Can we find a babysitter? I'd like to be alone with you. - I'm glad we are married, - think of more!

As your faith and married life is made stronger through spiritual and practical communication every day, pass on what you have learned to present and future generations. You will help to bring God's order and peace to couples and build marriages that last for generations.

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"You Are Never Alone"

You are off to college! You'll be "on your own." Your parents have entrusted you with responsibility and freedom. It sounds wonderful to think about being "on your own." But when you start to think about being alone, it can also be a little scary. So, know that you are never alone.

Your parents aren't with you physically on campus, but everything they taught you, everything you are, and all of their love is what you will bring with you to college. Your relatives are with you because you can't ever get rid of them. Even if you try, they will always and forever remain your family. And your friends are only a text away just like at home. Most important of all, God is with you. You already knew that; now believe it!

Still, things do change when you go off to college. The first is that you face more choices. But even then, when you make good choices, college life usually moves along smoothly. It is only bad choices that cause chaos and pain. The world and its moral code have changed, *for the worse* and suddenly there is potential for even more bad choices. That is why you are going to want to make good choices.

To make good choices, never forget what you were taught about right and wrong and that God is standing ready to help you. Also be aware of the following college situations:

- In some circles, cheating is expected, the norm, and even believed to be the only way to succeed. Know that in every circumstance, cheating is not only wrong, it leaves you with low self-esteem and lack of much needed knowledge. You may receive a good grade, but you will lose your soul (Matthew 16:26). Lost souls lead empty lives.
- You may find consenting sex taking place in dorm rooms. Consent doesn't make it right, and contrary to popular belief, not everyone is doing it. Young people who are sexually active miss out on the best years of their lives because sex takes over their lives. It steals so much of their college experience and keeps them from maturing in their faith and their lives.

- For many college students, drugs and alcohol become a right of passage, something they only do in college, and harmless until they become a needed escape from college pressures and turn into a powerful, painful addiction with the potential to destroy their faith and entire lives.

But you do not need to be afraid because you are never alone. Remember all of the people who love you are attending college with you in your heart and God is living deep in your soul. You don't even have to text Him. He is with you 24/7, guiding you and filling you with His peace that surpasses all human understanding (Philippians 4:7), peace that brings His order to the chaos of college life, peace that you can pass on to others at college and throughout your life. Many people you meet every day are desperately in need of and will be greatly blessed by God's peace and order in their lives. In fact, many lives can be saved when people in trouble come to know they are not alone because Jesus is with them.



**God will be with you when
you sleep and when you wake.**

Adapted from Psalm 3:5

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