

## Co-Parenting that Works, Divorced or Married

Television stories show divorced parents living happily apart as they raise their children together. They also show divorced parents fighting and hurting themselves and their children. Of course, stories of divorced families getting along with each other are the best. Sadly, in real life co-parenting in divorced families does not always work well like on TV.

### SIN CAUSES PROBLEMS

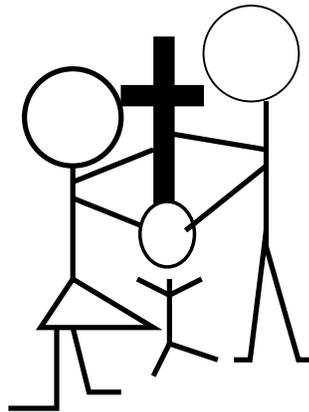
Now, the number one problem of divorce is sin, and the best co-parenting in the world can fall victim to it. This is why divorced parents desperately need the Lord, which brings to mind problem number two: Divorced parents find themselves unable to go to the Lord. They think divorce makes them unworthy, when it actually makes them need Him more. God and His Word bring peace in the midst of even the most devastating of divorces. The problems all parents face, divorced or not, are all the result of sin. And because we cannot stop sinning on our own, all parents need the love and forgiveness God offers through Christ to face every struggle including divorce and co-parenting.

### GOD FORGIVES US

Divorce is a sin no greater or less than any other sin. It is easy to get side-tracked with feelings of guilt and feel ashamed to approach God for forgiveness. However, forgiveness holds the key to co-parenting that works because a lot of love and forgiveness is needed to make co-parenting work. The truth is, we need to be forgiven so that we can forgive others. The longer we live unforgiven, the more painful sins like divorce can become in our lives, and the less likely we are to be blessed with co-parenting that works.

### WE FORGIVE OTHERS

Even if our divorce is caused by a sin committed against us by our spouse, we need God's forgiveness because it can help us to forgive the unforgivable. God's forgiveness *of us* grows forgiveness *in us*. It strengthens us to do what we can only do with His help. And for co-parenting to work, spouses must be able to forgive each other. Anger and hatred are very real products of divorce and they are sin. They can be present in parents and in their children. As they are forgiven by God His forgiveness rules and reigns in them and in their homes. God's forgiveness is immediate, but our forgiving others can be a process that happens over time. Still, requesting and receiving God's forgiveness has been known to speed up this process.



### WE HAVE A CLEAN SLATE

The first step to co-parenting that works is believing that every sin we confess God will forgive (1 John 1:9) and forget (Isaiah 43:25). God's forgiveness wipes the slate clean and gives parents a fresh start. When God does this for us, He is preparing us to do the same for others. Our spouse may have hurt us. Children hurt by divorce can do things that hurt us as they try to deal with their pain. People who condemn us for getting a divorce and tell us so or do not talk to us at all *hurt us*. The forgiveness God gives us empowers us to forgive them so we can move on to heal from divorce.

### GOD HELPS CO-PARENTING WORK

Hearts filled with God's forgiveness have no room left in them for anger, but there is always room for love. Forgiven hearts love the unlovable. They desire and try to please God. One spouse with this heart has been known to change the heart of the other. If forgiven hearts cannot change another heart, they accept unchanged hearts and give them to God whose desire is to help (Deuteronomy 33:26) and save (1 Timothy 2:4). Most of all, forgiven hearts are able by God's strength not their own to co-parent in ways that work, ways God shows them in their hearts. These are the hearts God steps out to stop from doing wrong and empowers to do what is right because these hearts forgiven by God depend and trust completely in Him.

### GOD WILL HELP US HOLD HIM SACRED

The problems we face as parents, divorced or married, can be enormous. But rest assured, we have an enormous, mighty, and everlasting God. Our UIM theme for this year will help us to hold Him sacred. As we do, He will bless us with His love and forgiveness and help us pass these on to not only help heal the problems that cause divorce, but prevent divorce from happening in the first place.

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## Make Chores Age Appropriate and Fun?

### WORK PLEASES THE LORD

We can hold God sacred, the mission of this UIM Year, by doing chores because work is pleasing to the Lord, even commanded by Him in 2 Thessalonians 3:10. God created us to do good works, and we do good works when what we do gives glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Parents can feel good about giving chores to their children because children can benefit from the self-satisfaction and self worth that come from hard work and a job well done. However, when we help children to do chores for the glory of the Lord they become truly and deeply blessed.

### MAKE CHORES FUN

The blessings that come from doing chores only make them fun when we make them fun. The key to making chores fun is to make sure they are not discouraging. This means making sure children are capable of doing them.

### DO CHORES WITH CHILDREN

One good way to determine what chores our children are able to do is to do chores with them. We can observe what and how they handle certain chores and see for ourselves what they need help from us to learn to do.

### TEACH

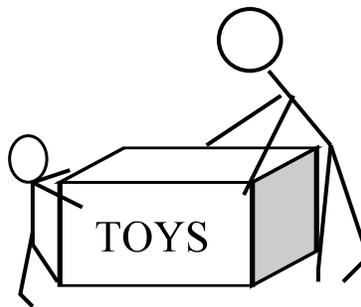
To teach our children, we need to know our children. Some children prefer even persist in wanting to do everything themselves. They refuse help and resist instruction. We should allow these children to do chores by themselves, but work beside them doing the same chore. They can see how we do it and imitate us.

### HELP

Other children will need and look to us for help. Giving these children a chore and leaving them to figure out how to do it will end in discouragement, theirs and ours. The chore, if it gets done at all, will not be done well. When children need instruction, parents need to be present to give the instruction. They also need to be present to give praise for all of the chores all of their children do with or without help.

### GIVE PRAISE

Children who are praised may do chores without even being asked. There is a motivation in praise that is not always visible to the naked eye, but it is thoroughly enjoyed by the soul. Praise should be forthcoming even or especially when we can't work with our children. One mother would get all excited when she came home and found her children had shined the toaster. Her antics were a bit crazy, but her children always made it a point to make the toaster extra shiny for mom. Children blossom when praised and parents see chores get done, making praise a definite win, win situation.



### HELP THEM GIVE GOD GLORY

Use the time God gives you to work together to sing songs of praise to Him. Talk about how doing chores with a joyful heart praises God. Thank the Lord for the ability to do chores because some people cannot walk or work. Do chores with them for other people joyfully for the glory of the Lord, etc.

### GET STARTED

Make a list of chores that you and your children can do together. Then play, joke, laugh and have fun doing them together. Children who have fun doing chores will do chores willingly, better, and at young ages. Your children may do chores just to spend time and have fun with you!

### BE BLESSED!

Start chores when children are toddlers. Help them pick up their toys. As they get older, help them pick up their room, then have fun doing the dishes together, etc. Before you know it, your children will no longer be doing chores for you, they will be doing chores for their own self-satisfaction and be richly and deeply blessed by God as they do them for His glory.

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## Blending Relationships in Homes and Congregations

Blending relationships is a process that usually occurs in the blending of families who are placed together due to divorce or death. To blend, they need to work through the difficult problems of living together - when they did not grow up together - they do not know each other - and in some cases they do not really like each other all that much.

### LEARNING TO LOVE EACH OTHER

This same “blending process” is what is often needed in God’s family, His church on earth. Many members have not grown up together. We don't really know each other and in some cases certain members don't really like each other. However, if we are going to accomplish anything for our Lord in our families at church or at home we do need to learn to blend relationships, and our UIM theme and mission this year to hold God sacred can help us do that.

### LOVE AS GOD LOVES US

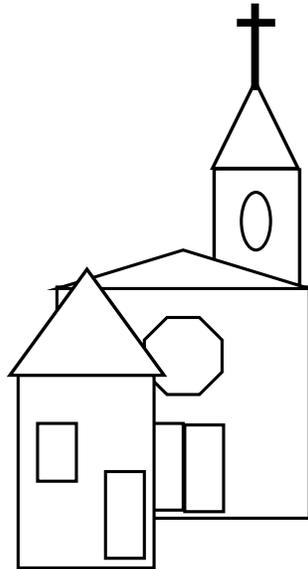
God commands us to love one another (John 13:34). The love needed is the same for church and home just as the problems in churches and homes can be the same. Problems like communication; if done in love, it has the best chance of happening successfully. Without love, unloving words are said that hurt. Without love for each other, it is easier to misunderstand what is said and believe words are meant to hurt even when they are meant to help. Misunderstood words can even leave people actually afraid of each other. People can become defensive and angry and this can cause them to sin. This is why no matter how difficult it may be, it is critical to blend relationships in and through God’s love.

### HEARTS NEED TO CHANGE

Relationships that just won’t blend can be as harmful and painful in the church as they are in the home. In homes, members may do poorly at work or in school. In congregations, ministry suffers and may even fail. It is certainly in the best interest of families in churches and homes to blend relationships. However, this means not only people, but hearts need to change.

### HEARTS NEED TO MELT

In fact, at one point, hearts need to melt. Everything hurtful family members hear, feel, and probably believe about other family members needs to be eradicated by *loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Peter 4:8). Family members must put off all anger and malice (Ephesians 4:31) and unselfishly love each other before any relationships can even begin to blend. And, you are right when you think this is never going to happen in some families or congregations, at least not without God’s help.



### GOD WILL SUSTAIN FAMILIES

God who created families in churches and homes will sustain them, and with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37). This, of course, means families need to be *with* God. This is why UIM has dedicated one full year to holding God sacred and why all UIM Resources lead to Christ who comes to live and be with those who believe in Him. His redeeming work makes them members of God’s family. In our busy lives, it is easy to forget that as we stay close to God, He will stay close to us. (James 4:8). UIM Resources simply remind generations to be with God in church worship hearing God’s Word. They encourage the study of His Word, partaking of His Sacraments, and praying together. They teach God’s Word to every generation to assure them God will be with them and live in them and fill them with His love. All of those who participate in UIM this year will be blessed, and so will their families and congregations as they live and share what they learn.

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## Peace On Earth?

Jeremiah 6:14 tells us people cry for peace but there is no peace. It is no different today. Peace continues to elude us. We experience fighting in our homes, at work, in our schools and even in God's church. We see nations fighting against nations. Peace seems impossible...until we realize it can only come from God. Every Christmas reminds us Jesus brings peace to earth, a spiritual and everlasting peace deep in our souls that no one and nothing can take away.

### CHRISTMAS-TIME PEACE

There actually is a certain kind of peace that appears around Christmas time: It is more of a worldly peace, though it does seem to reach parts of the heart. People feel happy even joyful during the Christmas season. But when Christmas is over, so is this peace. Some people become very depressed when it is gone. They miss the good feelings that seem to arrive and then leave along with Christmas every year, mostly because this peace is merely a state of mind.

### PEACE FROM WAR AND FIGHTING

There is also the kind of peace that stops wars and fighting through a truce. It is wonderful when it happens, but too soon people are fighting again and this peace ends.

### TEMPORARY PEACE

There is even a kind of peace that we feel when we mend broken relationships or heal from an illness or survive a crisis. However, this peace is short lived because we are constantly breaking relationship and becoming ill and experiencing one crisis or another.

### PEACE THAT WILL NEVER END

Take heart, though; there is a peace that comes to us because a tiny Baby was born in Bethlehem. It does not stop wars or illness or crisis, but it does help us through them. And it does not go away with the Christmas season. We can dwell in it all year long. It surpasses all human understanding (Philippians 4:7). And, while we may not understand it, we can possess and live in this perfect peace through faith in Christ. It is not a state of the mind, rather, it is a state of our soul and it is an everlasting peace.

### PEACE THAT LIVES

Perfect peace comes to live us as we hear, read, and study God's Word, Pray, Worship, and attend Sunday School and Bible Class. We may not feel we need to do all of the above, or at least not on a regular basis. We may think we simply do not have the time. We forget God's perfect peace is worth all of our time and so much more.

### PEACE THROUGH PRAYER

If we are honest, we all long for peace in our lives and souls. However as sinners, we do not always long for God's Word or yearn to go to church to worship Him. We do not always find time to read and study His Word personally and with other believers, nor do we pray without ceasing as He commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. We prevent Him and His peace from living in us because we forget God's peace is available every day as we pray.

### PEACE IN EVERY WAY

The beautiful and wonderful truth about God's peace on earth is that when it fills our lives so completely the problems that surround us every day can't touch us. We can live in and feel His peace in the best and the worst of times. Equally beautiful and wonderful is the fact that people will see God's peace in us and want His peace too. As they and we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13) and He will give us His peace on earth this Christmas and every day of their lives.

*Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those  
with whom He is pleased!" Luke 2:14*

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## Independent Senior Living

### HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE

Independent senior living begins with an attitude. No one really wants to be or become a burden. Yet, we often expect certain kinds of help and depend on certain people, especially family members, to help us as we grow older. While it is wonderful when they can, we should not be disappointed or left without the help we need if these people cannot help us.

### BE RESOURCEFUL

Don't become distraught when one person cannot help you. Look for other ways to get the job done.

- If one family member or friend cannot take out the garbage, call on someone else.
- Ask fellow church members or call a school nearby to ask if they have a student who could help you. Today, schools are finding that students who volunteer to help others thrive in school and are more successful in life. Some schools even require community service of their students because it helps to enrich their lives.
- Church youth groups also encourage serving others. Not only can the youth they send help you, but you can help and befriend the youth who are suffering from lack of personal contact today even though they have thousands on friends on facebook..

### BE A FRIEND

Likewise, make friends with younger families and couples in your neighborhood or church. Bake them special treats, hug them, listen to them, pray for them, and love them with all your heart. These are the people who will see your needs and offer you help even before you ask them or even feel you need help.

### BE A GOOD WITNESS

Never worry that you have nothing to return to those who help you. You have the greatest gift of all, your faith. Share it by letting them see you holding Him sacred in all your words and actions. Tell them you are praying for them. Before you know it, they may be asking for your prayers. Invite them to church if they do not attend. Share how God helps you and how He can help them to lead them to Him.

### BE PREPARED

Along with loving and sharing Christ, be prepared to be independent. Before age or disabilities necessitate a need for others to jump in and help you, investigate, make phone calls, and find out what help is available in your area. Sit down and talk with a local office on aging or social service agency representative to find out what services they provide.

### PLAN FOR MEALS

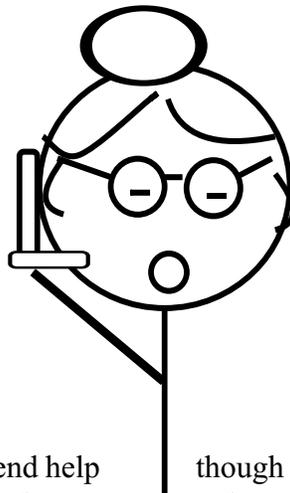
"Meals on Wheels" delivers meals to those unable to leave their homes. Find out when a local Senior Centers serve meals. Look into elderly housing that serves meals to residents several times a week. Food services of any kind help keep seniors healthy and living independently.

### KEEP HOUSING CARE FREE

Retirement housing for all incomes is available almost everywhere today. It can provide everything from snow shoveling and transportation, to laundry services and dispensing medications to residents. Living in a large home, even though you dearly love it, may require constant upkeep, mowing and snow shoveling, climbing stairs, etc. Live more independently by moving to a home that requires minimal or no upkeep by you.

### MEET YOUR NEEDS

The key to independent living is finding out what your needs are or will be and planning ahead to meet them. For added independence and pure pleasure, surround yourself with people you can love as God has loved you (John 13:34). As His love grows the love between you and them, these people will help you because they love you and Him dearly.



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## Developing Good Moral Judgement from Infancy

### BAD JUDGEMENT HURTS

Too many children, teens, and adults are being hurt and are hurting others because they lack good moral judgement. This is causing many parents to wonder what they can do to help develop good moral judgement in their children and when to begin.

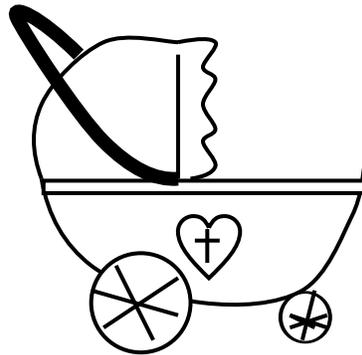
### TEACH GOOD JUDGEMENT EARLY

Experts report that what infants experience during the first three years of life lays a foundation for the rest of their lives. These first years determine how a child reacts, learns, and loves. This leads us to conclude that infants can be taught good moral judgement very early in their lives, at least during the first three years. Of course the question of how to teach infants remains.

### LOVE DEVELOPS GOOD JUDGEMENT

Infants can begin to develop good moral judgement as they discover how much they are loved. Feeling loved produces self-confidence and self-esteem in infants and every age. Being loved also produces love for others. Infants who feel loved and love others have the best chance of developing a desire to do what is good and right. Although they will fail at times, they will try their best to make good choices as children, teens, and adults.

The love of their parents and others becomes a solid building block on which infants can develop good moral judgement. Yet, human love only provides the desire for doing what is good and right. It is God's love that provides the power to do what is good and right. His love also helps us to hold Him sacred, which teaches good moral judgement because doing what is good and right is exactly what holding God sacred is all about.



### SHARE YOUR FAITH

Monitors reveal that unborn infants react to words and actions inside the womb. This means that both born and unborn babies can experience the peace and security of their mothers and fathers faith as their parents pray, read God's Word, attend worship, sing, read, or hear Christian music, and speak words of love to each other and them out of love for Christ. So holding God sacred can do much to develop the faith and love that develops good moral judgment from infancy.

### GOD'S LOVE AND YOURS

Moms and dads can communicate their love and God's by gentle words. A loud voice can startle or frighten unborn and born babies as quickly as a gentle voice can calm and reassure them. To develop gentle infants, use gentle words that demonstrate your love and God's love for your infant.

Likewise, a touch can communicate either rejection or unconditional acceptance and love. Let your every touch demonstrate your love and God's love living in you to your infant. Loving touches communicate the love that develops good moral judgement in infants.

By sharing God's love and ours with infants and with every child and teenager, we will be helping to develop the people God created and desires them to be. While our children can still go astray and use poor, even harmful judgement, God's love working in and through us can cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). And His love will help them find their way back to Him and the good moral judgement that comes from knowing and loving and holding Him sacred.

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## Teaching Respect

### DISRESPECT IS GROWING!

We tend to complain about the growing disrespect children are showing adults. But look around you; children are not alone in their displays of disrespect for people and things. I've personally noticed an increasing number of adults using disrespectful words and displaying disrespectful actions. Holding God and all of His creation sacred, the UIM theme and mission for this year, has much to offer in terms of curbing disrespect and teaching respect in our world today.

### WHO IS TO BLAME?

Who let all of this disrespect grow? If we are absolutely honest, we have to admit that we did. There are things we do every day that allow disrespect to grow. We may not even realize some of them. For example, I cringe when anyone addresses me as Mrs.... Yet, this title gives respect. At the same time, this title can make people seem unapproachable.

### WHAT DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

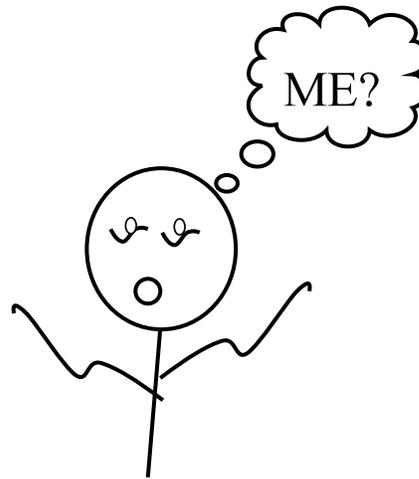
It is good to be approachable, but what if it causes some of the disrespect we are currently experiencing? Do I need to change how I prefer people to address me? After writing this article, I am certainly going to reconsider my motives. If I need to be approachable so people can talk to me and I can help them, I definitely should let them call me by my first name. If I want to teach respect, I need to let people address me as "Mrs." Teaching respect requires discerning what is needed and even change, depending on the situation.

### EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE RESPONSIBLE

An enormous amount of disrespect is heard on TV and other forms of media. Yet, we cannot blame the media because we are capable and should turn off any media that promotes disrespect. At the same time, those who produce media programs should care about what effect these programs may have on society. There is no doubt in my mind that the world would be a better place if all people would take responsibility for teaching respect.

### CARE ABOUT OTHERS

Basically, we need to care about others, and holding God sacred helps us to do that. There is something about holding God sacred that does not allow us to show disrespect. The respect and love that comes with holding Him sacred can cause us to turn off a TV show that promotes disrespect even when children are not present. It can make us speak up when people around us are showing disrespect, and help us show respect even to those who do not deserve it. However, it is teaching respect "for the glory of God" that has its greatest effect.



### HOLD GOD SACRED

The world desires and endeavors to teach respect because it is good for the world. The world does not have the power to help people show respect. This is exactly why the world needs Christ. He has the power to help believers hold God and all of His creation sacred. As they do, their living for Him will display the respect He commands and the good that comes from it.

Those who like what they see and want it for their own lives can be led to Christ for faith to hold God sacred, show respect, and pass it on for generations.

### COMMIT TO THE LORD

Whether the world realizes it or not, Christians hold the key to teaching respect. Whether we realize it or not, God has prepared each believer to teach respect. We don't have to wonder or worry about what to say because the Spirit will teach us what to say (Luke 12:12), and as we commit our work to the Lord, He will help us succeed. (Proverbs 16:3).

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## Give Teens Stability

Giving teens stability has a great deal to do with giving teens "family." Teens in every generation search for places where they can fit in and feel like they are accepted. That's why teens tend to form cliques or join gangs. They bond with people who they feel understand them. Those who use teenagers for ill gain know this and use these common traits in teens to lead them down harmful even deadly paths.

### TEENS NEED INDEPENDENCE

Teens are no different today than they have ever been. They certainly need God as much as teens have ever needed Him. The problems teens faced in the past and face now and in the future all stem from the same thing, sin. They have the same need for family and independence at the same time, making it impossible to meet all their needs. Likewise, while teen independence is natural and actually quite healthy, teens need contact with adults to gain the stability they need to live independently.



### TEENS NEED TO GO DOWN THE RIGHT PATH

How do we lead and keep teens on the right path? We can't. But, God can. Teens need God and family. They just don't know it. We need to depend on God to open their hearts to understand their needs and how to meet them. This requires prayer. We certainly need to pray for the teen, but we also need to pray for our own strength of faith to wait upon the Lord (Psalm 27:14). Waiting can take a long time and a lot of strength, so we must trust that the Lord will renew our strength (Isaiah 40:31). He will give us all the wisdom we need when we ask Him (James 1:5).

### TEENS NEED OUR TIME

Because they are teens, we can make the mistake of thinking they no longer need as much time with adults, when actually they need the same amount of time with adults they always have needed. They just need different time with adults, not to be played with and coddled, although they may want these at times, but to be treated by adults as adults and even given adult responsibilities.

### GIVE TEENS RESPONSIBILITY

Don't just ask teens to take out the garbage, make them responsible; make them the person in charge of taking out the garbage. Depend on them and let them know how much you appreciate having their help. Even sit down and tell them you could not do all that needs to be done without them. People who feel needed, feel wanted and loved and like they belong. This is what teens want and need.

### GIVE TEENS FAITH

Follow the same line of reasoning with faith. Share very personally how much you need God to help you through life. Lay it on the line; say "I cannot get through the day without God." Teens may not rush out to "get God," but you will be sharing where to go when they need God, and they will need God.

### CONNECT TEENS TO GOD

God created us to be connected as a family in and through His love. Teens need to see the connection between God and their families. Teens may think going to church every Sunday is boring, but in their minds and hearts and lives they are searching for the stability God offers. Teens may think devotions or even prayer is mundane, but as they pray even if only when you can get them to church, their souls are more strong and stable. What teens say is not necessarily what they are feeling. Neither is what they think they want what they need. But they are watching and listening. Our job is to make sure what they see and hear helps them receive all that they need from God and from us to keep them strong and stable in their faith and lives.

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## All Moms Work Hard!

Society tends to pit mothers who have made their career homemaking and those who choose to or have had to add another career to their work at home against each other. I don't see any difference. They are both moms and they both work HARD!

### THEIR HOMES

I have visited the homes of mothers who have a career outside the home and those who do not. Both have homes that are messy like mine or spotless. I marvel at moms who can keep a house absolutely clean and completely relate to moms who don't.

### THEIR SCHEDULES

Today, moms working inside and outside the home are extremely busy. Working all day long and coming home to be mom makes life busy and has some of these moms wishing they could stay at home. However, stay-at-home moms are called upon to go here and there, and do this and that all day long, primarily because they are at home. It's no wonder stay-at-home moms sometimes wish they had the easy lives of moms who work outside the home and vice versa.

### THEIR WORK LOAD

We don't want to neglect moms like me who have careers they pursue at home. The plain fact of the matter is that Moms, no matter what their situation, *work hard*. Telling any mom that the situation she chooses or needs to be in is not good for her or her family adds to her already overburdened life as a mom. It is also just plain wrong.

### THEIR FAITH

So its time to encourage all moms, especially in their faith to hold God sacred. I see moms inside and outside of the home succeed with less stress when they have faith. Not only does their faith that produces love benefit and bless their families but it shines to bless all the people around them every day.

### THEIR CHILDREN

We also need to encourage moms in their child-rearing. I know moms who work inside and outside the home who have well-adjusted and ill-adjusted children. Certainly, environment contributes to the development of children. So let's encourage moms to provide a good environments, and one of the absolute best ways moms can provide a good environment is by holding God sacred. Every time moms pray with their children, take them to church, talk to them about Jesus, etc they help their children to hold God sacred. I know moms who take comfort knowing they taught their children well, especially if their children turn away from God. They also never give up praying for their children to return to the Lord because they hold Him sacred and trust Him completely.

### THEIR LIMITS

Moms inside and outside the home are on call 24 hours a day. It doesn't really matter where they are or what they are doing; when they are needed they are there. These moms have to rearrange their schedules sometimes on a moments notice and sometimes they fail. This is when they need God most of all, and He helps them. He gives them peace and strength to keep trying and He hold them up in His arms and renews their strength (Isaiah 40|:31).

### THEIR SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Whether you stay at home or have a career outside the home, remember that God is your constant source of strength and guidance in everything you do. Go to Him and He will fill you with the love and faith you need to raise well-adjusted, loving, and faith-filled children.



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## The Marriage Gift of Christian Faithfulness

One married couple shared that they were not able to trust each other after several years of marriage even though they loved each other. Talking with them revealed they'd had sex just with each other and no one else before marriage. This fact was leading one of them to question whether their spouse might have sex with other people during their marriage. Their trust issues had taken years to surface.

### SEX IS A BLESSING

God created sex to be an amazing blessing within marriage. Outside of marriage, sex is sin and sexual sin causes serious problems that can creep in right away in a marriage or show up many years after the fact. But, take heart, God's love and forgiveness is able to resolve these problems.

### SEX CAN BE SIN

If it is possible, it is best to prevent sexual sin before it causes problems and pain. God commands purity to prevent the pain sexual sin outside of marriage can cause. God is very aware that our sinful natures can conjure up thoughts of unfaithfulness and that having sex outside of marriage even if it is with those we plan to marry can give credence to our thoughts. So to keep us from our sinful thoughts and the pain they can cause, He offers chastity; the act of abstaining from all sexual sin and remaining pure before and during marriage.

### UNDERSTAND SEXUAL SIN

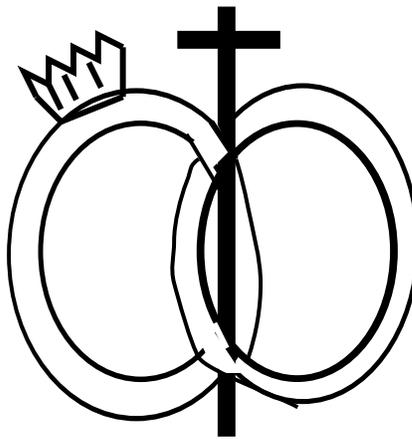
Before marriage, sex outside of marriage can affect a couple when one or both come to fear that all they have holding them together is sex; one or both sexual partners can begin after a short or long time to feel used; some have even described feeling sexually abused by their partner. They may try to marry to make the wrong right, but if they do not love each other the marriage can end in another wrong, divorce. These problems are becoming more prevalent and serious as living together outside of marriage becomes more popular. And there is a very serious problem that arises for Christian couples who have sex outside of marriage.

### SPIRITUAL SEPARATION

For Christians, the deepest problem or hurt that comes from having sex outside of marriage is spiritual. It happens deep inside the soul where it may not be felt until it is understood. The Bible tells us that the sexual act performed outside of marriage is a sin against our own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). This means it hurts *us* personally and deeply, and because it is done in defiance of God's command to be sexually pure (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), it separates us from His love and peace and joy. God offers forgiveness, but couples who do not understand their sexual sin cannot confess it and be forgiven.

### UNITED THROUGH FAITH!

Chastity reunites couples with God and each other. It does not work like virginity, once lost, always lost. Chastity happens as couples commit to sexual purity in their souls out of love for God and each other. All couples who have had sex outside of marriage simply need to repent and they will be forgiven. It is important for them to choose and vow to devote themselves to remaining sexually pure and faithful spouses with God's help and by His grace. If serious problems continue or arise in their marriage, couples should seek out pastoral or professional counseling that will help them give the gift of faithfulness to each other out of love for God and each other. As married or unmarried couples do this, God will strengthen the spiritual bond between them, making their love for each other more beautiful and more powerful and very possibly the most valuable gift they ever give or receive from each other.



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## Doing Things With Dad

More fathers are spending time with their children today because with two parents working outside of the home the parenting workload needs to be shared. Father's Day is a good time to thank them for spending more time with their kids. Children need fathers or father figures more than people may realize.

### FATHERS PREVENTS VIOLENCE

A story about baby elephants who became violent because they lacked male influence has been used to emphasize that children without their fathers can also become violent. I don't know if the elephant story is true, but I have read hundreds of true stories about fatherless boys growing up to become violent. When the lack of a father turns children violent the whole world can suffer and remember that violence can be passed on for generations.

### CHILDREN NEED SUPPORT:

Fathers absolutely must support their children financially whether they live with them or not. Yet, personal involvement, love, and spiritual encouragement from their fathers is even more important for children because it builds good relationships between children and their fathers. Fatherless boys are reported to be the most likely to feel angry, become rebellious, and act out in violence. Girls who lack fathers are reported to become insecure, feel unloved, and search for love in very wrong ways and places. Fatherless boys and girls are the most likely to abuse drugs, join gangs, become depressed, develop eating disorders, attempt suicide, etc. Hence, fathers who are available to listen, laugh, talk, and cry with their children help to prevent many emotional problems and tragedies.

### FATHERS HAVE SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

The strongest influence fathers can have on their children is spiritually. Past and present studies show that children are more likely to attend church if their fathers attend. Mom may be the heart and soul of the family, but in spiritual matters "as the father goes so go the children." This is a fairly old saying that still holds true today. Dads continue to be the strongest influence on their children's spiritual faith and

development: a good influence if Dad has a strong faith, and a bad influence if Dad is absent or does not function as the spiritual head of his family. The UIM theme and mission this year teaches all generations to hold God sacred. Fathers and all men can help to encourage children to do the same by holding God sacred themselves.

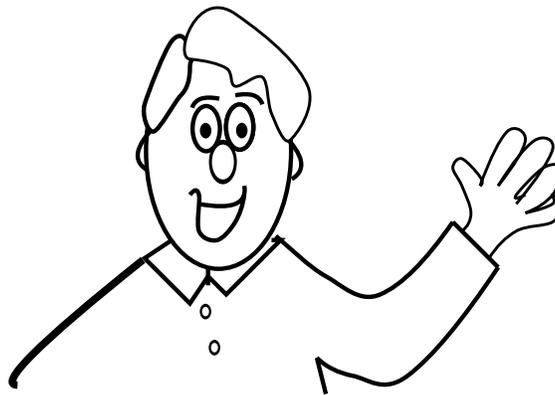
### CHILDREN NEED FATHER FIGURES

Knowing the spiritual influence of Christian men is important for children, does not mean it happens in our sinful world. Thankfully, fatherless children can benefit from father figures, especially when these father figures know the Lord and hold Him sacred. UIM Resources help Christian men mentor children by using the mentoring instruction included in every UIM Sunday School Series. Children who come to know their Father in heaven and Christian father figures during UIM SS are no longer fatherless.

Lesson also invite them into God's family where God's love can fill their every need.

### CONGREGATIONS HELP!

God is a Father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). He cares for the fatherless and so should we. Christian congregations actually have some of the best programs to bring fathers and father figures together with children in worship and the study of God's Word. UIM Resources offer the Christian family support children need to not only handle every struggle including being fatherless, but be strengthened by them and thrive in their faith and lives.



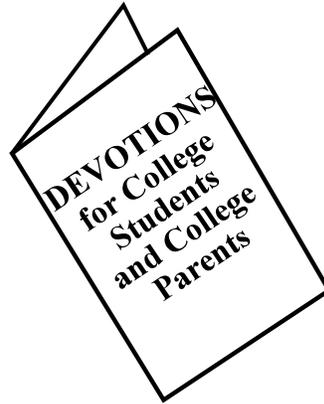
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## Calm College Pressures

One of the first pressures students and their parents face when “going off to college” is that neither are adequately prepared for the experience. Sending a child to college is often just as hard on parents and students who have never gotten along, as it is on close-knit families, because all are dealing with an unknown college campus.

### RESOLVE PROBLEMS

If parents and college bound children haven't communicated in a long time or ever gotten along, going off to college can make matters worse. So, reach out to each other now before college separates you even further. When there is discord, absence does not always make the heart grow fonder. In fact, absence can separate for a lifetime. Use the time you have left at home together to work out your differences. College can be far less stressful when good relationships exist at home.



### PRACTICE SEPARATION

Parents and students who are hanging on tight, your bond is strong and if you don't "let go" separation can tear you apart and make college a painfully disastrous experience. Practice being separated ahead of time. Spend time apart having fun *without* each other. Plan a packing party together. It helps to make the separation real. When the tears come, cry. It's a great release. You may still have a hard time saying "goodbye" but you will be much better prepared for handling the separation necessary for the best college experience.

### NOTES FOR STUDENTS

Do you feel like your parents are smothering you? At college, simply let them know how you are doing before they have a chance to contact you and infringe on your freedom. If you miss your parents more than you expected, talking to them is usually all you will need. Seeing them can lengthen your adjustment and anxiety. Most importantly, there are many new things to experience; some are good, some are bad. Stay close to God and His Word. He will help you choose the experiences that will make your college years successful and memorable.

### NOTE TO PARENTS

Worried about your student? Your prayers can do more than anything you can say or do to help you and your student adjust to college life. To avoid too much contact that can be seen as interference or not enough contact that can leave your student feeling alone and rejected, stay close to God and His Word. He will guide you to a happy medium that will help and not exasperate your student or you.

### FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Look for a good devotion book at your local Christian bookstore to share with each other. Make copies and send them to each other or buy two copies. Read the devotions and share your thoughts and faith by phone, e-mail, text, etc.

Above all, pray for each other constantly. Not only will your constant prayers help to calm college pressures, but God will help you to build a stronger relationship with each other through your college days, perhaps better than you ever had before college.

*Every year, UIM Articles like this one are offered to congregations FREE and contain encouragement for college students. As a congregation or individual member, collect them all and send them to college students and parents you know one at a time.*

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