

## There's No "Average" in God's Love



Many parents today are very concerned about getting their children into the best schools. They want to give them the best start in life, the best chance to succeed, and there is nothing wrong with wanting the best for our children. In fact, giving children the best is what this article is all about.

We are the workmanship of a wise, awesome, and mighty God. His hands formed us and His love grants us His power to accomplish great things. The sooner we begin to teach our children that they are loved by Him with an everlasting love, forgiven by His abounding grace, and have the power given by the Holy Spirit through faith to do miracles, the sooner children who know this fact, even if they may be considered "average" in life, will be able to accomplish incredible things through faith. They will never be average again.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with being average. Average is good. It's just that average is not "best." Average does not explode with possibilities. It just keeps people where they are at. "Average" can't lift to incredible heights of joy and accomplish the seemingly impossible! That's why it is important for parents to teach their children that as God's child they are anything but "average." For nothing loved and given a unique purpose and immeasurable value by God can ever be described as "average."

The world may and, indeed, often does view children as average, but children of God are not of this world. They are thankful for the world and all it offers. Yet, they do not desire the things of the world or consider any earthly accomplishments of success or wealth extraordinary. Rather, these are all gifts from God and valuable only because they can help perform service to God.

Children who understand their value and worth in and through Christ receive a wisdom of far greater value than mere human knowledge. They are able to make decisions based on God's love for them and in them. Their faith not only increases their potential for accomplishment, it fills them with power to become extraordinary human beings.

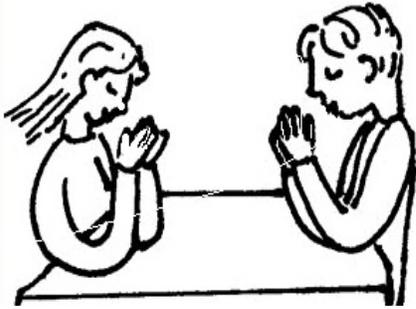
Children of God know full well that all of their material possessions, career, family, and friends come from God, and they trust Him to provide these and all that they need. Therefore, there is no need to fear. They rest in the assurance that their Father is Lord of all the universe and that they are His greatest and most valuable treasure.

Experts say: Improve your child's grades by improving your child's self-worth so they will be successful in life. Children who are helped to understand their infinite value as children of God feel immense self-worth. Children who understand God's love for them are filled with love for God, others, and for themselves. And, the love of God is not average. It is the strongest and the highest degree of love on earth and it has no end. Those who know God's love live in joy and peace the world cannot give in every circumstance! This is the best success!

Certainly, children will learn well in schools that are enthusiastic and highly motivating. Homes where homework is given priority offer children a high potential for success. Yet, parents who teach children who they are in Christ and daily through the reading and sharing of God's Word and prayer fill them with God's love will never see an average child. They will only see the miracles God performs in the lives of all those who know and love Him, and God's miracles are never "average." They are extraordinary and as His children so are we.

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## Parents Unite To Make Discipline Work!



Some parents are standing alone even in two parent homes. One reason is discipline differences like one parent disciplines too much and the other not enough. This is actually the “check and balance” for discipline that God intended. He created parents to balance and support each other. In matters of discipline, when balance between too much and too little is achieved, children receive the best of both types of discipline.

Sadly, as sin enters this perfect picture of what God intended discipline to be, one parent can become the primary disciplinarian and leave the other parent powerless. This lack of parental unity and balance confuses children and can give them opportunity to play one parent against the other.

Children are quick to spot and manipulate the parent who does not discipline as much as the other. They completely trample over the parent who does not discipline at all. The worst part of this scenario is that any discipline administered by either parent fails when parents are not united in the discipline of their children.

So, parents, unite! Children who hear both parents saying “no” have nowhere to turn. They are stuck with “no.” This firm position can give children a firm sense of security and eliminate any chance or even thought of manipulating their parents. Children blessed with two parents who both say “no” are left to concentrate on other things like good behavior, better grades, and having fun with their families. And good behavior helps to create more times parents can say “yes.”

Of course, when united, secure discipline is carried out in and through God’s love, it works best of all. Parents are able to say “no” out of love, and their children are able to see God’s love both in their parents and in their discipline. This doesn’t mean standing united in discipline is easy. It means that with God all things are possible. Even parents who are separated through divorce or other circumstances can stand united in discipline in and through God’s love. His love unites parents to work together to create and administer loving discipline that works for them and for their children.

God’s love makes compromise easier because it creates love for each other. It helps establish discipline through sharing, caring, and prayer to correct and teach, never to degrade or harm. God’s love even leads parents to the kind of discipline each individual child needs because it helps parents talk, communicate, and also pre-plan discipline. They can pre-plan the discipline they will use for certain behaviors and share these with their child ahead of time so parents and children know the boundaries. Pre-planning has been known to prevent some bad behaviors, eliminating the need for discipline that children do not like to receive and that parents have to work very hard to continue to give.

Above all, remember that parents are human and can make disciplinary mistakes. This is why parents need constant, daily contact with God through prayer and the study of His Word where they receive His guidance to make wise discipline decisions. They will also be continually reminded that they are not alone in the discipline of their children. God is with them and He will help them to stand united and administer discipline out of love for God and their children. Then, in and through God’s love, their discipline will not only work but be passed on for generations!

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## Mastering Those Teen Years



During the teen years, many parents feel that they have lost the children they once felt close to. Teens need to separate themselves from their parents in order to become independent, stable, and strong adults. Still, teenage independence, stability, and strength depends heavily on what they learn from their parents. Hence, contact with parents becomes important for the developmental well-being of teens.

Since teens rarely see the need for staying in touch with parents, it becomes the responsibility of parents to stay in touch with teens. The first step to staying in touch is knowing more about the world teens live in. It's a different world and those who want to stay in touch with teens must recognize and acknowledge the differences.

One difference is that the line between right and wrong is not as clear as it has been in the past. Every form of media propagates wrong as right or at least OK for some. Teens also see adults doing wrong and calling it right. Adults may mention that what is right for them is not right for teens, but this only confuses teens. It doesn't make right and wrong clear. Even adults who know right and do it can find it hard to convince teens to do right when there's so much wrong going on in the world.

So, the best way to influence teens is to be good examples. If we desire our teens to be pure, we must strive for purity in our own lives, in thought, word, and deed. If we expect honesty, we must be honest, not just in some but in all that we say and do. If we want our teens to remain faithful to their Savior, they need to see that we are faithful in prayer, reading God's Word, worship, and living in His love.

Teens make their decisions based on what they see. Not only do they need to see us on our knees in prayer and faithfully studying God's Word, they need to see that we depend on prayer and God's Word to guide and sustain us. They need to see us in worship. Teens who witness their parent's strong faith are the most likely to seek strong faith to help them through their teen years and all of their lives.

Along with being good examples in our faith and lives, parents need to be available to listen to teens. We may not like what we hear, but parents who have successfully mastered those teen years caution us not to condemn what teens say. Rather, after listening to their teens, parents can share what they feel and believe as an added view. If teens are disobeying God, share how obeying God helps you and the world. Speak gently and choose your words wisely. One successful parent shared that it helped to always speak as if God was listening. It helped to assure that everything that was said was said in love. Another successful parent warned to back off give teens time to process what was discussed. Teens often make the right choices when given the right information and lots of love and support in other things their parents don't disagree with them about. Above all, every Christian parent who mastered those teen years agrees that parents need to pray as they never have prayed before and depend on God to guide them and their teens.

While you are on your knees, ask God to help you be patient with your teens. They really haven't forgotten everything they have been taught. They are merely deciphering it and deciding how to make it fit into their lives. Love them just as they are, just as God loves you, and forgive them just as God forgives you. Where love and forgiveness exist, relationships are stronger and more durable. In the midst of even the most serious conflict, there will be love, God's love, working in you and your teen to keep you closer than you ever dreamed possible.

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## God's Gift of Love



"Come on; we've got to find Him!" our oldest screamed happily. She was looking for our nativity figurine of the Baby Jesus. When our children were little, we began hiding this figurine. We could not open Christmas gifts until "Baby Jesus" was found and carefully placed in His manger. This tradition was both fun and very *meaningful*. Our children quickly associate Christmas gifts with Jesus.

Under our tree would always await gifts from relatives and friends, as well as gifts from us and even from Santa. But the biggest and best gifts were clearly marked *from Baby Jesus*. Our children knew *those gifts were the best and most anticipated!*

We always read the Christmas story before we opened gifts. I was proud of how eager our children were to hear the Christmas message year after year. Then, one Christmas, they told me they were only eager because they knew it had to be read before they could open their presents. Their confession burst my bubble. On top of that came that awful year we had Christmas, seemingly, without Christ.

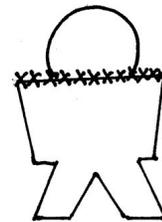
Christmas was coming and we had just moved. Our children were in high school. We all felt we were too old for childish games, and we all knew the Christmas story by heart. There was no need to read it again. Plus, I was completely exhausted from the move.

I quickly agreed when everyone suggested we no longer needed to hide Baby Jesus. I didn't even put tags on gifts from Baby Jesus. Imagine how surprised we were to find out the traditions we had called childish, in reality, had been taking us to the Child in the manger each Christmas. Without them, the true meaning of Christmas escaped us. Our gifts felt meaningless and worldly. We will never forget that Christmas. Neither will we repeat it.

Today, we have several Nativity scenes. Sometimes we go wild and hide all the Baby Jesus figures. It's more fun than opening the gifts! The Christmas message is told through a variety of poems and stories members of our family find throughout the year and read on Christmas Eve.

We open gifts slowly. We want to take time to appreciate the gift, say "thank you" to the giver, and remember that all good gifts come from our Father in Heaven, who gave us the precious gift of His Son that very first Christmas and for every day of our lives.

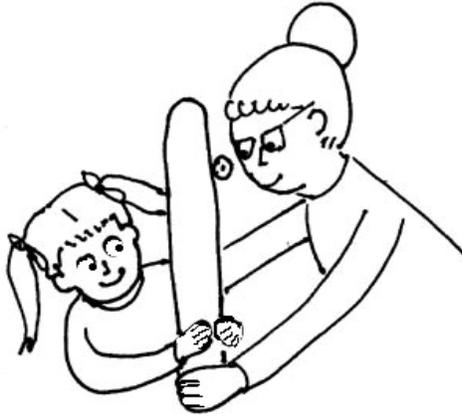
It is our deepest desire and prayer that long after we are gone, our children's children will be having great fun finding Baby Jesus, hearing the Christmas message, opening the best gifts from Baby Jesus, and taking time to remember the greatest Gift of God's love - Jesus! We can't think of a more wonderful gift and blessing to leave behind for our children and to share with each one of you this Christmas than Jesus!



**Jesus  
God's  
Christmas  
Gift to Us!**

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## Grandparents Pass On Faith and Fun!



Today, not all grandparents bake cookies and always seem to be home when we stop by for a visit. More and more grandparents are so busy we have to make appointments if we want to spend time with them. They are into every activity and organization imaginable. They exercise. They hang glide! They do things grandparents in the past simply did not do.

Don't worry, though. Grandma may be leading an aerobics class. Grandpa may be helping to build houses around the world. These active, vibrant people are still grandparents. They simply *"have a life"* and *"you've gotta admire them for it."*

I marvel at the agility of the grandparents I see teaching their grandchildren to roller blade or vice versa. I will never be as daring, but I thoroughly support those who are. I delight to see grandparents in their business suits playing in the sand with grandchildren during their lunch hour. One career orientated grandmother admits that she used to hate dirt. Now, she says, "I love to play in this stuff."

During my childhood, grandparents were the center of our universe. If anything was happening, it usually took place at Grandma's house. Today, grandpa and grandma live in a condo and it's fun when the whole family gets together for a meal in a restaurant.

Times are changing and grandparents are changing too. Thank the Lord that the mission and ministry of grandparents remains the same: *to pass on their faith and God's love that will sustain and strengthen their children and grandchildren in their own faith and lives for generations.*

Grandparents at home or off traveling around the world continue to deeply love and pray for their children and their grandchildren. Many grandparents today report being looked to for spiritual leadership and strength. When trouble arises, grandparents are often some of the first people asked to pray. One grandparent reports that a grandson, not particularly religious, found great comfort in knowing his grandfather was praying for him during a difficult time in his life.

In a busy restaurant, the grandparents in our family say, "Let's pray..." At that moment, we separate ourselves from all the bustle around us and become intimately involved with God and each other. From their grandparents, a memory of God's presence and priority have been created for our children, which we pray they will carry to future generations.

So, things really haven't changed that much. Grandparents today simply pass on faith and love to their grandchildren in new and different ways. They may be busy, yet, they take time to pray for and play in the sand with their grandchildren. They may not be available to babysit all the time, but during the time they spend babysitting, they pass on God's love and theirs. They share their faith simply because they have been around long enough to know how much people need it. They may not be the grandparents you expected, but they are the grandparents God has given you. Enjoy how they are and who they are. Whether they're on the go or stay at home folks, the time you spend with them will help prepare you to be who they are in their faith and lives when you become a grandparent.

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## Imparting Spiritual Wellness



With each newborn baby comes an increase of parental responsibility and work, accompanied by a decrease of time. Just when new parents need to be reading God's Word for strength and be in prayer for the guidance and patience they need to care for this little one God has given them, they don't have any time. Their newborn baby takes up every extra minute of every day.

Not only do diapers need changing and babies need to be fed, but there is laundry. Piles of it! Where can parents of newborns find the time to pray? When will they have a moment to read, much less actually study God's Word? The truth is they won't. Time is a gift from God and God gives us the gift of time as we lay our burdens and our busyness on Him. Our busyness doesn't usually go away, but the burdens we feel over it surely can when we let God carry them.

There is a common thought that God helps us carry our burdens, and He does. But when we give them completely to Him, He carries them. This is an extremely crucial fact of faith many busy people miss. With the demands of carrying for a newborn it is definitely time to give all of the burdens that come with it and all burdens of any kind to God because it is the only way parents of newborns will ever get any rest. God may or may not give you time to pray and read His Word, but He did give you this article filled with other ways busy parents can pray and read God's Word.

Amazingly, as we give all of our burdens to Him, God helps us remember to pray as we bathe the baby, change diapers, run after toddlers, clean up a messy house, etc. He helps us tape up Bible passage where we spend our time or keep them in our pocket until we memorize them. Fed with spiritual food, we survive sleepless nights better; we have patience to calm the cries of infants or the screams of toddlers; when childhood illness arrives unannounced, we can cope because, spiritually, we are well.

We do need to understand that God imparts spiritual wellness to all who love and trust in Him even if we do not find time to pray and read His Word. That's the wonderful thing about God's love and grace. It comes to us and blesses us with all that we need even before we ask. However, when we do pray and memorize God's Word, He blesses us even more richly with His love; He helps us hug a very unlovable child; He gives us an understanding and forgiving heart for every child.

Experts believe even unborn babies are aware and influenced by things their parents do and say. This means that we can begin to pray for unborn children out loud and they can hear our voice and learn to pray. It means as we read God's Word and Bible Stories to our unborn children and keep reading them until our children take over and read them to us, we will be imparting spiritual wellness to children that they can pass on to their children for generations.

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## God's Love Reduces Conflict



Single, blended, and every family can benefit from reduced conflict and, therefore, from this article. This, of course, is because every family experiences conflict. While all parents may experience the same conflicts, single parents face them alone or without the support of a spouse. This can make the same conflicts seem larger than conflicts faced by married parents. Some single parents describe nerves so close to the surface that they snap into a million pieces when confronted with the slightest conflict. Certainly, the nerves of all parents can snap just as quickly, but again, they have each other. This article gives congregations an opportunity to give a special measure of God's love to all parents.

The truth is as long as sin exists, conflict will exist in all kinds of families. The good news is that God's love overpowers conflict and that there are steps to take in and through God's love to reduce conflict in every family. Because parents are the head of every family, it falls on them to be the leaders or the ones to take the first steps to reduce conflict.

One of the first steps to reducing conflict is to reduce stress. The internet will tell adults to reduce stress by keeping a positive attitude, assert their feelings rather than become angry, relax, meditate, eat healthy, manage their time, set limits, get rest and sleep, seek support, be willing to let some tasks go at home, and if the conflict is very serious, speak with their employer about reducing stress at work.

Likewise the internet states one of the biggest stressors for children is overscheduling. Parents are told to make age-appropriate time for play and make sleep a priority, make mornings calm, and to manage their own stress. They are told to help teens manage stress with healthy foods, sleep, balanced activities, and to get them outside, and they are to *take a breath* - them and their teens.

The mind boggling thing about the stress reducers prescribed by experts follow how God's Word directs us to live our lives. The chief one being to care for our bodies because they are not our own, they are the Lords (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). However, the most amazing is that time with God is the greatest stress reduction anyone will ever experience. He is the "peace" of our lives and in our souls. (John 14:27) Spend time with Him and take your family with you to church, have family devotions, pray with them and for them. Place Christ in the center of all that you do and He will fill you with a love that both reduces stress and not only reduces but overpowers conflict. Here's how it works:

Filled with God's love, you will feel less stress because of the freedom that comes to all who confess their sins through Christ (John 8:36). So, go ahead! Set aside everything that causes stress. Go to the park with your family. Spend a few hours having fun together and feel the stress leave for the moment. Then, stay close to God to reduce stress and handle every conflict that comes along.

Spending time together with God and each other will help your family constantly resolve your conflicts as you talk and pray, as well as play, joke, laugh, and have a good time working together. Chores will be done in record time by the whole family. Then, reward yourselves even more. Have an ice cream cone together!

Of course, conflicts will continue to arise. Most remarkably, God's love will come to the rescue every time. In and through God's love, families come to love, understand, and forgive in ways that reduce stress and every other factor that causes conflict. And single parents will never again face conflict alone because God will be with them.

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## Slow Down, Singles!



"Slow down" is a valuable piece of advice for any member of society who races around non-stop. Our bodies and minds need to slow down and think, but there never seems to be enough time in our busy, fast-moving world. However, many people assume single people are not busy. The truth is they are busier than we think - *sometimes they are even busier than they think.*

It is wonderful to be busy, but some single people feel driven to be busy because people think they are not busy. Their ill-conceived need to be busy takes away from time needed to quietly think, set goals, plan, and even succeed at plans. People who run here and there and everywhere, in the end, never actually get anywhere. This problem is paramount to speeding up to arrive early, only to find yourself in a traffic accident and arriving late, *or not at all.*

While moms and dads may realize they have to slow down for their health because their children need them - and children need to be slowed down because they are becoming increasingly hyperactive - and senior citizens slow down naturally with age - single people report they stay busy so people will not think they are lazy or they fear they will feel lonely if they have nothing to do.

First of all, slowing down does not mean not doing anything at all. It means not doing some things to open up time to be healthy and happy and in control rather than busily out of control. Secondly, instead of feeling lonely, singles who slow down can have more time to be with friends and receive the support they need but never get because they are too busy. Busy lives that keep people from the support and love of their family and friends can actually cause loneliness.

Most importantly, slowing down creates more time for people to be with God and receive His love and support. As God's love fills lives, it fulfills lives. Those who slow down to stay closer to Him will receive the strength and peace that escapes those who are too busy to even recognize much less enjoy being close to and loved by God.

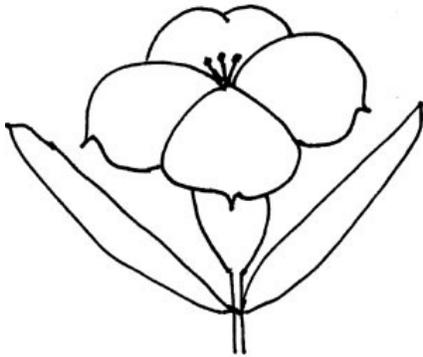
Many people, especially singles around us, need help to slow down and take time for God and for themselves. You can help by passing this article on to them. It will alert everyone to reasons why it is important to slow down and help to give singles the OK to slow down. It can also help to clear up the misconception that singles have more time because they do not have children.

Many single people without children have parents who depend on them. Nieces and nephews look to them for attention and time. Being single is not as free and easy as people believe. Some single people are expected to buy more gifts or spend more money on gifts because it is perceived that they have more money. They may end up putting in more hours at work to make more money, which leaves them with less time for others, themselves, and God. Assure the singles you know that inexpensive gifts given from the heart have more value than gold. Give them a copy of this article as your gift to them.

Along with encouraging singles who are moving too fast to slow down, be sure you and your congregation offer ministry that helps them to grow in their faith. Offer Bible Studies and support groups that help singles to think, plan, and succeed at the wonderfully fulfilling things God out of His great love has planned for them to do.

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## Grow Big Enough To Overlook The Little Things



You know what I'm talking about. Those little annoyances that tend to build up one on top of another over the years. We may chuckle when people ask us if we squeeze the toothpaste from the bottom or from the middle of the tube or if we leave the toilet seat up. Perhaps, by themselves, these petty irritations would continue to be more annoying than destructive, but they rarely occur "by themselves." They become an addition to every crisis and pain a marriage already endures and they need to be dealt with in and through God's love.

God's love does not keep record of wrongs. His love helps us overlook the little things even when they continue to happen over and over again and may never go away. Through God's love, we are equipped with power to tell our annoying spouse "I love you" in spite of the little things and mean it!

The truth is we desperately need God's love in us to help us control our sinful natural impulse to become annoyed over all the little things. Our human nature finds it difficult to forgive and impossible to forget. Thankfully, with God all things are possible. In and through Christ, we become new creations able to try again, forgive again, and love in spite of the little things that annoy us because that is what God does for us out of His great love.

God not only fills us with His love to overlook the little things. He also strengthens us in faith to handle the big things. Big problems and little annoyances can more quickly than we think tear a marriage apart without Christian love, but they have no power over a marriage grounded in God's love through Christ.

So to prevent marriage breakdown now or sometime in the future, sit down together today and discuss all the ways you can make God and His love more a part of your marriage and lives. Set a time aside to pray together every day. Make worship a priority. Get rid of everything that keeps you away from God. Seek to partake of all the things that will draw you closer to His love so He can help your faith and love grow big enough to handle every problem big and small.

As you do, watch God's love bloom in your marriage and in your faith and lives! Every time you become annoyed with your spouse, you will see the big picture of God's gracious and forgiving love for you. His love will make you big enough to love your spouse (as annoying as he or she may continue to be). That's how God's love works! It helps you grow big enough to overlook the little things through love and equips you to handle all the big things through faith.

**WARNING:** Don't wait until big and little problems overwhelm your marriage. Strengthen yourselves and your marriage now in and through God's love by getting closer to God every day. His love will help you grow big enough to overlook the little things and handle the big things too.

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## Build Lasting Love

Submit to One Another

Ephesians 5:21



Purely “Biblical” submission of wives to their husbands in marriage is seriously misunderstood. It is true that in our sinful world, the misunderstood meaning of submission has been used to give husbands control over their wives or men control over women. It has been blamed for wife abuse and hatred of men. But, this kind of submission is not biblical submission. It is sinful submission, and sinful submission is degrading and demeaning and needs to be outlawed.

The submission spoken of in God's Word is not of this world. It is divine and from above. It does not degrade or demean. Neither does it give one person control over another. The world cannot even comprehend biblical submission, much less obey it. In fact, the world considers it foolish. But Christians are not of the world; we merely live in it for a time. And, we have the Bible that is God's own Word to guide us in the correct understanding of His submission.

In biblical terms, the word "submission" has nothing to do with taking unfair advantage of or abusing another. Biblical submission does not take; it gives - willingly. Biblical submission is a strong word designed by God to build up and strengthen those who submit to one another out of love for God. Biblical submission is (as are all of God's commands for us) our choice.

The Bible commands wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave up His life for her. A husband who chooses to accept this great biblical responsibility is willing to give up his life for his wife. It's not hard for wives to submit (selflessly give) to husbands who are willing to give up their lives for them.

I often share that my husband believes his sole purpose in life is to make me happy, and I submit to that. It often gets a laugh, but it also gives a strong defense for and definition of biblical submission. It is easy to willingly, lovingly, and totally submit to someone who seeks to fill your every need out of deep love for God and for you.

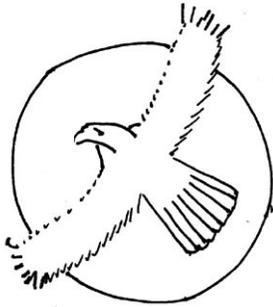
It is also said that people who stop trying to create the right spouse and concentrate on "being " the right spouse are blessed with the right spouse. Biblical submission creates “the right spouse.”

On the other hand, when a husband does not respect his wife, his wife will not respect him, much less submit to him. The only way biblical submission can work is through the demonstration of the mutual love between husband and wife, and their love must come from God in and through Christ. Hence, we read in Ephesians 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

If you are already engaged, thinking about becoming engaged, or married, read Ephesians 5:21-33 together. These verses will help you understand the total commitment of love for God and each other that marriage requires. Once you are both willing to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” you will be prepared for marriage and as you continue to do this every day *your marriage will last*.

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## Letting Go of the Past



The eagle is an excellent reminder of God's strength, sweeping up under us and lifting us up to new life in and through Christ. After the death of a beloved spouse or following a divorce, the strength to let go of the past and begin anew must come from our Lord.

Clinging to the memory of a deceased spouse because you do not want to be unfaithful to a person who has been a loving spouse to you and a loving parent to your children is easy to understand, so is longing for the return of a spouse who has left you through divorce. Sadly, in death, a spouse will not return and in divorce, a spouse may not ever return. The remaining spouse is left alone to somehow find a way to let go of the past.

Difficult problems can arise for those who remain emotionally tied to their lost loved ones for many years after a death or divorce. They may make the mistake of reaching out to love another but then pull back when the relationship progresses to a certain emotional level. If this is happening to you or to someone you love, here are some suggestions for letting go of the past:

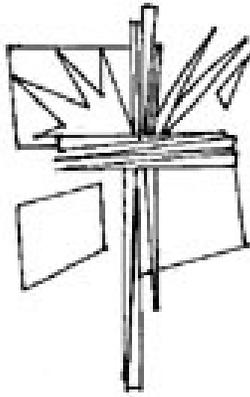
- Talk to God in prayer. Ask for His guidance and strength. Read His Word. He will fill you with His love to help you or the person you love let go of the past and love again.
- Recognize that problems prohibit letting go of the past. Resolution may require talking about feelings with a pastor, trusted friend, or sometimes with a professional counselor.

- Help initiate the letting go process by putting away photos and other reminders of the past and replacing treasured old experiences with new experiences to create new memories.
- Those who have been through the process of letting go after divorce or death encourage squelching every desire to compare the past with today. Some say an absolute refusal to dwell on past memories helps most of all.
- “Start anew” say those who have had trouble letting go of the past. A different place to live may be difficult, but is highly recommended. While the pain of picking up and leaving the past behind exists, the reminders that threaten to hold you back are gone.
- The friends you had as a married couple will probably not be the friends you have as a widowed or divorced person. You have less in common and usually grow apart naturally. So, find new friends. If you still have your old friends, treasure them as a gift from God.
- Today, there are a number of support groups for divorced and widowed singles. If your church does not have one, check with neighboring congregations *or begin one of our own.*

Most important of all, renew and strengthen your faith and life with your Lord. He will fill you with His love, which will give your life joy and peace in spite of your loss. His love will make you the kind of person who reaches out in love to others and is dearly loved by many in return. The Lord and the people He sends to love you will help you let go of the past and move in to a future He has planned just for you (Jeremiah 29:11).

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## Mentor Morality



A cloud is growing over our land. Slowly but with great force, it is wiping away all thought and desire for morality. This is especially true among our college students. What is being taught in colleges today, not the education, but the morality, strays so far from biblical and moral law that it is easy to believe morality does not exist at all on college campuses.

But, take heart. While morality is in serious decline, students with high moral values continue to exist on college campuses. Even more valuable and beneficial than students with high moral values are students with solid Christian faith and beliefs. These are the students we need to change low morality on college campuses and in the world. But, they need our encouragement and they need our prayers.

Take time to mentor a college student. If you don't know a college student, ask your pastor or local high school for a name. Begin by simply praying for this student every day. Then send a card, an e-mail, or text. If you live close to a college campus, invite students over for a meal or invite them to do their laundry at your house. They might like to come over and cook their own meal once in a while too.

**DO SOMETHING EXTRA:** Pass out the names of college students to fellow Christians in groups and organizations you attend. Start a massive movement to encourage college students in their Christian faith and lives. Also, give out this article to help others encourage college students.

There are many ways to begin to get to know and mentor college students. "Care Packages" of homemade or purchased goodies are a welcome sight for any college student and a wonderful, non-intrusive source of encouragement. Cards or notes can offer the same encouragement. Refrain from phone calls or visits unless invited to do so. But, if you desire, give your student your phone or cell phone number and e-mail address.

As you become an encourager (mentor), your relationship will grow naturally. There should never be a need to preach morality. Rather, let your faith and life reflect what you believe. Let them see and hear and even feel Jesus' love through you.

This does not mean you should not use God's Word for encouragement and direction. Find short Bible passages that you can add to notes or e-mails or texts that speak of:

- God's purpose and plans for our lives: Jeremiah 29:11
- our value in Christ: Matthew 6:26;
- purity: 1 Timothy 4:12
- honesty: 2 Corinthians 8:21
- forgiveness: Ephesians 4:32.
- search for more on the web.....

Devote yourself to God's Word and prayer. He will reveal to you endless ways in which you can mentor morality through His love to college students and to all the people you know and that God sends your way every day.

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