



in touch spiritual perspectives on family life

by The Family of God Foundation, Inc.

FORWARD WITH GOD

by Ron Craig

Ron Craig is our correspondent in Sterling, Alaska. We hope his writing will be a regular feature of in touch.

One great problem which married couples face today is the difference in religious beliefs between spouses. The first step in approaching any problem is first of all to recognize the problem and then be willing to put forth an effort to overcome that difficulty. At this point we should all also be aware of the amazing ability of people to make mountains out of mole hills—some problems are not really problems until we become committed to making them such. Profound problems require profound faith, a living faith that God can solve any and all problems. This life is a living partnership with God and with God as a senior partner all problems are capable of being overcome.

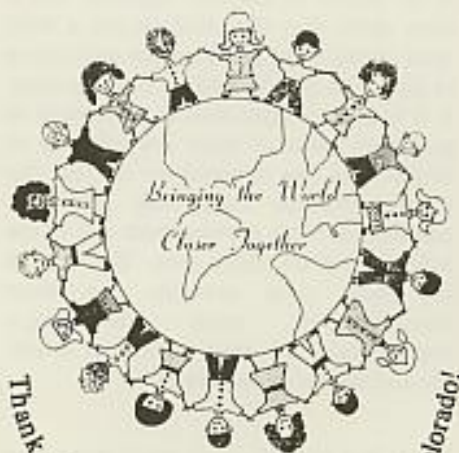
Marriage is also a partnership—the working relationship between a man and a woman in an effort to make life better for one another. When differences arise, and arise they shall, each needs to be willing to listen to the other person's point and honestly seek to understand that point of view. Many times we only allow our spouse to speak so we will have another shot at our position when the other finishes talking (if we wait that long!). Listening is an art and one which can and must be learned—we must listen to our marriage partner and we must listen to our Senior Partner. The differences between a married couple on religious issues cannot be any greater than those faced by Jesus among his followers or others to whom he taught. Let us look to Jesus and his life as an inspiration for bridging gulfs between various beliefs. How did Jesus deal with differing religious views held by those close to him? He cultivated the truth and by-passed those erroneous beliefs so firmly held by those of his generation.

Our own personal relationship with God has a great deal of impact on how well we face and solve problems. Develop an

unshakable faith in God and the great Truth that his guidance shall prevail in your life. This is your own personal relationship with the Father and it is unassailable. The Spirit of Truth was poured out upon all mankind. As we seek to proclaim the truth to those close to us, let us give heed to this great influence in our own lives. Allow the Spirit of Truth to do its own work. It is our work to **proclaim** truth, it is the Spirit of Truth's work to **convict** another and ourselves of truth.

Probably the single greatest factor in solving most immediate differences of a religious nature, or any other nature, with our partners in marriage would be included in our being a "second-miler"—be willing to give when there is no more to give. This is the living proof of Jesus' teaching dominating our lives.

There is written the tale of two fools who found an oyster with a pearl inside. They fell to arguing with each other as to who owns what, and when push came to shove they went to court. When all was said and done the first fool got the top shell, the second fool received the bottom shell, and that in the middle fell to the lawyer. Marriage is a partnership of one man and one woman and their problems can become pearls if the partnership stays together.



A CHILDHOOD MEMORY

by Nancy Grimsley

One of my treasured memories from childhood is the system for sharing my mother early established between my brother and me. The rule was that one of us divided and the other one chose first. It was a great system. No energy was wasted on unproductive debating over who got what. A great deal of the energy thus saved went into the intricately careful calculations necessary to the process of division. "Wait a minute, wait a minute, I'm not through yet," would be the byword of the one doing the dividing. In my mind's eye I can easily conjure up this familiar scene for the adult me to smile over: two children, both crouched down with eyes at table level, intently concentrating as one carefully pours a bottle of pop first into one glass then into another, while the other carefully monitors the process so as to make the best possible choice.

INSIDE

I am like a storm
of ice and rain

In the center of my
mind, I go on mysteriously

curiously forever
and ever

my heart is like
a planet only

inhabited by
lonely ghosts.

My life is like
a mysterious secret

only I know
Inside.

Casey Langfelder Age 13



the young child

Michael Hagan

Guiding Decisions—

The Prayer Connection

A friend once told me that when he was confronted with the need for an important decision he would use the following technique. After considering the potential courses of action as fully as possible, he would arrive at a tentative decision; he would then present that decision to the Father and seek through prayer to determine if it represented the Father's will. Once he felt confident he was on the right course he acted upon his decision. This method seems to embody some sound principles for seeking divine guidance in personal decision-making, for it demands that the individual actively use his own intellect and insight in the search for a solution, and demonstrate a willingness to seek and accept the Father's will.

There are some important parallels between the Father's role in guiding experienced decision-makers and our parental role in guiding the decisions of our less experienced young children. Every time we are approached by a child for help with a problem, we have an opportunity to exercise (and thus better understand) the same wisdom with which our Father hears our own petitions. (Not incidentally, we can, by demonstrating our willingness to listen to and help our children with their problems, encourage them when older to take their problems to the Father more readily.) We can, in fact, teach our children some of the principles of effective prayer by having them consider some of the following questions and counsel during our daily interaction with them in problem solving and decision-making.

1. Have you tried your best to solve the problem? Think for yourself about the problem you want to solve, rather than ask an adult to solve it for you. Have you done everything you can to find an answer? If not, what else can you do?

2. Have you thought about what is the right thing to do? Have you considered the needs and motives of others? This is the same as asking what God would have you do.

3. Are you going to do what's right, even if it isn't easy or isn't what you want to do? Sometimes it is easier to make a decision than it is to act upon it. It takes courage to make decisions and carry them out.

4. Have faith that God will help you to understand what is right to do, and will help you to do it. Don't hesitate to ask God for help, just as you ask me for help, because God is always there for you.

These questions and suggestions may not be appropriate for every problem a child will confront. Some problems will involve important moral questions and require much counseling and questioning; others will be more routine, making only a few of these ideas relevant. Yet in both small ways and large we are daily given opportunities to help our children learn to make decisions and to experience prayer as a part of everyday life.



editorial

Gayle Eash

It is vacation at our house. Actually, it is the middle of summer vacation, and it does seem that the children are a little tired of the same old brothers and sisters to play with all day and all evening long. It is important right now to remember to give each child an extra few minutes of single time, as opposed to the all day puppies-in-a-pile time they get. The pile-time is more sorting them out of the heap than it is quality care. But that all day long time presents the most stressful—and most rewarding—opportunities for their growth as brothers and sisters in our family.

There is a parallel to be made here. As God's children, we don't always play nicely with our brothers and sisters, but the interaction offers us our greatest

challenges for growth. We may spend as much time in the "puppy-pile" as we choose, but we may also choose to seek out our Father for quiet moments of one-to-one quality time. God is never too busy, never loses his patience, never is pre-occupied with dinner or housework or homework from the office. Thank God for that!

We have a challenge as parents to balance our ideals with our life reality, to make sense out of the conflict that comes when an imperfect being has just a far-away certainty about perfection. The challenge becomes even greater when the small beings in our care see our flaws, hear each error in our reasoning—and very generously point them all out to us.

After I have spent several unbroken days at home with the sibling rivals, I often feel totally disheveled, and suffer from a lack of energy, lack of self-respect, and lack of respect for anybody under 30. This condition can be cured—instantly—by one simple "Thank you for the dinner, mommy," or, "I love you, mommy," or, "You know what? I like, you mommy." When this is uttered by a small person standing in the center of a topsy-turvy room, the pile of debris becomes temporarily invisible. This can be said by a child who crosses the just

mopped floor for the third time in five minutes, covered from head to toe with mud, and if the message is sincere—and accompanied by a rock-treasure found in the mudpile—the spirit shines through the layers to reveal a baby angel.

And so, I think, must God feel about us. He sees us, from his wise perspective, covered from head to toe in mud for perhaps the third time today, but our heartfelt "thank you" eases his infinite load. He watches us practice our whirling dervish lifestyles, leaving havoc all around us, and yet his heart must be lifted by our sincere, "I love you, Father."

What is it that we parents most desire from and for our children? Love, respect, lives full of happiness and self-respect. We are doubly delighted and touched and rewarded by their unsolicited gratitude and understanding. What, then, do you suppose the most perfect parent desires for and from each of us?

preparation for parenthood

Mary Blessing



Becoming a parent is a major adjustment in life. Being prepared for the highest responsibility you have ever assumed can be quite a work-out. I know, because my husband, Jim, and I decided that we would like to be parents, and now we are awaiting the arrival of our first little one—to present his or her unique spirit sometime in early autumn.

If you've been reading *in touch* for the last two years, you may recall that Jim and I went through a major decision-making process (which took almost two years!) before arriving at the conclusion that having children was the appropriate path for us. Our decision-making process (described in *in touch*, Volume 2, Number 2, Spring 1981) strengthened our marriage and gave each of us confidence that we were making the right choice as individuals. The time and effort we spent seriously considering the question of parenting during this lifetime were an investment not only in our future as a couple, but in our child's future.

Something else that has made us strong during this "preparation" period has been an investment in considering our pasts. We each took a serious look at our early childhood experiences to discover some of those locked away memories which reveal how our parents, grandparents and siblings treated us as children. We are aware that it is usual for people to grow up to parent their children much as they were parented. It is our hope that by stopping now to reflect, write and talk about our early family experiences we will be able to identify aspects of our up-bringing that we may want to change in raising our children. This process is also valuable in giving us a chance to see how our families differed, and to better understand one another's basic attitudes and responses to such family experiences as showing affection, sharing discipline, authority figures, family rituals, and religious practices. We even wrote our

autobiographies, giving a year-by-year account of our lives from our earliest memories to the present. We showed each other photographs of ourselves and our families as we were growing up. This truly deepened our love and enhanced our appreciation for each other.

While I am quite certain that Jim and I are going to perform as parents rather like our own parents did, I do believe that because we are making ourselves conscious of our parent's patterns, we will be able to identify negative aspects and at least attempt to eliminate them. Additionally, we are at an advantage because we have a source book on parenting in the form of an epochal revelation! We can be stronger as parents and break some of the old habit patterns because we have something positive to replace them. Yet I don't believe this new vision would be seen as clearly by either of us if we did not first stop to assess our starting point. We cannot change our past, but we can make our future stronger by understanding our history, accepting our present and stepping forward with confidence, knowing that we are guided by the light of our universal Parent, the Universal Father!

(Editor's note: Jim and Mary Blessing were "blessed" with the birth of their daughter, Christina Elizabeth, on September 1, 1982.)



religion in the home

Mary Echlin

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.
Ecclesiastes, 3:1.

Today we've had rain, thunder, lightning, hail, sunshine and birdsong—but it's the birdsong that reminds me it's spring! The daffodils are blooming again and tiny green plums are swelling slowly with the new season's growth, promising even now the juicy sweetness of mid-summer.

The seasons and their celebration as

family festivals can be "windows through" this life—through insight and imagination to higher meanings and values for adults and through natural expressions of inner connection to the rhythmic, purposeful, orderly universe for children. For the young child the world is alive; his memory is visual, nourished by sensory images, not precepts; her will is exercised by *doing*—purposeful activity. Their reverence and awe can be nurtured with song, verse, special food, seasonal stories and the loving activities of family preparations for a home celebration.

For example, spring and Easter celebrations for our family this year are no longer dictated by greeting card manufacturers or by a curious combination of pagan custom and atonement theology, but by a fresh sense of the renewal of life—continuing and rejuvenating—that comes to us through the symbol of the egg carrying new life, with the fragrance of hot cross buns baking, in the sun-like glow of daffodils bobbing their faces in the rain, and in a song-filled passage from the inner focus of winter to the outer-directed activity of summer. We sing some of the songs (see below) and the birds sing the others. Even the traditional easter egg hunt is no longer solely for the purposes of chocolate-egg-orgy or "who can find the most." Now that I as a parent see a timeless inner meaning, I can prepare a tiny stuffed felt chick or an egg shell containing seeds to be planted and cared for, hide the eggs decorated by the children, and connect each child's surprises with yarn from a ball of a different color which each child will then follow in the hunt—making this a "seek and ye shall find" festival for each one. I know that the *doing* will suffice for the child—his instant recognition and forgetting of the taste, the colors, the scents all build quietly, inwardly and with purpose as the children go out in search of the unexplained symbols of new life in silent contrast to the bringing into the home of warmth and life at Christmastime.

In the sensory experiences of nature and the seasons lie the images and connotations which later become a vocabulary of the spirit for our children's inner encouragement, insight and growth. It was this richness of experience with the natural world which Jesus called upon in his parable teachings.

And much is gained immediately. Both parents and children can practice living loyally in the present as they make festival preparations as meaningful as the celebration. Patience is practiced in allowing the children to knead the dough or chop the candied peel for the hot cross buns or in waiting together for the dough to rise. We parents can hold in mind the symbolism of new light in the yolk as eggs are blown for decorating and we can revel with the children over each new blossom appearing in the garden. The children can find the joy of giving to be as exciting as that of receiving when a hand-picked clover on St. Patrick's Day or a bunch of spring flowers (no matter how short the stems) is accepted with reverence as a child's offering of love.

We know that throughout the universe transitions are celebrated—though on a much longer cycle than here—and we have a God-designed opportunity in celebrating seasonal festivals within our families to experience in a concrete way some timeless universe principles: the rhythm of goal-directed activity followed by celebration and relaxation; the relationship of trust between outward preparations and habits to inner, unconscious growth; and the worshipful joy of expressing our gratitude, reverence and awe for the life and caring love which connects and nourishes us all.

A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE
by Bert Cobb

As a father I'm amazed and sometimes humbled when I realize that each new generation of children ride on the shoulders of knowledge of all preceding generations of men.

Does this mean my kids can be smarter, more "together" than me?

What a blow!

But when I accept this possibility, I'm filled with a new hope for humankind. And this hope is reinforced when I observe my maturing son and daughter (16 and 18 years old) and I remember back when I was their respective ages...and sure enough, I'm developing faith in a peaceful evolution toward the era of light and life!

UNIVERSE CHILDREN

Surely they thrive on love and encouragement,
Basic, essential, nourishment.

Stand back and observe them in their Phases of growing...
Vaguely knowing...

They're bearing the fruits that we've been sowing

Strong bodies, sound intellects, and growing spiritual perception...
decreasing ignorance, fear and deception.

Why should I worry or be uptight?
The kids are gonna be all right.

Their human potential is far beyond me,
On all three levels of reality.

Bert Cobb



father's day

Bob Eash

This is the third and final installment of Bob Hunt's article on parenting.

GROWING UP WITH YOUR CHILDREN

by Bob Hunt

Your total experience with your child or your children will almost certainly be joyful, fulfilling and successful if you can maintain the right attitude as a parent. Your methods will vary according to your own personality and your own values and you will evaluate and refine these as you gain experience and confidence. But nothing can be more helpful in an overall way than simply feeling good about your parental role. If you are positive and optimistic in your relationship with your child, your attitude will be contagious and will reinforce your child's own naturally positive characteristics. Your mistakes and the inevitable difficulties that occur cannot only be overcome but viewed as learning experiences if your heart and your mind are properly attuned to the rhythm of this experience. Always look for the best in your child and refrain from being cynical about any aspect of your mutual relationship. Listen to your children; there is a great deal to be learned from what they have to say. An understanding fellowship should exist between you and your child; and you must view this bond as a precious and unique gift. Your basic attitude, in the midst of turmoil or the height of shared joy, should be infused with the best balance of love and wisdom that you are capable of generating. This will occur naturally as you aspire to be tolerant, patient and forgiving towards your child and as you maintain a sincere motivation to provide compassionate discipline and careful guidance for your child.

Your children will have problems that will require your loving assistance. They will encounter difficulties that you must share patiently; and there will be achievements and pleasures to enjoy together. All of these elements of living and growing can be molded into a beautiful relationship that is unlike any other

The opinions expressed in letters and articles published in **in touch** do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial staff.

STAFF

Gayle Eash, Editor
Mary Blessing, Production Manager
Nancy Grimsley, Production Advisor
Tery McCade, Graphics
Jane Rolnick, Circulation Manager

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

Sara Blackstock
Mary Blessing
Robert Eash
Mary Echlin
Michael Hagan



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published by



THE FAMILY OF GOD FOUNDATION, INC.
BOX 347, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94701

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in touch spiritual perspectives on family life
Box 347
Berkeley, California 94701

life experience. And this can be achieved with an absence of negativity by sharing and growing with your children as you show them why rather than tell them why not, as you motivate them to be good instead of giving them rules for not being bad, as you urge them towards truth in place of away from falsity. Such an attitude, consistently and firmly maintained, will assist your child in developing a strong and noble character with which to face the world as an adult and in formulating personal values and goals upon which to build a happy and successful life. It would be difficult to improve upon such a foundation!

While it is tempting, when giving advice, to provide lists of specific rules to follow, there are good reasons not to do so in this situation. No such list can be complete for there will always be new and difficult situations to consider. Also, any attempt to be absolute in regard to parent-child relationships runs the risk of being at odds with personal beliefs or circumstances that may require a different, or at least modified, approach. In any case, specific rules of methods are of secondary importance to the interest, the attitude and the commitment of the parents.

Individual parents must develop their own methods through careful and thoughtful consideration, even with much trial and error. Furthermore, it seems appropriate to include the child or children in this developing process which can become an important part of the mutual relationships. Many parents attempt to set time aside to play with or pursue leisure activities with their children but completely overlook the value to be gained from working together. In fact, the best way to initiate your child concerning a particular household task is to do the job with the child. An excellent method of instilling some understanding of a problem in your child is to discuss the matter and consider its solution together. Within a family, discussion periods or family council sessions can have a significant impact on the attitudes of the individuals in the group. One of the most important and, at the same time, frustrating aspects of family life is the adjustment of diverse personalities into a mutual state of harmony and tranquility. Personal desires must be modified for the welfare of the family and the realization of this simple insight involves types of growth and awareness that are vital to human happiness. *There is no better experimental setting for learning*

patience, tolerance and altruism than within your own family.

Children are willing to cooperate, to share and to sacrifice if they observe these traits lovingly and happily demonstrated by those persons with whom they live. Your responsibilities as a parent are quite consistent with your responsibilities as a human being; and you should expect no more progress on the part of your child, at her or his level of maturity and understanding, than you are making yourself. In this dynamic process of living and growing together, both you and your child will experience success and failure in the natural course of events. The rewards and the setbacks must both be accepted gracefully and with renewed dedication towards the new experiences that will follow. The importance of failing is often overlooked in the child development process. In many situations, it may be better for your child to discover the results of his or her own hasty actions or foolish conduct than for you to intervene. *You and your child should understand the value and learning potential of failure to the same extent that you recognize and take pleasure in the thrill of success.* There are positive ways to approach even the most dismal situations and you should be ever alert to the type of emphasis that you provide to your children. They will reflect your own degree of light and will emerge as stable and happy individual personalities in large measure according to the understanding and opportunity that you provide them. Your sincerity will make a lasting impression on your children. Your fairness and your honesty will strengthen your children's natural impulses to be thoughtful and to be truthful. Your willingness to contend with the immediate problem and to face up to the present difficulty with strong resolution will challenge your children to follow your example. Your own inner peace will stimulate the deepest feelings of personal security in your children.

While you are trying to stay at least a step or two ahead of your child in growth and awareness of personal values, you must concurrently provide for adequate training that will enable your child to meet the responsibilities of life as an independent individual. Your own examples and activities will meet these needs to a great extent if your child has sufficient opportunity to observe you and to share time with you. While schools and friends will provide a great deal of both academic and social

education, there are many practical life experiences that you can provide to your child. These will include home repairs and grocery shopping; household chores, from cooking to mending; family managing, from vacations to life insurance, bank accounts and income tax; information and attitudes about politics, religion, personal hygiene, sex, preventive medicine, care of the sick, death and dying, and a diversity of other matters that will range from the mundane to the exotic.

As a devoted and wise parent, you find your own special ways of selecting these practical elements of life to share with your child. You will derive pleasure from observing your children discover, learn and perfect their own abilities to perform and accomplish these tasks. The pleasure may be delayed and mixed with pain at times, for a child will complain, cajole and go to incredible lengths to stall many of these "learning experiences." Your firm leadership and restraint will be tested often and you may spend more time on explanation and discussion than the job itself requires, but this is part of your responsibility as a parent. While being a loving companion to your child, you are still the parent with all of the accompanying responsibilities. There may be times when you will simply have to resort to wielding the power of your position in dealing with your child. "You must understand, my lovely, that I myself was once a child; and I am now an adult. I can understand your complaint, your reluctance, your unhappiness; for I experienced those same feelings when I was your age. But now I can look back on them with a perspective that you cannot. I see them from both sides. And, in this instance, I must insist that you do as I say. (And now for the terrible, but so applicable, double cliche...) I truly believe that it is for your own good and that you will someday thank me for it. Now, if you feel you have a better argument than this, or that I am overlooking something very important, I will listen to what you have to say about it."

If your relationship with your child has been nurtured and built on a solid basis of love and wisdom, if you have established strong credibility with your child through your fair and honest actions, if you can maintain both good humor and consistency in dealing with your child, then you will find this sort of explanation is quite satisfactory to accomplish your goals. In fact, it should only infrequently be necessary to

reiterate these facts; your child should come to realize them and have an appreciation for them. As you care for, train and love your children, their understanding of your actions will increase along with their appreciation for your loyalty and your dedication.

One of the most important elements that is always present in a child and yet often overlooked by the self-centered parent is the natural goodness of the child. Parents who regard children as vessels to be filled from their own fountain of knowledge and experience can soon overwhelm those innocent but tender buds of inherent purity that are present in their children. To the extent that this occurs, the utilization of these natural traits as bases for growth is subdued. Such loss is unfortunate beyond measure. Here is a potentially perfect being already equipped with some faint traces of the truth, beauty and goodness that the human animal is capable of realizing during a short, adventurous life on earth. Sensitive parents must truly realize what they have to start with in a child and then do their level best to nourish, rather than stifle, this delicate life in which they are so honored to be involved. What has been given into their hands, for better or for worse, is certainly not a parental right but rather the supreme responsibility of their existence. It is particularly important to bear these realizations in mind during the first years of a child's life when the animal nature and instincts are more dominant than the goodness. There will be many trying times as this growth period unfolds; remember that these are opportunities for your forbearance, your wisdom, your growth. And the manner in which you react and deal with various situations at this time is being indelibly recorded by your observing child. For example, children have a natural trust, a simple faith that parents should work to preserve. This means that you must steer clear of any sort of deception in your relationship with your child (or with anyone else for that matter; remember your child is a keen observer and knows you very well). Similarly, you must not allow suspicion, or even tendencies towards being suspicious, to be a part of your life. As you adopt attitudes of this sort, you may be amazed to discover that there are positive ways to learn with your children about matters that might otherwise be approached in a negative fashion. Openness and love, tolerance and understanding, kindness

and patience are traits of endless variety that are capable of obliterating deception and suspicion. Feelings of fairness and justice, of unselfishness and sympathy appear in five or six year old children as they begin the marvelous discovery of their moral nature. It is the parental inclination to link morality with guilt or sex or vanity that redirects this otherwise positive force along less desirable lines.

When children gain a positive perspective on their unselfish tendencies, they achieve something that many adults struggle with throughout their lives. Some adults realize great gains in such matters through the parental experience with the loving and patient assistance of their children. *Be prepared to give credit to your child when he or she assists your growth; sharing your learning experiences with your child enhances your relationship in ways that nothing else can approach.* Child development, or more accurately child-parent development, is really quite natural if given the opportunity to be. The exquisite beauty of both the living experience and the life-time results is a wonder to behold; and you, as a parent, have all the ingredients for success. It does not really matter where you live or how much money you earn or even what you have previously accomplished in your own life; with your child, you have a fresh start, a new beginning for mutual discovery and growth.

Throughout the time of your child's development and amidst all of your efforts to be open, fair and loving and to consistently set truthful good examples, there is one value that will mean more to your child than any other; and this is loyalty. Your child will always have a strong sensitivity to whether or not you are loyal to her, to him; and this insight on the part of your child will penetrate through any external trappings, good or bad. Actually, you cannot fool your child about very much of anything, especially over a period of time, any more than you can fool yourself. But on the matter of loyalty, your child has finely tuned intuitive detectors. While particularly sensitive in the matter of personal loyalty, your child will also be attuned to your loyalty to others, to your values and to yourself. This value includes your dependability, fidelity and constancy; and while you may stumble and falter on many matters concerning these traits, your consistency with your child should always remain uppermost in your mind and in your heart. Needless to

say, the return on such an investment is great and enduring; as with your love, your children will repay your loyalty many times over.

"How could my own child do this to me?" an anguished parent cries. But how numerous are those past occasions when the child, often silently, perhaps in loneliness or frustration, wondered deep in his or her being how "my own mother or father could do this to me?" It is truly an unfortunate situation when parents demonstrate greater loyalty to friends, to careers or to numerous other commitments than to those vibrant, beautiful child-beings growing up in their shadows. *There is nothing more important in your life than to be there for your child at all times and under any circumstances.* It is often at a time of greatest need, in the midst of an emotional issue, that a parent forsakes a child. A parent should never be under the illusion that his or her role in the development of a child will be free of pain. The nature of the relationship is intense and direct, and rewards and success do not come easily. A parent must forgive the most grievous actions and remain loyal amidst the most tortuous turmoil, and a parent must be quick to ask a child's forgiveness when the parent falters in manifesting these qualities. It is difficult to imagine any better training ground for learning how to manage one's ego tendencies than parenthood. Worthy parents will accomplish as much for themselves as for their children in the course of those developmental years; they will grow up with their children.

TO A FATHER, FROM A MOTHER

You stand by a stream staring in,
On the calm water I see you,
Standing close beside me.

As we watch the sun rise,
Across the water and into the sky,
a warm glow passes across our faces.
You bring me morning afterglow.

Wonder at water that that mirrors the sky!
Wonder at our love, that mirrors His love.

At our feet, wildflowers kiss the sun,
who raised them from their winter sleep,
and conceived them from love.

Sounds of waking miracles fill the air.
A breeze brushes by; God is near.
The breath of your love breathes in me.

Penny Poole-Oster

BE YE PERFECT

Gayle Eash

Building Good Habits

In his book, *REACHING HIGH: The Psychology of Spiritual Living* (1980, Spiritual Renaissance Press, Berkeley, California), Marvin Gawryn shows us the pathway to balancing body, mind and soul by understanding, decision, and action.

Question: How do we build good habits, and balanced personalities, possibly in spite of a whole load of imbalance and bad habits?

Answer: A little bit at a time.

Here is a suggestion which I would like to share, for the daily building of new habits. Since I am a visually/verbally oriented person, the pen and paper are my aids for this exercise. You might be more comfortable with a tape recorder or something else. Find your own best aid, and put it in front of you. Now list your priorities in this life. Break them into three categories:

Priority Program

M T W Th F S S

Body							
Mind							
Soul							

What is your priority for your body? Is it to lose ten pounds? Is it to stop eating chocolate? What about your mind? Is the priority to paint a picture or take some music or language lessons, or do some creative writing? How about your soul? What is your priority? Is it to become closer to God, to discover his will? Is it to serve your brothers and sisters more effectively?

Now stop and formulate a plan to help you realize these priorities. Keep them realistic and within your abilities. Give yourself a chance to build and reinforce your new habits. How about avoiding a chocolate bar, studying your lessons for ten minutes, and spending at least five

minutes in prayer and worship. (Chances are you will want more time than that with the Father as this practice becomes a habit.) This all adds up to fifteen minutes and one less candy bar a day—not an overwhelming amount. Even the busiest family life should allow fifteen minutes per person.

Give yourself daily feedback on your program. Check mark yourself or talk to your tape recorder, or give yourself a gold star, or donate a dollar to your favorite charity, for each priority you are able to build toward each day.

The goal is balance. Spiritual progress is the most far-reaching branch of the goal, but without the other two aspects in balance, spiritual progress can become less productive and even potentially dangerous. Jesus was not a mystic in a cave.

If this sounds like an idea you can work with or adapt to your own needs:

- Read Marvin's book.
- Build those good habits.
(This technique can also be taught to children who are struggling with certain growth roadblocks.)
- Make yourself a gold-star chart
- Share the idea with a friend.

Let us know if this works for you!

PEN PAL CORNER

HEY KIDS!

Let's get in touch.
If you would like
to have a pen pal,
here's how to
advertise for one:
Send us your
Name and address
hobbies or interests
age.

Dear Sara, I writing
about the Intouch pen pal.
I am 12 years old and going
into 7th grade. I play the violin
and I went to a music
camp for a week this summer.
I like cats and have a pet
bird named Becker that will
kiss you! I have long blond
wavy hair and I am very
short for my age. I have
a brother & sister and
I love to babysit them &
other neighborhood kids. My
favorite TV show is the Solid
Gold or Love Boat. I hope
you can get me a pen
pal. Your friend, WENDY

Wendy Zopel's letter.

We will print them for you and you will meet another brother or sister in God's family. Remember, IN TOUCH is being sent to India, France and Canada now, as well as the U.S.A.

HERE'S ANOTHER HAIKU:

(Remember, a Haiku has three lines. It is fun to try for 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and 5 syllables in the third line.)

Resting in deep grass,
Green, soft, and all around me,
God is present here, now.

Anyone can do a Haiku.
If you create one or read one somewhere, send it to us
so we can share it.



in touch spiritual perspectives on family life

BOX 347, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94701
