



Bulletin

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Happy New Year!

Bring New Life to Your Marriage

BY JAIME SCHREINER


WITH A NEW YEAR UPON US, IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO reflect on your marriage from a fresh perspective. As a couple, discuss Philippians 1. Read the chapter together or individually, then focus your conversation on the following verse and discussion questions:

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.” (Philippians 1:9)

- What's one thing you loved about me when we first began our relationship? What is one new thing you love about me now?
- What is something you've been surprised to learn about me?
- What can we do to learn more about each other?

We don't always notice changes in our spouse, particularly when we're with him or her day in and day out, but we can be sure that changes are taking place. Nobody remains exactly the same. No matter how long we've been married, there are always new things to learn about our spouse.

If we decide to study our spouse with the right attitude, knowing God has placed treasures in him or her that we have yet to discover, we can experience a deeper love for each other. Committing to search our beloved for new reasons to love him or her can bring new life to our marriage.



TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

If God is everywhere,
why do we
go to church?



New Year's Resolutions

It's that time of year when we pause, reflect and resolve to make some changes. I imagine losing weight has to be at the top of the list for a few million people. Others desire to quit drinking or smoking, get out of debt, spend more time with family and read more books. For people of faith, resolving to spend focused time reading the Bible might be a big one too.

When it comes to making New Year's resolutions, I don't have a specific top-10 list. I do reflect on the past and set personal goals for the future. That's important. This season of taking personal inventory is like a much needed wheel alignment. I just haven't codified my thinking into a specific list of resolutions.

If, however, I was pressed to make a short list, perhaps the best thing I could do would be to echo something spoken by author and evangelist Jonathan Edwards back in the 1700s. See if you don't agree that these two resolutions are so simple, yet so powerful:

Resolution One: I will live for God.

Resolution Two: If no one else does, I still will.

What about you? In addition to what Jonathan Edwards is proposing, do you have a top-10 list of New Year's resolutions? What do you hope, plan or dream of doing this year?

—*Jim Daly*

Resolve to join Focus on the Family's 30-day Kindness Challenge starting Jan. 16. Sign up at JoinTheKindnessChallenge.com/Focus.



Protecting the Sanctity of Life

Countless human lives are at risk from abortion, preventable disease, orphan status, human trafficking and malnourishment—but our generation can be a compassionate and compelling voice for life. While human life has been devalued throughout history, we have opportunities to advance the sanctity of life like never before through both prayer and action.

Join Focus on the Family at the Evangelicals for Life conference, taking place January 26–28 in Washington, D.C. The conference will address the defense of all human life, with speakers like Russell Moore, Jim Daly, Al Mohler and many more.

To find out how your church or small group can livestream the event for free, visit www.evangelicals.life/simulcast.

Balancing Privacy and Protection

We had just moved, and our 14-year-old daughter, Murphy, wasn't coping well. My wife, Erin, and I were concerned.

One day, Erin noticed Murphy's journal on the bed. Erin was faced with a dilemma: Should she respect Murphy's privacy and ignore the journal, or should she read it—based on Murphy's unwillingness to talk?

Some parents believe they have the absolute right to go through their children's belongings, check social media accounts, etc. Other parents say we shouldn't invade our children's privacy, but should trust them unless they give us a reason not to.

I don't think there is a black-and-white answer. It is important to build relationships with our kids that are based on trust and mutual respect, affording them as much privacy as we can. However, God has entrusted us to parent our children, and it is our job to love and care for them. So a dependent child really has no "right" to privacy.



The key to finding a healthy balance in this area is to set the right expectations. Erin and I don't allow our kids to close their bedroom doors when they're using a computer or when friends are over, and we check their phones and social media accounts from time to time.

We've also talked with them about their diaries. We want our kids to have somewhere to process life without fear of being exposed, so we've assured them that we will not read their private thoughts simply because we're curious. But our children also know that we will do whatever is necessary to protect them.

Make it your goal to err on the side of trusting your children. But red flags in their behavior mean you need to keep them safe. I encourage you to have a

family meeting to discuss what "privacy" means for your family.

After a quick prayer that day in Murphy's room, Erin decided to read the journal and discovered some disconcerting things. She was being a responsible mom who accepted the relational consequences when Murphy felt betrayed. Ultimately, Erin repaired their relationship, and Murphy got the help she needed.

—*Dr. Greg Smalley*

Family Matters

Answers to your questions . . .

How can my family get a better handle on our finances?

Answer:

I suggest you live life by these three words: *give*, *save* and *spend*.

First, *give*. Proverbs 3:9-10 says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty.” You might be saying that you don’t see how you can give to God when you can’t even pay all of your bills, but God says that if you will give to Him—honor Him—He will make sure you have enough for what you need.

Next, *save*. A portion of every dollar you earn should go into savings.

Egypt was able to not only survive a seven-year famine during Joseph’s time, but they were also able to feed people in other lands (Genesis 41:41-57). This is because Joseph instructed the Egyptians to set aside—to save—a portion of every harvest during the seven years leading up to the drought. Life has a way of surprising you with unexpected expenses. When you make a practice of saving some of your money, you will be prepared for what is in store.

Lastly, *spend*. But spend wisely. Plan your spending. Draw up, agree upon and stick to a family budget. Play hard and enjoy life, but also play smart. God tells us in Proverbs 21:5,

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.” There’s nothing wrong with spending money or enjoying blessings in life. It just needs to be done with wisdom and restraint.

When you live by these words, you can stop letting money be the boss that tells you what you will be doing with your time. Instead, as you follow God’s principles, you will watch Him restore the financial situation in your home.

(Adapted from *Kingdom Marriage: Connecting God’s Purpose with Your Pleasure* by Dr. Tony Evans. Available at [FocusOnTheFamily.com/KingdomMarriage.](http://FocusOnTheFamily.com/KingdomMarriage))

**TOUGH
QUESTIONS
FROM KIDS**

Answer:

Something very special happens when people who follow Christ get together. We can encourage and strengthen each other. We can pray for each other. We can learn from each other. We can serve and help each other. Most of all, we can worship and praise God together.

For more information on any of the topics in this bulletin, go to FocusOnTheFamily.com or call 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). To reach Customer Service regarding your subscription, please call 800-692-9912. To check out more church resources and read the editor’s thoughts, please visit us at www.tyndaleperiodicals.com.

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