

FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions...



Bulletin

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August Is Awesome!

TAKE THE LEAD

BY JIM DALY

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY RECEIVED THIS SAD EMAIL FROM A DAD WHO was filled with regret: “I’m estranged from my adult daughter. She’s 35, and I haven’t spoken to her since she was 17. I’d love for our relationship to be better, but I don’t know if I should reach out or wait for her to show interest in me.”

If you’re estranged from your child, I encourage you to take the lead. Don’t wait for your son or daughter to seek reconciliation. *You* reach out. Just like the Lord reaches out to us. First John chapter 4 says that God pursues *us* when there’s a rift and invites us back into relationship with Him. Initiating healing in your relationship takes humility.

It also takes perseverance. You can’t give up at the first sign of adversity. Some children are always open and ready, while others may be angry or still distrust you in some way. It may take time for their hearts to soften, so be patient.

And most importantly . . . pray. Ask the Lord to intervene in your relationship and to help you restore what’s been broken. You want to put yourself out there, but you need God’s grace to mend your relationship.

Whether your child is 15 or 50, humble yourself and take the lead. Pursue a restored relationship.

Want to know more? Visit www.focusonthefamily.com.

These days, it seems that children just are not being taught how to be grateful—or why they should be. How can I teach my kids to be grateful?

ANSWER:

First off, remember that God owns everything. The culture your children are growing up in doesn’t act as if that’s true. Even Christians tend to think that we are to give God 10 percent and do whatever we want with the remaining 90 percent. But according to the Bible, we own nothing. God entrusts us with a wealth of resources (time, talent, treasure, opportunities—the whole package of who we are and what we have) to manage as wise stewards.

How can you help your children learn that they

are stewards, not owners? Teach them the principle of Luke 16:10: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” When my kids were small, they had three money jars: one for giving, one for saving and one for spending. Whenever they got a dollar, one dime would go into the giving jar, one into the saving jar and eight into the spending jar. As they grew older, we would provide opportunities to give over and above their tithes by adopting as a family various causes—an orphanage in Russia, support for a child through a ministry like World Vision or Compassion Interna-

tional, etc. These additional gifts were never compulsory, but as our kids saw the needs of the world, they learned to give from their hearts. They developed a pattern of giving, saving and spending that has continued to their adulthood.

Giving reminds kids that God owns everything and is worthy of the first portion of all we receive. Saving reminds them that money is to be used with planning and purpose. And spending reminds them of the generosity of God and the privilege of being a steward.

(Adapted from *Effective Parenting in a Defective World* by Chip Ingram)



Tough
Questions
from Kids

How can
I stop
daydreaming
and pay
attention in
class?

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

It’s easy to let your mind wander, especially when you don’t find the subject interesting. One way to stop daydreaming is to take notes about what the teacher is saying; maybe even write down questions you think of. Or ask your teacher for suggestions about what you can do. Teachers are happy to help students learn.

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 1-800-692-9912. To check out more ministry resources, please visit us at www.tyndaleperiodicals.com.

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CONNECTING SPIRITUALLY AS EMPTY NESTERS

Lately I've been watching many of my friends enter the empty-nest stage of marriage. I'm taking notes and learning from their wisdom about what to do and what not to do.

If you have an empty nest, consider the following tips on how to grow closer to your spouse and deepen your spiritual relationship.

THANK GOD

Whether you entered the empty-nest season with joy, grief or another emotion, Scripture says to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Thank God for this season—amid tears or squeals of delight. It will draw you closer to Him.

EXPLORE DEEPER SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS

Try to understand your spouse's attitude toward growing together spiritually during this season. Be willing to listen to his or her thoughts and ideas about how you could connect spiritually—even if those ideas are significantly different from yours. You'll probably learn about yourself and your expectations, too.

CHOOSE ACTIVITIES THAT DRAW YOU CLOSE TO GOD

Regardless of what your spouse desires in a spiritual connection, what can *you* do to abide in Christ (John 15:5)? Your spouse may not join in, but the influence of your choices can make a difference, and his or her enthusiasm might surprise you.

DREAM TOGETHER

One thing my husband and I love to do is to dream together. God has placed individual desires in our hearts; however, we believe that the Lord can use our marriage and oneness to bless others.

As newlyweds, you more than likely spent a lot of time dreaming about your future together. But many couples stop doing this due to distraction, conflict or disconnection. Return to dreaming! Know why you are together and how you can draw others to Christ through your marriage. “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act” (Psalm 37:5). Maybe you desire to:

- minister to a young married couple or couples,
- serve on a mission trip,
- open your home to foster children or provide respite care for families who foster or
- give financially to a nonprofit.

Each empty-nest marriage will look different when it comes to the couple's spiritual connection with the Lord. Continue to seek Him together in a way that feels good to both of you—knowing that He has plans for you both individually and in your marriage.

—Erin Smalley

CAN KIDS BRING THEIR FAITH TO SCHOOL?

In many instances, public schools have become places that discourage or even punish expressions of faith. However, kids *can* bring their faith to school.

Students have a right to voluntarily express a personal, faith-based viewpoint in a respectful manner at school. Court rulings have made it clear that public schools cannot ban student speech simply because it happens to have a religious perspective. But it is important to remember that they must do so in a way that doesn't disrupt instructional time.

Student-initiated prayers are private, personal speech and protected by the Constitution. Prayers are allowed as long as they are student-led, aren't disrupting academic instruction and are voluntary—meaning no student feels coerced to participate.

Students can bring other books from home to read at school, so they can also bring their Bibles (or other religious books) to read during free time and share with their peers.

They can even use the Bible in class assignments! As long as students use the Bible in a way that is relevant to the subject the teacher has assigned and that meets the requirements of the assignment, they have that freedom.

—Bret Eckelberry

COMBAT BACK-TO-SCHOOL WORRIES

Helping children build resiliency is the best way to combat many of the concerns they may have about going back to school. You may not be able to deal specifically with every circumstance, but you can foster a more resilient attitude in your child.

Maintain a daily routine. Children crave structure and feel safer with routine. A home that has less structure may cause anxiety for children as they struggle with the more rigid environment at school. Routine at home can also foster more positive and effective homework habits.

Teach your child self-care. Kids don't inherently know how to add balance to their lives. Look for opportunities to model balance in recreation, responsibilities and personal pursuits.

Nurture a positive self-view. Sometimes it's hard to recall and focus on previous successes when we are struggling with a sense of failure. Help your children remember times in their lives when they made good decisions, when they handled a difficult situation with grace or when they mastered something difficult. Remind them that a positive attitude helps create a positive home and school environment.

—Vicki Caruana