

Awake!

OCTOBER 2011



How to Raise Responsible Children

SPECIAL ISSUE



Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 39,913,000
PUBLISHED IN 83 LANGUAGES

Raising Responsible Children

Likely it is the *last* thing parents think about as they look at their precious newborn. But it is a simple truth: Eventually that tiny infant will grow to become a young adult who will live on his own. This is as it was meant to be, for the Bible says that “a man will leave his father and his mother.” (Genesis 2:24) Of course, the same could be said of a young woman.

Nevertheless, on that bittersweet day when a grown son or daughter leaves home, many parents are anxious. ‘Did I raise my child properly?’ they wonder. ‘Will he [or she] be able to keep a job, maintain an apartment, and live within a budget?’ Even more important, ‘Will my child live by the values we have tried to instill?’—Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:15.

This special issue of *Awake!* will show how the Bible’s advice can help parents at each stage of their child’s growth.

HOW TO RAISE RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN



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“The Most Powerful Learning Machine in the Universe”

A BABY’S brain has been called “the most powerful learning machine in the universe,” and for good reason. An infant enters the world primed to absorb all the sights, sounds, and sensations that surround him.*

Above all, the infant is intrigued by other humans—their faces, their voices, their touch. The book *Babyhood*, by Penelope Leach, states: “Many studies have been made of the sights which interest an infant most, the sounds which attract and hold his attention, the sensations he most clearly seeks to repeat.

* For the sake of simplicity, throughout this magazine we refer to the child as a male. However, the principles discussed apply to both genders.

All of these are most frequently and readily available in the form of an adult care-taking human being.” No wonder parents play such a vital role in the child’s development!

“I Spoke as an Infant”

Parents and pediatricians alike are astounded by a newborn’s ability to learn a language by merely listening to it. Researchers have found that within days, an infant is accustomed to his mother’s voice and prefers it over that of a stranger; within weeks, he can tell the difference between the speech sounds of his parents’ native tongue and those of other languages; and within months, he can

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today’s problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2011 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in Canada.

Within days, an infant is accustomed to his mother's voice and prefers it over that of a stranger

sense the junctures between words and thus tell the difference between normal speech and unintelligible sounds.

The Christian apostle Paul wrote: “When I was an infant, I spoke as an infant.” (1 Corinthians 13:11, *Modern King James Version*) How does an infant speak? Usually with an outpouring of incoherent babbling. Just noise? Hardly! In her book *What’s Going On in There?—How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life*, Dr. Lise Eliot reminds us that the act of speaking is “an intricate motor task, requiring the rapid coordination of dozens of muscles controlling the lips, tongue, palate, and larynx.” She adds: “While babbling may seem to be just an enchanting way for babies to get attention, it also serves as a very important rehearsal for the complex gymnastics of speaking.”

Parents respond to their infant’s babbling with animated speech of their own, and this too serves a purpose. Exaggerated speech stimulates the infant to respond. This back-and-forth exchange teaches the infant the rudiments of conversation—a skill he will use for the rest of his life.

Shifting Roles

Parents of infants are kept quite busy responding to their newborn’s everyday needs. Baby cries, and someone is there to feed him.

Baby cries, and someone is there to change him. Baby cries, and someone is there to hold him. Such pampering is appropriate and necessary. It is a primary way that parents fulfill their role as *caretakers*.—1 Thessalonians 2:7.

In view of the above, it is only natural if a baby believes that he is at the center of the universe and that adults—in particular, parents—exist solely to do his bidding. That view is flawed but completely understandable. Remember, for more than a year, *that has been the baby’s reality*. In his view, he is the monarch of an empire populated by big people who were put here to serve him. Family counselor John Rosemond writes: “It takes just short of two years to create this fantastic impression; it takes at least sixteen more years to correct it! And that, paradoxically, is a parent’s job: cause his/her child to believe in this fantasy, then burst—albeit gently—the child’s bubble.”

At about age two, the bubble does indeed burst as a parent shifts roles from *caretaker* to *instructor*. Now the baby becomes aware that his parents are not following his lead; instead, *he* is being expected to follow *theirs*. The baby’s monarchy has been overthrown, and he may not take well to the new regime. Frustrated, he attempts to hold his ground. How?

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)°, (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,° Danish,° Dutch,° English,° Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,° French,°° Georgian, German,° Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,° Japanese,° Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Korean,°° Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian,° Polish,°° Portuguese,°° Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,°° Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,° Swahili, Swedish,° Tagalog,° Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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More than ever before, a three-year-old is beginning to learn the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad

Coping With Tantrums

At about two years of age, many babies exhibit a radical change of behavior, often including fits of bad temper known as tantrums. This period is so frustrating for parents that it has been termed “the terrible twos”! Suddenly, the toddler’s favorite expression is “No!” or “I don’t want to!” He may become frustrated with both himself and his parents as he struggles with his own conflicting feelings. He wants to be away from you, yet he wants to be near you. To bewildered parents, little seems to make sense, and even less seems to work. What is going on?

WHY TANTRUMS MAY KEEP COMING

“Some parents feel that tantrums occur because they have made some mistake in dealing with the child’s demands,” writes John Rosemond in *New Parent Power*. “It stands to reason, if they are to blame for the child’s tantrum, that they must right the wrong as quickly as possible. So, having said *no*, they say *yes*. Or, having spanked, they then give the child more than he or she originally demanded, to keep their guilt at bay. These maneuvers work. The tantrum stops, the parent is relieved, and the child, learning that tantrums are a successful means of obtaining things, throws more and better ones.”

Well, consider the radical shift that has taken place in the toddler’s life. Until recently, all he had to do was whimper, and adults would come running. Now he begins to realize that his “rule” was only temporary and that he will have to do at least some things for himself. More and more, he comes to understand that he is in a submissive role, which can be summed up by the Bible’s statement: “Children, be obedient to your parents in everything.”—Colossians 3:20.

During this difficult period, parents should hold on to the reins of authority. If they do so in a firm but loving way, the child will adjust to his new role. And the stage will be set for further marvels of growth.

Moral Character

Animals, even machines, can recognize words and imitate speech. But only a human can step back and examine himself. Thus, at about two or three years of age, a toddler is able to feel such emotions as pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment. These are the first stages toward his becoming an adult with moral qualities—one who can firmly stand up for what is right, even when others are doing wrong.

At about this time, parents are thrilled to experience yet another wonder. Their child is becoming aware of the feelings of others. Whereas at two years of age, he only played *alongside* others, now he may play *with* them. He also recognizes when his parents feel good and may want to please them. Thus, he is likely to become more teachable.

More than ever before, a three-year-old is beginning to learn the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad. Clearly, this is a time for parents to train their children with the goal of helping them to become responsible adults.

WHAT PARENTS SAY

If you are the parent of a preschool child, you likely face challenges. For example, how should you deal with the tantrums? How can you teach your child right from wrong and give balanced correction? Note how some parents have dealt with these issues.

TANTRUMS

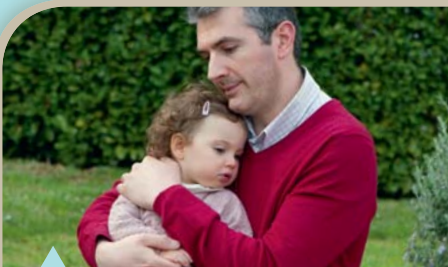
“During the ‘terrible twos,’ a child expects to get what he wants. Our son had this problem. If his demands weren’t met, he would throw things. This was our first child, so we had no prior experience with tantrums. It didn’t help when others told us that this kind of behavior should be expected.”—*Susan, Kenya.*

“At the age of two, our daughter would lie on the floor, scream, cry, kick . . . It was exasperating! Trying to talk to her at that moment didn’t work. So my husband and I would send her to her room and quietly tell her that when she felt better, she could come out and we would discuss the matter with her. Once she calmed down, one of us would go to her room and help her understand why her behavior was unacceptable. This method was successful. Once we even overheard her praying to God, asking for his forgiveness. In time, her tantrums became fewer and then stopped.”—*Yolanda, Spain.*



“Toddlers experiment to see how far they can push limits. Allowing a child to do what you have clearly forbidden sends a confusing message. We found that when we were firm and consistent, our children gradually learned that screaming is not the way to get what they want.”

—*Neil, Britain.*



“It is important not to compromise. But at the same time, a parent shouldn’t be dogmatic or rigid. Sometimes, when the child is truly sorry, we feel that it’s best to be reasonable and lighten the discipline.”

—*Matthieu, France.*

DISCIPLINE

“When a child is under five years of age, it’s difficult to measure how well he is listening. The key is repetition. You have to repeat and repeat, seemingly thousands of times, along with gestures and a firm tone.”

—*Serge, France.*

“Even though they were being raised in the same environment, each of our four children was unique. One would cry just knowing that she had disappointed us; another would try to see how far she could push the limits. In some instances a stern look or scolding would be enough, while at other times we’d have to enforce a consequence.”—*Nathan, Canada.*



“I try not to impose too many rules, but the ones that exist are nonnegotiable. My three-year-old son knows the consequences of disobedience, and that helps him control his behavior. True, when I’m tired it would be easier for me to ignore his wrong actions. But for the sake of consistency, I force myself to act. Consistency is everything!”

—Natalie, Canada.

CONSISTENCY

“Little children seem to have a memory chip that records any inconsistency from a parent.”

—Milton, Bolivia.

“Sometimes my son would ask about the same matter in different ways in an attempt to see if we would give the same answer. Or if I say one thing and his mother says something else, he will see that as a loophole and try to take advantage of it.”—Ángel, Spain.

“Sometimes I ignored my son’s bad behavior when I was in a good mood but punished him harshly when I was in a bad mood. I found that this would only aggravate the bad behavior.”—Gyeong-ok, Korea.

“It is important for young children to understand that if a certain type of behavior is wrong today, it will always be wrong.”—Antonio, Brazil.

“If parents aren’t consistent, the child will think that Dad and Mom are unpredictable, that their decisions depend on their mood. But if parents stick to their principles, children will know that what is wrong is always wrong. This is one way that parents provide security and love.”—Gilmar, Brazil.

“Children can take advantage of situations in which a parent seems to have little choice but to give in to a request—such as when other

people are present. If my answer is no, I say so from the beginning, and I make it clear to my son that I will not listen to constant pleadings.”

—Chang-seok, Korea.

“Both parents need to present a united front. If my wife and I don’t agree on something, we talk about it in private. Children can detect when their parents are not united on an issue, and they will try to take advantage of the situation.”—Jesús, Spain.

“When a child knows that his parents are united and that they cannot be manipulated, he has security. He knows what to expect, whether he is obedient or disobedient.”

—Damaris, Germany.

“To my wife and me, consistency also involves keeping our word when we promise our daughter something nice. This way she learns that she can rely on our promises.”—Hendrick, Germany.

“If my employer constantly changed what was required of me on the job, I would be irritated. Children are no different. They find security in knowing the rules and knowing that the rules won’t change. They also need to know the consequences of disobedience and that these won’t change either.”—Glenn, Canada.

“Let your Yes mean Yes, and your No, No.”—James 5:12



Unplanned Pregnancy

HOW WE ADJUSTED

As told by Tom and Yoonhee Han

Tom and Yoonhee with their daughter, Amanda



Tom: We had been married only six months when my wife, Yoonhee, found out that she was pregnant. Outwardly, I stayed calm, since I wanted to assure Yoonhee that she could depend on me for comfort and strength. But inwardly I panicked!

Yoonhee: I was devastated—and *scared*! I cried and cried; I felt neither ready nor capable of being a mother.

Tom: And I didn't feel ready to be a *father*! But after talking with other parents, we came to realize that unplanned pregnancy is more common than we had thought. Also, it helped us to hear what other parents had to say about the joys of being a dad or a mom. Gradually, my fear and uncertainty were replaced by anticipation.

Yoonhee: After Amanda was born, a new set of challenges arose. She cried relentlessly,

and I was unable to sleep for weeks. I had no appetite, and extreme fatigue set in. At first, I didn't want to be around people. But then I realized that isolating myself at home wouldn't help. So I spent time with other new moms. That allowed me to 'compare notes,' and it helped me to realize that I wasn't the only one with concerns.

Tom: I strove to maintain stability in our family routine. For example, as Jehovah's Witnesses, Yoonhee and I were determined to be regular in the ministry and at Christian meetings. Also, having a child brings expenses, some of which are unexpected. We made sure to live within our means so as not to get into debt, which would only result in more stress.

Yoonhee: At first I thought that engaging in the ministry might be impractical, since babies can be disruptive. But

really, people enjoy being around babies. Realizing that helped me to stay active and to have a more positive attitude about my child.

Tom: The Bible says that children are "an inheritance from Jehovah" and "a reward." (Psalm 127:3) To me, those words show that a child is a precious gift. As with any inheritance, you have a choice: You can either make a wise investment, or you can squander it. I'm learning that every stage of a child's growth is unique, and I need to be a part of my daughter's life at each stage because once that opportunity passes, you can't get it back.

Yoonhee: At times, life surprises us, and having an unplanned child is not a *bad* surprise. Amanda is now six years old, and I can't imagine myself without her.



Parenting Children Between Infancy and Adolescence

“Up until your children are five years old, they are in cozy family surroundings and it is easier to instill good qualities in them. But once they start school, they are exposed to different ways of doing things and different ways of speaking.”—Valter, Italy.

AS CHILDREN grow, they explore the boundaries of their expanding world. They interact with more people—playmates, schoolmates, and extended family. As Valter, quoted above, notes, you are no longer the sole influence in your child’s life, as you were when he was an infant. That is why it is essential that you use these years to teach your child the value of obedience and good manners. It is also important to provide direction with regard to right and wrong.

The skills just described do not come quickly and intuitively. Likely, you will need to “reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2) Israelite parents were commanded regarding God’s laws: “You must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) As that scripture indicates, your ongoing instruction is vital.

The responsibility of raising children includes a number of challenges. Let us consider just a few of them.

A Time to Listen

The Bible says that while there is “a time to speak,” there is also a time to listen. (Ecclesiastes 3:7) How can you teach your child to pay attention when others—including you—are speaking? One way is to set the example. Do *you* listen attentively to others, including your children?

Children can easily be distracted, and no doubt your patience will be tested as you attempt to communicate with them. Each child is different, so be observant and determine which methods of communication work best with *your* child. For example, David, a father in Britain, says: “I get our daughter to tell me in her own words what I have just said. As a result, she is listening more as she gets older.”

When Jesus was instructing his disciples, he told them: “Pay attention to how you listen.” (Luke 8:18) If adults need to do that, how much more so do children!

“Forgiving One Another Freely”

The Bible states: “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint

against another.” (Colossians 3:13) Children can be trained to develop the ability to forgive. How?

As discussed above regarding the art of listening, you need to set the example. Let your children see you display a spirit of forgiveness in your dealings with others. Marina, a mother in Russia, makes an effort to do that. “We try to set a good example for our children in forgiving others, making concessions, and not getting offended,” she says, adding: “When I am wrong, I apologize to my children. I want them to learn to do the same in their dealings with others.”

The ability to resolve differences and forgive will be necessary in adulthood. Train your children now to be considerate of others and to accept responsibility for their own mistakes. By doing so, you will be imparting a valuable gift that will serve them well as they grow.

“Show Yourselves Thankful”

In these “critical times hard to deal with,” many people are “lovers of themselves.” (2 Timothy 3:1, 2) Now, while your children are young, is the time to instill in them a spirit of gratitude. “Show yourselves thankful,” wrote the apostle Paul.—Colossians 3:15.

Even while they are young, children can learn to show good manners and be thoughtful of others. How? “The best thing you can do to engender a thankful attitude is to demonstrate it tirelessly at home,” Dr. Kyle Pruett tells *Parents* magazine. He adds: “This means that you’re regularly saying how much you appreciate the help you get or other acts of thoughtfulness . . . It takes lots of practice.”

Richard, a father in Britain, strives to do that: “My wife and I demonstrate how to thank those who have been kind to us, such as schoolteachers or grandparents,” he says. “Whenever we visit a family for a meal, we write a thank-you card, and all the children sign it or draw a picture on it.” Being gracious and thankful will help your child to de-



Children can learn to be thoughtful of others

velop lasting and close relationships later in life.

“Do Not Hold Back Discipline”

As your children grow, it is essential for them to learn that *actions have consequences*. Even at a young age, children are answerable to authority, not only in the home but also at school and in the community. You can help your children learn the principle that you reap what you sow. (Galatians 6:7) How?

The Bible states: “Do not hold back discipline.” (Proverbs 23:13) If you have made it clear that a certain wrong act will bring a particular consequence, do not be afraid to follow through. “Consistency is vital,” says Norma, a mother in Argentina. “Inconsistency encourages a child to manipulate situations according to his liking.”

Parents can do much to avoid endless wrangling *after* a misdemeanor by making sure their children understand the consequences of disobedience *beforehand*. Children are less likely to resist if they know the rules and what will happen if they break those rules and if they have reason to believe that the consequences are nonnegotiable.



Correct children in such a way that they retain their dignity

Of course, for discipline to be effective, it should not be meted out in anger. The Bible states: “Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you.” (Ephesians 4:31) Discipline should never take the form of brutal punishment and should never be abusive—either physically or emotionally.

But how can you restrain your temper when your child has pushed your patience to the limit? “It’s not always easy,” admits Peter, a father in New Zealand, “but children need to learn that the discipline is the consequence of their action and not the result of a parent’s lack of restraint.”

Peter and his wife try to help their children see the long-range benefit of correction. “Even if the children have done something particularly obnoxious,” he says, “we talk to them about the kind of person they need to be rather than the offender they have just been.”

“Let Your Reasonableness Become Known”

Regarding the correction he would give to his people, God stated: “I shall have to chastise you *to the proper degree*.” (Jeremiah 46:28) You will get the best results if you measure out correction that is fair and commensurate with the wrong that was com-

mitted. “Let your reasonableness become known,” Paul wrote to Christians.—Philippians 4:5.

Part of being reasonable involves administering correction in such a way that your children retain their dignity. Santi, a father in Italy, says: “I never belittle my son or daughter. Instead, I try to identify the root of the problem and deal with that. I don’t discipline my children in front of others, not even in front of each other, if at all possible. And I don’t make fun of their shortcomings in public or in private.”

Richard, quoted earlier, also sees the wisdom of being reasonable. “Punishment should never be cumulative, with each new wrong being added to the punishment,” he says. “After you’ve given the discipline, it’s important not to keep going on about it and reminding the child about his faults.”

Raising children is hard work that involves self-sacrifice yet brings rich rewards. That is what Yelena, a mother in Russia, has found. She says: “I have selected part-time work so that I can spend more time with my son. It takes effort and results in a loss financially, but it’s worth the sacrifice to see how much joy it brings my son and how it draws us together.”

WHAT PARENTS SAY

As your children grow, how can you help them to learn the value of obedience? How can you impart practical skills as they continue on the path to adulthood? Note what some parents from around the world have said.

SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC SKILLS

“When we eat together and discuss our day, each child learns how to listen. When they see Mum and Dad listening patiently, it builds up their respect for one another and for themselves.”—*Richard, Britain.*

“It is heartwarming to watch our children treat each other respectfully and to see them sort out their differences without our intervention. They also communicate confidently with adults.”—*John, South Africa.*

“I’m not perfect, and at times I unintentionally hurt my children’s feelings. When that happens, it’s very important for me to apologize for my mistake.”—*Janelle, Australia.*

“We train our children to do practical chores around the home. Teaching them to work for the benefit of others helps the family run smoothly and peacefully and gives our children a sense of accomplishment.”—*Clive, Australia.*



“It is not easy, but it is vital to teach them how to understand, respect, and forgive one another.”—*Yuko, Japan.*

HYGIENE AND HEALTH

“When our children were young, we taught them to bathe themselves and made it fun by using soap made into figurines, shampoo featuring a cartoon character, and sponges shaped like little animals.”—*Edgar, Mexico.*

“When we lived where there was no tap water, I always made sure that there was soap and a container of water in a convenient location so that we could wash our hands as we came into the house.”—*Endurance, Nigeria.*

“We give the children healthful meals every day, and we explain why a balanced diet is

essential. The children are curious about the various ingredients that go into different dishes, so I have them help me prepare meals. The time we spend together doing that also encourages communication.”—*Sandra, Britain.*

“Exercise is important, and as parents, we try to set a good example. Our children love it when we jog, swim, play tennis or basketball, or ride bicycles together as a family. They learn that exercise is not only important but also fun.”—*Keren, Australia.*

“Time with their parents is what children need most. Nothing else can replace it—not money, gifts, or trips. I only take morning jobs when the children are at school. Then, in the afternoon I can dedicate my time to them.”—*Romina, Italy.*



DISCIPLINE

“We have found that no single method of discipline is the best; it depends on the circumstance. Sometimes discipline involves having a heart-to-heart talk and at other times taking away a child’s privileges.”—*Ogbiti, Nigeria.*

“We have our children repeat our instructions to make sure that they understand them. Then, we follow through. If we want our children to become responsive listeners, we have to do our part by enforcing the consequences if they disobey.”—*Clive, Australia.*

“I have found it effective to bend down when I correct my children so that I am at their eye level. This helps me get their full attention. It also allows them to focus on my facial expression, which can convey as much as my words.”—*Jennifer, Australia.*

“We try not to say to our children, ‘You never listen,’ even when it seems as if the accusation is justified. Also, we don’t reprimand our children in front of one another. We either whisper to them or take them aside so that we can talk to them privately.”—*Rudi, Mozambique.*

“Children are very malleable, and they like to imitate others. Because of that, we need to counteract the corrupting influence of school-mates, the media, and the social environment and help our children develop good morals that are based on wholesome principles. A good moral base helps them say no to anything that is harmful.”—*Grégoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo.*



“Discipline needs to be firm, fair, and consistent. Children must understand the consequence of doing wrong and know that you mean what you say.”—*Owen, England.*

“Do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted.”—Colossians 3:21

Succeeding as a Single Parent

*An interview with
Lucinda Forster*



Lucinda with her daughters, Brie and Shae

What is most challenging for you as a single parent?

Simply being a parent is daunting, but as a single parent, I find it especially challenging to manage my time and energy. It takes time to instill principles and values and still have an opportunity to relax and laugh together. I often have to sacrifice my relaxation time to get household chores done.

How do you maintain good communication with your daughters?

After a divorce, children can feel insecure and angry. I find that when problems arise, eye contact and a calm tone of voice are essential. I wait until we are calm, and then I try to express my concern without making a big issue. I ask for their opinions, listen very carefully, and show that I really value their feelings. I take an interest in their schooling and commend them for what they do. We always eat meals together at the table in a calm and

relaxed environment. I also constantly tell them how much I love them.

How do you administer discipline?

Children need definite boundaries, and consistency is essential. I try to be kind but firm. I have to reason with my children and explain why a particular behavior is wrong. I also try to draw them out before disciplining them, to determine why they behaved the way they did. If I am in the wrong—for example, if I have misunderstood a situation—I apologize.

How do you teach your children respect for others?

I remind them of what Jesus taught—to treat others as you would like to be treated. (Luke 6:31) I encourage the girls to sort out their own issues as much as possible, and I teach them the value of responding mildly and kindly when they are upset.

What do you do for relaxation?

We can't always afford to go away on vacation, so we look in

newspapers for inexpensive activities. We go on picnics or take walks to see the plants growing in nurseries. We plant herbs in our garden and have fun selecting our own herbs for cooking. Recreation is important, even if we just spend time at a local park.

What joys and rewards have you experienced?

Living in a single-parent household has been difficult for us, but we have drawn closer to one another, and we have learned to appreciate the blessings we have. I love to see how each child's personality is developing. At this age they want to spend time with me, and I cherish their company. They are perceptive of my moods and will sometimes just give me a hug to reassure me. Their expressions of love give me great joy. Most important, we have felt the love of a caring Creator who has helped us through many difficult situations. The Bible has given me strength to keep trying to be a good parent. —Isaiah 41:13.



Adolescence PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

IMAGINE that you have just traveled from a tropical island to the Arctic Circle. As soon as you step off the plane, you realize that you are in an icy climate. Can you adapt? Yes, but you will need to make a few adjustments.

A similar situation confronts you when your children become adolescents. Overnight, it seems, the climate has changed. The boy who once would not leave your side now prefers the company of his peers. The girl who once could not wait to tell you about her day now gives only clipped replies.

“How was school?” you ask.

“Fine,” she replies.

Silence.

“What’s on your mind?” you ask.

“Nothing,” she replies.

More silence.

What has happened? Not long ago, “it was like you had a backstage pass to your children’s lives,” says the book *Breaking the Code*. “Now the best you can hope for is a seat out in the audience, and it probably won’t even be a very good seat.”

Must you resign yourself to such an icy distance? No, not at all. You *can* stay close to your children as they go through adolescence. First, though, you need to understand just what is happening during this fascinating yet sometimes turbulent stage of growth.

Moving From Childhood to Adulthood

Researchers once thought that a child’s brain was almost fully developed by age five. Now they believe that while the *size* of the brain changes little after that age, the same cannot be said of its *function*. When they enter puberty, young people begin a hormonal revolution that changes the way they think. For instance, while small children usually view things in concrete, black-and-white terms, adolescents tend to think abstractly, weighing the underlying issues of a matter. (1 Corinthians 13:11) They develop convictions, and they are not shy about expressing them.

Paolo, from Italy, noticed that change in his adolescent. “When I look at my teenage son,” he says, “I feel as if I have a little man in front of me, not a boy anymore. It’s not just the physical changes. What amazes me most is how he thinks. He’s not afraid to express his views and defend them!”

Have you observed something similar in your adolescent? Perhaps as a child, he simply followed orders. “Because I said so” was all the explanation he needed. Now, as an adolescent, he wants *reasons*, and perhaps he even questions the values by which the family lives. Sometimes his assertiveness looks like rebellion.

But do not conclude that your adolescent is out to overturn your values. He may just be struggling to make your values his own, to find a place for them in *his* life. To illustrate, imagine that you are moving from one home to another and that you are taking your furniture with you. Will it be easy to find a place for each piece in the new home? Likely not. But one thing is certain, you will not throw away any item that you view as precious.

Your adolescent faces a similar situation as he prepares for the time when he will “leave his father and his mother.” (Genesis 2:24) True, that day may be a long way off; your adolescent is *not* yet an adult. In a sense, though, he is already packing. Throughout the teen years, he is examining the values he has been raised with, and he is deciding which ones he will take with him into adulthood.*

The idea of your child making such decisions may frighten you. You can be sure, though, that when he moves into adulthood, he will retain only the values that *he* views as precious. Therefore, now—while your adolescent is still at home—is the time for him to investigate thoroughly the principles by which he will live.—Acts 17:11.

Really, it is beneficial for your adolescent to do that. After all, if he accepts *your* standards without question now, he may later accept the standards of *others* naively. (Exodus 23:2) The Bible describes such a youth as being easily seduced because he is “in want of heart”—a phrase that means to lack discernment, among other things. (Proverbs 7:7) A young person without convictions can be “tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men.”—Ephesians 4:14.

* One reference work aptly refers to adolescence as “one long goodbye.” For more information, see *The Watchtower* of May 1, 2009, pages 10-12, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



Let your adolescent talk

How can you prevent that from happening to your child? Make sure that he has the following three assets:

1 PERCEPTIVE POWERS

The apostle Paul wrote that “mature people . . . have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.” (Hebrews 5:14) ‘But I taught my child right from wrong years ago,’ you might say. And, no doubt, that training benefited him at the time and prepared him for this next stage of growth. (2 Timothy 3:14) Still, Paul said that people need to have their perceptive powers trained. While small children may acquire a *knowledge* of right and wrong, adolescents need to “become full-grown in powers of *understanding*.” (1 Corinthians 14:20; Proverbs 1:4; 2:11) You want your adolescent, not to obey

blindly, but to use solid reasoning skills. (Romans 12:1, 2) How can you help him do that?

One way is to let him express himself. Do not interrupt, and try your best not to overreact—even if he says something that you do not want to hear. The Bible says: “Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.” (James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13) Furthermore, Jesus said: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34) If you listen, you will be able to find out what really concerns your adolescent.

When you do speak, try to use questions rather than blunt statements. Jesus sometimes asked, “What do you think?” to draw out not only his disciples but also those who were obstinate. (Matthew 21:23, 28) You can do something similar with your adolescent, even when he expresses a view that is contrary to yours. For example:

If your adolescent says: “I’m not sure that I believe in God.”

Rather than respond: “We taught you better than that—*of course* you believe in God!”

You could say: “What makes you feel that way?”

Why draw out your adolescent? Because although you already hear what he is *saying*, you need to find out what he is *thinking*. (Proverbs 20:5) The issue may have more to do with God’s standards than God’s existence.

For example, a youth who feels pressured to disobey God’s moral laws may try to make it acceptable by removing God from the picture. (Psalm 14:1) ‘If God doesn’t exist,’ he could reason, ‘then I don’t have to live in accord with Bible standards.’

If your adolescent seems to be thinking that way, he may need to reason on the question, Do I really believe that God’s standards are for my good? (Isaiah 48:17, 18) If he believes that they are for his good, encourage



An adult mentor can have a good influence on your child

him to see that his well-being is worth standing up for.—Galatians 5:1.

If your adolescent says: “This may be *your* religion, but that doesn’t mean it’s *mine*.”

Rather than respond: “It’s *our* religion, you are *our* child, and you will believe what *we* tell you to believe.”

You could say: “That’s quite a strong statement. If you reject my beliefs, though, you must have something to replace them with. So, what are *your* beliefs? What code of conduct do *you* think it’s right to live by?”

Why draw out your adolescent? Because reasoning with him in this way can help him examine his thinking. He might be surprised to discover that his beliefs are the same as yours but that what concerns him is really something else altogether.

For example, perhaps your adolescent does not know how to explain his beliefs to others. (Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:15) Or he might be attracted to someone of the oppo-

site sex who does not share his faith. Get to the root of the problem, and help your adolescent do so as well. The more he uses his perceptive powers, the better prepared he will be for adulthood.

2 ADULT GUIDANCE

In some cultures today, there is little or no evidence of the “storm and stress” that some psychologists claim is to be *expected* during the teen years. Researchers have found that in those societies youths are assimilated into adult life at an early age. They work with adults, socialize with adults, and are entrusted with adult responsibilities. Terms such as “youth culture,” “juvenile delinquency,” and even “adolescence” do not exist.

In contrast, consider the experience of youths in many lands who are herded into overcrowded schools where the only meaningful association they have is with other youths. When they come home, the house is empty. Dad and Mom both work. Relatives live far away. The group they have easiest access to is made up of their peers.* Do you see the danger? It is not just a matter of falling in with the wrong crowd. Researchers have found that even *exemplary* youths tend to succumb to irresponsible behavior if they are isolated from the world of adults.

One society that did not isolate youths from adults was that of ancient Israel.† For example, the Bible tells of Uzziah, who became king of Judah while still a teenager. What helped Uzziah handle that weighty responsibility? Evidently, at least in part, it was the influence of an adult named Zechariah, whom the Bible describes as an “instructor in the fear of the true God.”—2 Chronicles 26:5.

* Entertainment geared to teenagers capitalizes on their inclination to be with their peers, perpetuating the idea that youths have their own subculture that adults can neither understand nor penetrate.

† The terms “adolescent” and “teenager” are not found in the Bible. Evidently, youths among God’s people in both the pre-Christian and Christian eras were assimilated into adult life at an earlier age than is common in many cultures today.

Does your adolescent have one or more adult mentors who share your values? Do not feel jealous of such helpful influences. Having them can help your adolescent do what is right. A Bible proverb states: “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise.”—Proverbs 13:20.

3 SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

In some lands, the law prohibits young people from being employed more than a certain number of hours a week or from doing certain types of work. Such restrictions were put in place to protect children from hazardous work conditions—a by-product of the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries.

While child labor laws protect youths from danger and abuse, some experts claim that these restrictions also shield them from responsibility. As a result, says the book *Escaping the Endless Adolescence*, many teens have developed “a sense of surly entitlement,

Meaningful work helps adolescents become responsible adults





“I COULDN’T IMAGINE HAVING BETTER PARENTS”

By word and by example, parents who are Jehovah’s Witnesses teach their children to live in accord with Bible principles. (Ephesians 6:4) However, they do not force them to do so. Witness parents realize that each son or daughter, on coming of age, must decide by which values he or she will live.

Aislyn, 18, has adopted the values with which she was raised. “For me,” she says, “my religion isn’t something I do just one day out of the week. It is my way of life. It affects everything I do and every decision I make—from the friends I have to the classes I take and the books I read.”

Aislyn greatly appreciates the upbringing her Christian parents have given her. “I couldn’t imagine having better parents,” she says, “and I’m fortunate that they have instilled in me a desire to be and to remain one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. My parents will be a guiding force in my life for as long as I live.”

of almost *deserving* to have things presented to them without having to struggle to earn them.” The authors note that this attitude “seems a natural response to living in a world that’s been far more geared to entertaining teens than to expecting anything from them.”

In contrast, the Bible tells of youths who took on weighty responsibilities at an early age. Consider Timothy, who likely was just a teenager when he met the apostle Paul—a man who had a powerful influence on him. At one point, Paul told Timothy: “Stir up like a fire the gift of God which is in you.” (2 Timothy 1:6) While perhaps in his late teens or early 20’s, Timothy left home and traveled with the apostle Paul, helping to establish congregations and build up the brotherhood. After about a decade of working with Timothy, Paul was able to tell the Christians in Philippi: “I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you.”—Philippians 2:20.

Often, adolescents are eager to take on responsibility, especially when they sense that doing so involves meaningful work that makes a difference. Not only does this train them to become responsible adults in the future but it also brings out their best right now.

Adapting to a New “Climate”

As mentioned at the outset of this article, if you are the parent of an adolescent, you probably sense that you are in a different “climate” from the one you were in just a few years ago. Be assured that you can adapt, just as you have during your child’s other stages of growth.

View your child’s teenage years as an opportunity for you (1) to help him cultivate his perceptive powers, (2) to provide adult guidance, and (3) to instill in him a sense of responsibility. By doing so, you will be preparing your adolescent for adulthood.

WHAT PARENTS SAY

The years of adolescence bring a whole new set of challenges for many parents. How can you help your child succeed in this phase of life—which may be as confusing to him as it is to you? Note what some parents from around the world have said.

CHANGES

“When he was younger, my son would take my counsel without questioning it. But during the teenage years, he seemed to lose confidence in my authority. He questioned both what I said and the manner in which I said it.”—*Frank, Canada.*

“My son doesn’t talk as much as he used to. I have to ask him what’s on his mind rather than expect him to tell me. Getting him to answer a question isn’t easy. The answer will come—but not right away.”—*Francis, Australia.*



“Patience is very important. At times we may want to lash out at our children, but calming down and having a conversation with them is always a better solution!”—*Felicia, United States.*

COMMUNICATION

“Sometimes my teenage daughter has this wall of defense that she puts up, and sometimes she thinks that I’m picking on her. I have to remind her that I love her, that we’re on the same team, and that I’m rooting for her!”—*Lisa, United States.*

“When they were younger, my children readily opened up to me. It was easy to draw them out. Now I have to try to be understanding and to show that I respect them as individuals. That is the only way they will open up their hearts to me.”—*Nan-hi, Korea.*

“It’s not enough to forbid teenagers to do certain things. We have to reason with them and have meaningful conversations that touch

their hearts. To open the door for that, we need to be ready to hear what they have to say, even if that includes things we would prefer not to hear.”—*Dalila, Brazil.*

“If I have to correct my daughter, I try to do so privately rather than in the presence of others.”—*Edna, Nigeria.*

“Sometimes when I am talking with my son, I begin to get distracted by other activities in the home and I don’t give him my complete attention. He realizes it, and I think that is one of the reasons why he doesn’t talk with me much. I need to try to pay more attention to him when we talk so that he will continue expressing himself.”—*Miriam, Mexico.*



Parents may grant a degree of independence, but they also establish reasonable boundaries

INDEPENDENCE

“I had always been apprehensive about granting independence to my teenagers, and it definitely has been a source of some conflict. I discussed the matter openly with them. I explained why I felt fearful, after which they explained why they desired more freedom. We were able to reach an agreement by which they could have more freedom within the reasonable limits that I had set up.”—*Edwin, Ghana.*

“My son wanted a motorbike. I was so much against the idea that I found myself scolding him and pointing out all the negative aspects of buying one, without giving him any opportunity to explain himself. That made him angry and more determined to get one! I decided to try a different approach. I encouraged my son to research the subject from every angle, including the dangers, the expense, and the requirements to obtain and maintain a license. I also told him to seek the advice of mature Christians in the congregation. I came to realize that instead of being oppressive, it was better for me to encourage my son to talk freely about his wishes. In that way I could reach his heart.”—*Hye-young, Korea.*

“We set limits, but we also granted freedoms, gradually. The better our children handled those freedoms, the more they received. We provided them with opportunities to earn freedom, showing them that it was our desire for them to obtain it; but we would not withhold consequences if they abused our trust.”—*Dorothée, France.*

“I never lowered my standards. But when my children were obedient, I was willing to make concessions. For instance, on occasion I would relax their curfew. But if they *broke* a curfew more than once, there would be consequences.”—*Il-hyun, Korea.*

“The more obedient and responsible an employee is, the more consideration he will receive from his boss. Likewise, my son can see that the more obedient and responsible he is within the boundaries we have given him, the more independence he will gradually earn. My son knows that just as an employee is penalized for not fulfilling his responsibilities, he can lose the independence that he’s earned if he doesn’t handle it responsibly.”—*Ramón, Mexico.*

“Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their life.”—Proverbs 22:6,
Good News Translation

“Parenting Adolescents Is a Wonderful Experience”

Joseph: My two oldest daughters are teenagers, and I find that it’s important to listen to and acknowledge their viewpoints. Being honest about my own shortcomings—and showing respect when talking to my daughters—helps keep the lines of communication open. All told, I feel that parenting adolescents is a wonderful experience, thanks to the guidance we get from God’s Word, the Bible.

Lisa: I noticed that when our oldest daughter became a teenager, she needed my attention even more. I can remember spending much time listening to her, talking with

her, and reassuring her. My husband and I let our daughters know that they can express themselves and that we will respect their feelings. I try to apply the wisdom of James 1:19, which says to be “swift about hearing, slow about speaking.”

Victoria: My mom is my best friend. I’ve never met anyone as sweet and as caring—and she’s that way with everyone. I can’t think of a better word to describe her than “genuine.” She could never be replaced.

Olivia: My dad is caring and generous. He’s always giving of himself even when we



The Camera family: Joseph, Lisa, Victoria, Olivia, and Isabella

don’t have much ourselves. He knows how to be serious, but he also *really* knows how to have a good time. He’s a special dad, and I’m glad he’s mine!

“We Don’t Have Time to Be Bored!”

Sonny: If the girls have a problem, we sit down as a family and discuss it. We’re always open with one another, and we base our decisions on Bible principles. Ynez and I also try to make sure that the girls have good, mature associates. Our friends are their friends, and their friends are ours.

Ynez: We stay active, and we do things together as a family. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we’re busy with the ministry, personal and family

Bible study, and volunteer work—including disaster relief and Kingdom Hall construction. We also balance all of this with good recreation. We don’t have time to be bored!

Kellsie: My dad is a good listener, and he always consults the whole family before making a big decision. My mom is always there for me whenever I need help—or just to talk.

Samantha: My mom makes me feel so special, so loved, so important—even when she



The Zapata family: Kellsie, Ynez, Sonny, and Samantha

doesn’t realize it. She listens. She cares. I wouldn’t trade our friendship for anything.

What Is a Parent's Goal?

WHICH of the following would you like your adolescent to become?

- A. A replica of you.
- B. A rebel whose mission is to become the *opposite* of you.
- C. A responsible adult who makes wise decisions.

Some parents who choose Option C may *act* as if they favor Option A. They try to force their values on their adolescent, such as by telling him which career to choose. The result? As soon as he gains a measure of independence, he runs in the opposite direction. Ironically, many parents who sow Option A reap Option B.

Why Attempts at Complete Control Fail

You want your adolescent to become a responsible adult who makes wise decisions. But how can you reach that goal? One thing is certain: *Complete control is not the answer.* Consider two reasons.

1. The complete-control approach is unscriptural. Jehovah God created humans with free will. He allows people to choose the path they will take in life, whether good or bad. For example, when Cain harbored murderous anger toward his brother Abel, Jehovah said to him: "If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation? But if you do not turn to doing good, there is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving; and will you, for your part, get the mastery over it?"—Genesis 4:7.

Note that while Jehovah gave Cain clear counsel, he did not force him to heed it. Cain had to choose whether to get the mastery over his anger or not. The lesson? If Jehovah does

not try to exert complete control to elicit obedience from his creatures, neither should you try to do so with your adolescents.*

2. The complete-control approach usually backfires. Imagine that you are confronted by a pushy salesman. The more he tries to make the sale, the more firmly you resist. Even if you need his product, you are probably put off by his manner. You want to get away from him.

Something similar could happen if you try to force your values, beliefs, and goals on your adolescent. Will he "buy" them? Not likely! In fact, your approach may achieve just the opposite, causing your adolescent to develop a distaste for your standards. All too often, parental attempts at complete control fail. What, then, *can* you do?

Rather than try to control your adolescent's life completely, imposing your values on him as you might have when he was younger, help him to see the *wisdom* of doing what is right. For example, if you are a Christian, show him how living by God's principles will bring him greater contentment in the long run.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

As you do that, set the example. Be the kind of person you want your adolescent to become. (1 Corinthians 11:1) Make clear the values you choose to live by. (Proverbs 4:11)

* For more information, see *The Watchtower* of February 1, 2011, pages 18-19.

Which would you like your adolescent to become?



A replica . . .



A rebel . . .



A responsible adult

If your adolescent develops a love for God and his standards, he will make wise choices, even when you are not present.—Psalm 119: 97; Philippians 2:12.

Impart Practical Skills

As brought out on page 2 of this magazine, the day will come—perhaps all too soon, in your view—when your grown child “will leave his father and his mother.” (Genesis 2:24) As a parent, you want to make sure that he has the skills he needs in order to function as an independent adult. Consider some of the skills that you can help him develop now, while he is still at home.

Domestic Skills. Can your adolescent prepare meals? wash and iron his clothes? keep his room clean and organized? perform maintenance and basic repairs on a car? Developing such skills will enable either a son or a daughter to manage a household someday. The apostle Paul said: “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient.”—Philippians 4:11.

Social Skills. (James 3:17) How well does your adolescent get along with others? Can he settle disputes amicably? Have you trained

him to treat people with respect and to resolve conflicts peacefully? (Ephesians 4:29, 31, 32) The Bible says: “Honor men of all sorts.”—1 Peter 2:17.

Money Management. (Luke 14:28) Can you help your adolescent to learn a trade, work within a budget, and avoid debt? Have you trained him to save for needed items and avoid impulse buying and to be content with necessities? (Proverbs 22:7) Paul wrote: “Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content.”—1 Timothy 6:8.

Adolescents who learn to live by upright values and who have developed practical skills are truly prepared for adulthood. Their parents have reached their goal!—Proverbs 23:24.

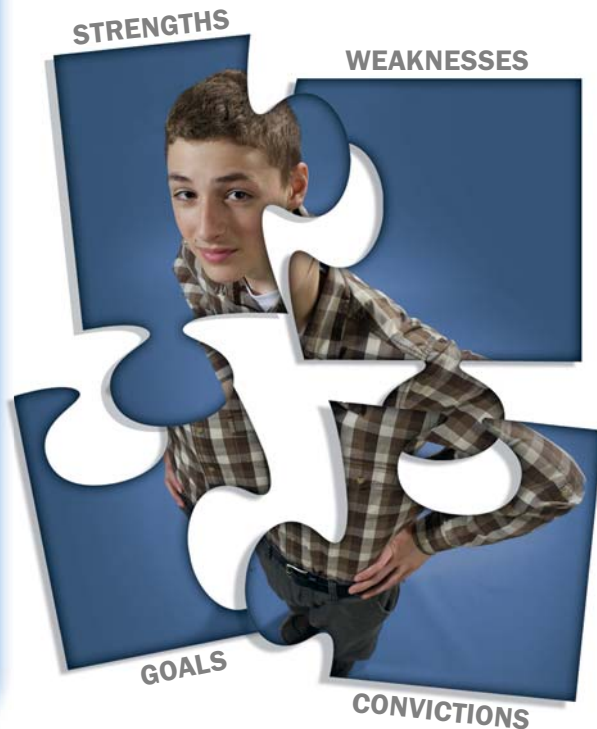
HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- What is your goal as a parent?
—Hebrews 5:14.
- What will be your adolescent’s own responsibility when he becomes an adult?—Joshua 24:15.

Who am I?

Michael sees Brad approaching, and he dreads what is about to happen. “Hey, Mikey, try this!” Brad says. Brad opens his hand, and Michael sees exactly what he expected to see—a fresh marijuana joint. He doesn’t want to accept it, but he doesn’t want to seem like a loser either. “Look,” Michael says weakly, “maybe another time. . . . OK?”

Jessica sees Brad approaching, and she’s ready for what is about to happen. “Hey, Jess, try this!” Brad says. Brad opens his hand, and Jessica sees exactly what she expected to see—a fresh marijuana joint. “No thanks,” Jessica says confidently. “I have future plans that involve breathing. And besides, Brad, . . . I thought you were too smart to smoke!”



IN THE above scenarios, why is Jessica better able to resist the pressure? Because she has something that Michael doesn’t. Do you know what it is? An *identity*. No, not a card with a name and a photo on it. An identity is an inner sense that tells you who you are and what you stand for. Armed with that knowledge, you’re empowered to say no to trouble—to control your life instead of letting others control it for you. How can you develop such confidence? Answering the following questions is a good start.

1 WHAT ARE MY STRENGTHS?

Why it matters: Knowing your abilities and positive traits will boost your confidence.

Consider: Everyone has various gifts. For example, some people are talented in art or

music, while others are athletically inclined. Raquel has a knack for fixing cars.* “When I was about 15,” she says, “I realized that I wanted to be a mechanic.”

Bible example: The apostle Paul wrote: “Even if I am unskilled in speech, I certainly am not in knowledge.” (2 Corinthians 11:6) With his thorough grasp of the Scriptures, Paul was able to stand his ground when others challenged him. He didn’t let their negative attitude shake his confidence.—2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:5.

Analyze yourself. Below, write down a *talent* or *skill* that you possess.

.....
Now describe a *character strength* that you

* Some names in this article have been changed.

possess. (For example, are you caring? generous? dependable? punctual?)

.....
"I try to be there for people. If someone needs to talk and I'm busy, I'll still stop what I'm doing and lend a listening ear."—Brienne.

If you have trouble identifying a character strength, think of one way that you have matured since childhood, and write it below. —For examples, see the box "What Your Peers Say."

2 WHAT ARE MY WEAKNESSES?

Why it matters: Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, your identity can quickly change for the worse if you let your shortcomings get the upper hand.

Consider: Nobody's perfect. (Romans 3: 23) Everyone has some trait that they would like to change. "Why do I let the silliest things get to me?" asks a girl named Seija. "The smallest thing sets me off, and suddenly I lose control of my emotions!"

Bible example: Paul was aware of his weaknesses. He wrote: "I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law."—Romans 7:22, 23.

Analyze yourself. What weakness do you need to keep in check?

.....
"I've noticed that after I finish watching romantic movies, I get a little sad and I want to find someone to fall in love with. So now I know that I have to be careful about that type of entertainment."—Bridget.

3 WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

Why it matters: When you have goals, your life has direction and purpose. You're also more likely to avoid people and situations that could hinder you from accomplishing what you've set out to do.

WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY



Jeremiah

“As I've grown older, I've learned to weigh all factors when making decisions, big or small, and to avoid getting involved in things that would displease God.”

“When I was younger, I assumed that anyone different from me was weird. Now, I like the fact that not everyone is the same, and I'm interested in others' viewpoints.”



Jennifer

Consider: Would you get into a taxi and tell the driver to drive around the block repeatedly until his car ran out of fuel? That would be foolish—and costly! Goals keep you from traveling in circles with your life. You have somewhere to go and a plan of how to get there.

Bible example: Paul wrote: "The way I am running is not uncertainly." (1 Corinthians 9:26) Rather than drift through life letting things happen to him, Paul set goals and then lived in accord with them.—Philippians 3:12-14.



When you have a strong identity, you are like a firmly rooted tree that can withstand powerful storms

Analyze yourself. Below, write three goals you would like to reach within the next year.

1

2

3

Now pick the goal above that is *most important* to you, and write down what you can do *now* to start achieving it.

.....

“If I don’t stay busy, I catch myself just floating along. It’s better to have goals and progress toward achieving them.”—José.

4 WHAT ARE MY CONVICTIONS?

Why it matters: Without convictions, you’ll be wishy-washy. Like a chameleon, you’ll change colors to blend in with your peers—a sure sign that you don’t have your own identity.

Consider: The Bible encourages Christians to ‘prove to themselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’ (Romans 12:2) When your actions are based on your convictions, you stay true to yourself—regardless of what others do.

Bible example: While a teenager, the prophet Daniel “determined in his heart” that he would observe God’s laws, though sepa-

rated from his family and fellow worshippers. (Daniel 1:8) By doing so, he *stayed true to himself*. Daniel lived in accord with his convictions.

Analyze yourself. What are your convictions? For example:

● Do you believe in God? If so, why? What evidence convinces *you* of his existence?

● Do you believe that God’s moral standards are for your good? If so, why? For example, what convinces you that obeying God’s laws regarding sex will make you happier than conforming to your peers’ “free” lifestyle?

These are not questions to answer quickly. Take time to consider the reasons for your beliefs. By doing so, you’ll be better able to defend them.—Proverbs 14:15; 1 Peter 3:15.

*“In school, kids play on your insecurities, and I didn’t want to be insecure about my faith. So I worked on developing clear, firm reasons for my beliefs. Rather than tell people, ‘Oh, I can’t do that because it’s against my religion,’ it was more a matter of ‘I don’t think it’s right.’ These were **my** beliefs.”—Danielle.*

In the end, which would *you* rather be like—a fallen leaf that gets blown around by every mild breeze or a tree that withstands even powerful storms? Strengthen your identity, and you’ll be like that tree. And that will help you answer the question, *Who am I?*

More articles from the “Young People Ask” series can be found at the Web site www.watchtower.org/ype

WHY NOT ASK YOUR PARENTS?

What talents do you see in me?
What traits do you think I should work on? How did you build conviction in God’s standards?

Forgetting How to Play

A fifth of the parents in Britain claim to have forgotten “how to play with their children,” according to a recent survey. One third confess that they find play boring, while others lack time or ideas. Regarding this finding, Professor Tanya Byron, a clinical psychologist, says: “There are four key ingredients to a successful playtime between parents and children: education, inspiration, integration and communication.” Although 1 in 3 parents chose to play computer games with their children, the vast majority of youngsters prefer playing these alone. Among the activities that most 5- to 15-year-olds want to share with their parents are outdoor games and board games.

Bedtime Stories

An Internet service offers to be of help to fathers who are too busy to read bedtime stories to their children in person. “Hi-tech software records the voice of fathers reading a bedtime story, adds music and sound effects and emails an audio file to the child,” explains Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph*. Relationship experts, however, are skeptical. “Reading involves a whole lot of relationship building,” says Dr. Richard Fletcher of a families research program at Newcastle University, Australia. It involves fathers interacting with their children, cuddling them, and laughing with them. No e-mail can replicate the benefits of physically sitting down and reading to your child, says Fletcher.

Some 17 percent of Brazilian schoolchildren aged 10 to 13 are involved in bullying—either as victims or perpetrators.—O ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL.

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney stones, and liver problems are now being diagnosed in children under the age of 12. The main causes? Sedentary lifestyles, too much junk food, and overweight.
—ABC, SPAIN.

The cost of raising a child born in 2008 to age 18 in a middle-income family in the United States is “about \$221,190 (\$291,570 when adjusted for inflation),” according to a government estimate.
—UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, U.S.A.



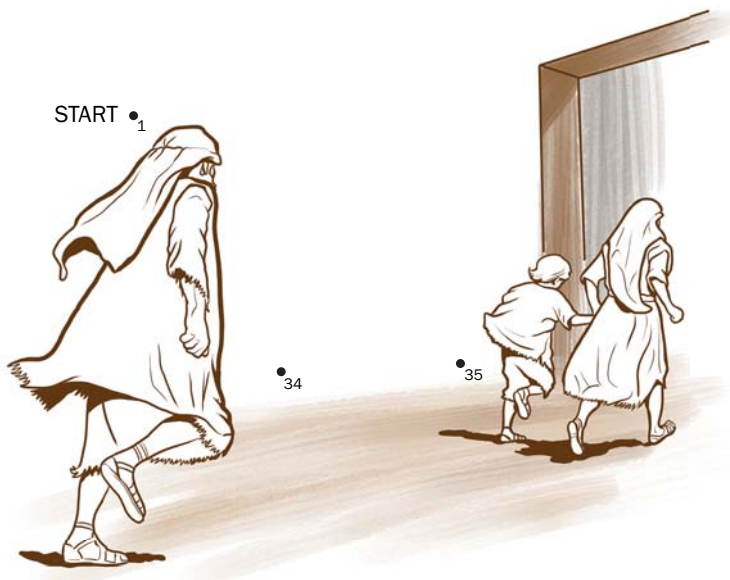
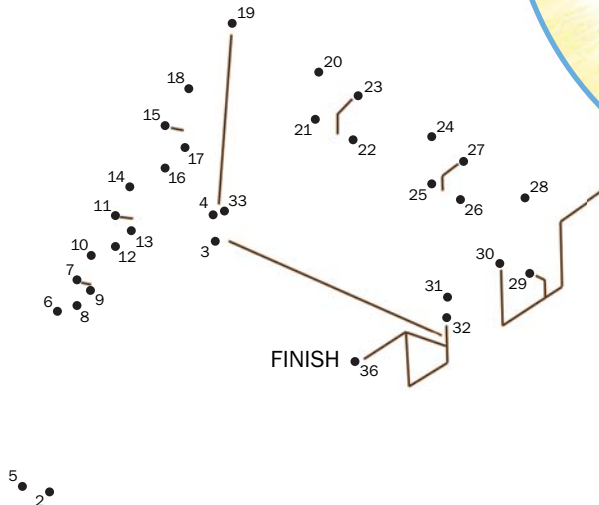
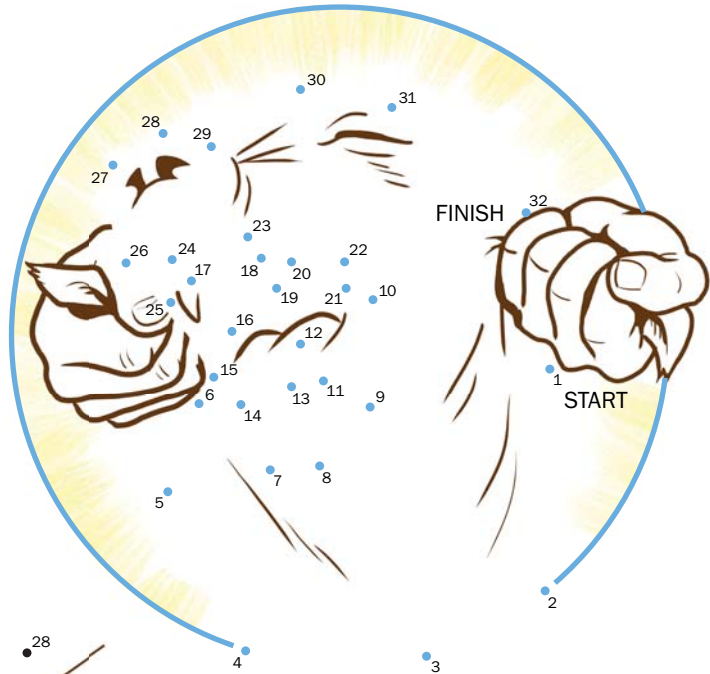
What Is Missing From These Pictures?

Read Proverbs 18:10 and 26:17. Now look at the pictures. What features are missing? Write your answers on the lines below. Connect the dots to complete the pictures, then color them in.

1.....

2.....

● “FOR FAMILY REVIEW” answers on page 24



FOR DISCUSSION: What do you learn from these verses? Is just knowing God's name enough to receive his favor? **CLUE:** Read Psalm 91:2; Proverbs 3:5, 6. Why are you wise to avoid meddling in other people's matters? **CLUE:** Read Galatians 6:5-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:15. Next, read Proverbs 26:18, 19. Are practical jokes simply harmless fun? **CLUE:** Read Proverbs 14:13; 15:21; Matthew 7:12.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Read Proverbs 31:10-31 together. Have one family member, without speaking, act out some of the activities of a capable wife that are described there. The rest of the family should try to guess the activities. Discuss what tasks you can learn in order to be more capable.

Collect and Learn

Cut out, fold in half, and save



SOLOMON

BIBLE
CARD

10



QUESTIONS

- A.** Solomon prayed, not for riches or years of life, but for what?
- B.** Fill in the blanks. Solomon could speak ____ proverbs, and his songs came to be ____.
- C.** Solomon was given what other name?

1 C.E.

4026 B.C.E.

Last Bible
book written

Lived circa
1000 B.C.E.

Adam
created



The queen of Sheba traveled some 1,500 miles (2,400 km) to hear Solomon's wisdom



SOLOMON

PROFILE The second son of David and Bath-sheba. Solomon ruled Israel for 40 years. He built a great house for Jehovah's worship. (1 Kings 5:2-5) Jehovah used Solomon to write Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Bad association with foreign wives led him away from Jehovah.—1 Kings 11:1-6.

ANSWERS

- A.** An obedient heart.—1 Kings 3:5-14.
- B.** 3,000, 1,005.—1 Kings 4:29, 32.
- C.** Jedidiah, meaning "Beloved of Jehovah."—2 Samuel 12:24, 25.

Peoples and Lands

3. My name is Chloe. I am nine years old, and I live in Canada. About how many of Jehovah's Witnesses live in Canada? Is it 55,000, 88,000, or 110,000?

4. Which dot shows where I live? Circle it, draw a dot where you live, and see how close you are to Canada.

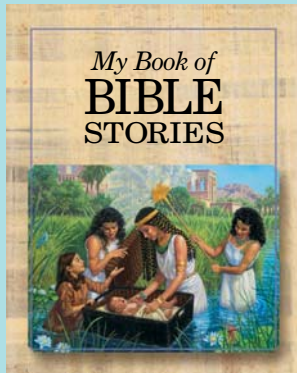


Children's Picture Search

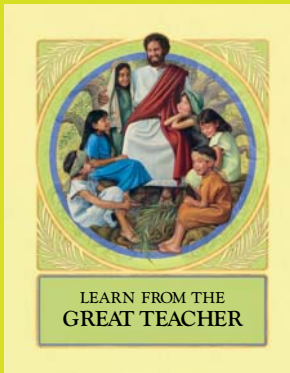
Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.



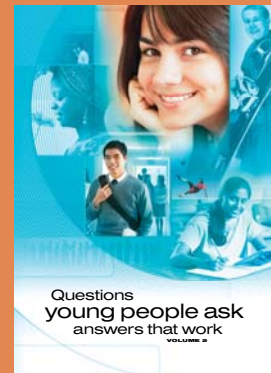
AS THEY GROW



“We both enjoyed *My Book of Bible Stories* when we were children. Now we have a 16-month-old son, Joshua. The book is a wonderful teaching tool for him. Even at his tender age, Joshua can identify by name at least 35 Bible characters in the book. They have become a part of his vocabulary.”
—Timothy and Ann.



“My young son loves looking through the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*, and he already knows most of the pictures. It has helped me to reason with him about overcoming problems at school and elsewhere. It is more than I could have asked for!”—Jennifer.



“*Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work, Volume 2*, deals with every aspect of a young person’s life. I am 19 years old. This book has helped me to make goals, to make wise decisions regarding dating, and to progress in my relationship with God. I would recommend this book to anyone, young or old.”—Courtney.

☐ *My Book of Bible Stories*

☐ Without obligation, I request a copy of the book(s) selected. You may send this coupon using an appropriate address on page 5 of this magazine.

Indicate which language.

.....

☐ Please contact me concerning a free home Bible study.

☐ *Learn From the Great Teacher*

Name

Address

.....

City

Province/State Postal/ZIP Code

☐ *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work, Volume 2*