

Christianfamily

A bilingual magazine for Christian families

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Photo by Martha Howell



In this issue: The Skeltons talk about family and work and what they have learned from farm life · PAGES 8-11



From the Editors

Our families are very important to us, the church, and society. This issue of our magazine encourages parents to teach their children to love God and to love work—as we look at the Skelton family and their farm with all of the chores that are required! Parents also need to teach their children to love worship; after all, that is the ultimate reason for our existence! Let us not forget the marriage relationship itself; this issue encourages us to build “peace” with our spouse. Children need a proper love for self, seeing themselves as made uniquely in the image of God. We close with a young writer, sharing insights from building blocks, which, again, encourages to take God’s Word seriously. A godly family does not happen by accident!

We commend this issue to you with the prayer that it will help you strengthen your family.

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Christianfamily

Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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Family Memories

“Did You Really, Dad?”

Moisés Pinedo

In our home, I have been “solemnly appointed” to put our daughters to bed. This is no easy task, for the “highest order” calls to calm them down instead of making them go wild. Over the years, this task became more challenging as one of my daughters’ favorite stories seemed to be, “Daddy’s Adventures.” Yes, I must confess that it has been a constant struggle to contain my emotions when telling these stories because..., well, after all, “I was there!”

“Dad, can you tell us again about the time you went to the moon and put the Peruvian flag on it?” [before the Americans!]

“Dad, can you tell us again about the time you fought a fire-breathing dragon with only your bare hands?”

“Dad, can you tell us again about the time you made a strike in two different lanes by splitting a bowling ball in half?”

As I dramatically told the stories, my daughters found them hilarious and got me in a pickle to come up with fancier ones (while at the same time trying to keep the noise from reaching the other side of the house). The older ones knew these were made-up stories, but the little ones may have gotten confused at times.

One day, one of my girls (about five at that time) came to me and asked me, “Dad, were you **really** the tallest guy on your basketball team?” I am about 5’6”; however, that was in Peru, and, yes, believe it or not, I was the tallest guy on my team!

Children live in a world of fantasies; they like fairytales and superhero stories. Parents know this and usually feed this early desire with funny stories while creating strong bonds and lasting memories. But there are times when fantasies must come to an end and children must be taught to test the facts (1 John 4:1).

How are we instructing our children? Can our children distinguish good from evil (Isaiah 5:20)? Can they distinguish a joke from a lie (Proverbs 26:19), marriage from fornication and adultery (Hebrews 13:4), the truth of supernatural creation from the lies of naturalistic evolution (Genesis 1), God-approved relationships from vile passions (Romans 1:26-27), or “women’s right” from abortion’s shedding of innocent blood (Proverbs 6:17)? Can they distinguish God’s **Word** from a **word** He has not spoken (Leviticus 10:1; Deuteronomy 18:22; 1 Corinthians 14:37-38)?

Let us train our children daily to know God and His Word (2 Timothy 3:15)! ■



*Three of our girls in the bowling alley (2020)
Just before Dad made that memorable double strike...*



*The fruit of the Spirit
and your spouse*

Freddie Klein

Peace

Peace Defined

Sometimes words lose their strength over time. The word “love” is a good example. We may love our mother and our dog and use the same word for both. This tends to happen to words that are often overused or have a wide variety of uses. This also applies to the word “peace.”

When we think of peace, we often associate the word with a cessation of some activity. For example, to make peace while at war means that both sides stop fighting (Ecclesiastes 3:8). When the waters are at peace, they are not filled with turbulent waves, and when siblings are at peace, they are not nagging or picking on one another. Therefore, our idea of peace is often associated with its passive nature; things are “at peace” because some disruptive force has come to a stop. But what if peace can be used in the active sense? This active definition and usage of peace are often at the heart of the Bible.

In Matthew 5:44-45, Jesus said, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” His point was, to have peace, we must make peace; peace is active.

Additionally, God desires that we not only actively seek peace but that we actively continue in it. Peace, like many states of activity, does not continue with-

out effort; peace achieved is not automatically peace continued. Paul admonished: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). We are to live out peace in our lives.

Peace Produced

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul gave a list of virtues that are the result of walking in God’s ways; this list is sometimes referred to as “the fruit of the Spirit.” If we allow God and His Word to be our guide, we will produce love, joy, and peace, among other things. To have such fruit, we must begin with the appropriate attitude, that is, we must be fully devoted to God (Galatians 5:24).

Often, we desire the outcome, the fruit, when we have not first fully dedicated all of our lives to God’s plan and purposes. But to have peace in this world, peace in our relationships, yes, even peace in our marriages, we must have God and His commands at the forefront of our view. Once we have our priorities in order and our hearts set on pleasing God, we will be able to enjoy the manifold fruit; not only will we enjoy the fruit of God’s blessings, but others will be able to share in those blessings as well. One such relationship that will profit from our walk with God is our marriage.

Peace Enjoyed

We often claim we desire peace in our marriages. But what do we mean? As stated above, do we merely desire the calming of the waves? Do we wish for



the fighting to stop or for the nagging to be over? These are goals that we may reach, but this is not the meaning of peace in the active sense. Peace in marriage is more than the stoppage of certain unwanted interactions. God desires, upon following Him, that we would have peace to a fuller degree (Romans 5:1). Peace in our marriages is more beautiful than many can imagine, and we are selling God short when we merely desire the cessation of some displeasing circumstances.

The peace of God is fuller and richer because the peace He offers is active (Philippians 4:7). Biblical peace seeks the good of our spouse. God's peace loves even when it is hard. The peace which God gives allows us to look past faults and focus on the dedication we should all strive for in our marital relationships. Fundamentally, peace is that which is achieved when we seek the good of the other (Philippians 2:3-4). The practical side of all of this is that peace meshes with not only the love we have for our spouse but also the joy we find by being in this covenant relationship.

Peace Attained

The active peace we all hope for in our marriages is something that takes time, effort, and patience. To have peace in our marriage, we must incorporate several habits and principles in our life.

Whether it is peace with God or peace with our spouse, every relationship requires wrongs to be admitted and patterns of change to be initiated. A re-

quirement of God's plan of salvation is repentance (Acts 17:30); this is also a requirement within the bonds of marriage. Repentance is key to peace because it cultivates humility and builds trust. When spouses own up to their mistakes and apologize, they place themselves in a humble position as they ask for forgiveness (Matthew 5:23-24; Colossians 3:13). It takes humbleness and strength to utter the words, "I was wrong." Repentance is showing our spouse that we are actively pursuing peace even though we are imperfect creatures. For peace to ensue, repentance is paramount.

Our marriages will enjoy peace when we face issues together, relying upon the Bible to guide our decisions and direction (Proverbs 3:5-6). Disagreements will come, and when they do, we must face them. Peace does not mean life without disagreement. Sometimes a disagreement helps us solve something now that would have been an even bigger issue in the future.

When the waves of conflict are crashing above your head, when peace is nowhere to be found in your marriage, ask for help. Prayer is a powerful tool, and its power is exponential when couples pray together (James 5:16). However, it should not be the case that prayer is used as a last-ditch effort to save a marriage in turmoil. We should be in regular conversation with God throughout the ups and downs of our marriage (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17). Asking for help might also include going to a trusted outside source in your quest to find peace (Proverbs 1:5). This may be a close family friend or member of your congregation. Whatever the case, someone with an outside perspective can be a valuable tool to achieve peace in your marriage.

Conclusion

We can have peace with our spouses, but our lives need to be aligned with the Word of God. We must never settle for good enough in our marriages, even when it concerns peace. With God's Word as our guide, we can know a peace that draws us closer to Him and our spouse. ■

The Seriousness of WORSHIP

Kerri Epling

In Pew Packers sessions before our evening worship on Sundays, kids are asked, “What is Worship?”, to which they have been taught to respond with “seeking the presence of God.” Every week, I am struck by that definition. When we come before God to worship, we are seeking His presence, and we aim to do so “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). As I looked over the questions for this year’s first quarter of study,¹ two stood out to me: “How may we be showing disrespect for sacred things today?” (Week 9), and “What can we learn from Joshua’s statement in Joshua 24:15?” (Week 12). I fear that we often take worship for granted and do not treat it the way God intends. Let’s study together.

God has always been specific in His expectations for when mankind approaches Him in worship and/or obedience. In Leviticus 10:3, “the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’” Consider the following verses in connection with some accounts selected for the first quarter of study.

- Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:15-17; 3): Were Adam and Eve given specific instructions for how to live in God’s presence? Did God overlook disobedience?
- Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16): Did God make His expectations for offerings clear? How do we know? (cf. Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17). Were there consequences for not taking Him seriously?
- Noah (Genesis 6:8-7:5): What specifications did God give Noah? Did Noah follow them? What was the result?
- Job (Job 1-2): What did serving God cost Job? Was it “easy” for him to follow God faithfully?



- Abraham (Genesis 22): Was worship just a matter of casually showing up and completing tasks? Did Abraham make excuses?
- Esau: Esau was willing to trade long-lasting security for temporary pleasure (Genesis 25:30-34). In what ways do we do this, especially in terms of worshipping God?
- Joseph: What did Joseph have to give up to serve God faithfully, and what was his attitude about these sacrifices? (Genesis 39; 50:20).
- Moses: God gave His people specific instructions about what things were holy, and He gave clear

expectations for how His people should respond to holy things (Exodus 20, 35). Consider His instructions for the priests, their clothing, the tabernacle, and offerings (Exodus 25-29).

- Joshua: Joshua understood that it is a choice to serve God or not (Joshua 24:15). We cannot be neutral; we either serve Him, or we don't. Find a New Testament passage that makes a similar claim.

God has always made His expectations clear for His people. Serving Him has always been about our hearts more than physical actions, but He expects us to worship Him as He has prescribed. Worship must be “set apart” for Him. While the specific commands for **how** to worship have changed in the New Testament, the mindset God expects from us has not. Consequences for **not** taking God's expectations seriously or approaching Him casually have always been devastating. What is required for us to worship Him today?

Do we consider the seriousness of what we are doing when we come before God? Are we preparing our hearts and minds in advance to truly seek His presence in the ways He has commanded, or are we just showing up and treating worship as a checklist? How are we training ourselves and our children to see this “event” as something different from the rest of our lives? While the building where we worship is not “holy,” the reason that we are there **is**. How should this affect our attitudes and behavior “in the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15)? It is **so** easy to become casual in our approach to God and in our service to Him. Obedience to God is seldom convenient. It often requires effort and sacrifice on our part to do things the way He has chosen. As David said, we must be careful that we do not offer God that which costs us nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). May we always strive to seek first His Kingdom (Mathew 6:33). ■

1. You may find these questions in our featured article in volume 8, number 4 (2023), pages 8-11.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Kerri at editorial@ebglobal.org with email subject of “Family Study for Ladies.”



the Skeltons

...are a family of six: Wesley and Denise and their four children, Hannah Kate (13), Micaiah (11), Sarah Grace (9), and Noah (7). They love God, His creation, and His people. Wesley is a deacon at East Side church of Christ, in Cleveland, TN, where the family worships. He works as a pharmacist in Chattanooga, Denise homeschools the children, and they run a farm business as well. Their family enjoys spending time with the church, planning and attending the Legacy Family Camp East in the fall, and just about anything involving animals. Here they talk about family and work and what they have learned from farm life.

Cf. Would you briefly describe each member of your family?

Denise is a lovely wife, mama, homeschool teacher, and farmer. **Wesley** is a hard-working husband, daddy, farmer, and pharmacist. **Hannah Kate** is a horse lover and an avid book reader. **Micaiah** is a hunter and a reader. **Sarah Grace** is an animal lover and flower grower. **Noah** is adventurous and funny.

Cf. Why (or how) did you decide to get into farming?

The farm we live on in Cleveland, Tennessee, has been in Wesley's family since 1904 when his second great-grandfather purchased the land. Denise's family has been in the agriculture industry for over five generations, beginning when her great-grandfather purchased a farm in Lafayette, Tennessee, in 1910. Wesley's parents also live on the farm, where his dad works full time (in his retirement!). We are grateful to have them so close and get to enjoy farm life with them. In 2019, we decided that we wanted to pursue a more direct-to-consumer business with our beef and eggs to reduce Wesley's work hours off the farm.

We received our retail meat permit and began selling beef by the cut in March 2020, the weekend that everything "shut down" in our area due to the pandemic. In 2021, Wesley began roasting coffee to sell as well. Thankfully, he was able to reduce his hours to part-time off the farm last fall.

Cf. Would you briefly let us know about your farm (the kind and number of animals you own) so we can have a better idea of the work it may involve?

We raise beef cattle and egg-laying chickens on our farm. We have about 100 mama cows, plus their current babies and calves. We have mobile chicken coops that currently house about 500 hens. We had sheep for about three years but ultimately decided they were not the kind of workload we needed. We were able to sell them to some friends so that Sarah Grace could still visit them and love on them. The kids also have two horses, Kandy and Cisco. Hannah Kate made bread and sold it when she was eight years old to save up enough money to buy Kandy. Cisco is a new addition gifted to us by some friends. Addi-



tionally, we have three livestock guardian dogs who help protect the animals on our farm as well as one pet dog who brings joy to (Wesley says, “most of”) our family.

Cf: *What is the specific work of each child on the farm?*

The kids help with a little bit of everything. It truly depends on the season as to what everyone does to help. Everyone can feed animals, move cattle to new pastures, sort cattle to separate them for various reasons, check cows, gather eggs, wash and package eggs, and help with our booth at the farmers market. Right now, we have two bottle calves. One belongs to Micaiah, so he is the primary bottle feeder for that calf. Sarah Grace and Noah took turns helping raise an orphan calf that was born in the fall. Hannah Kate’s main responsibility is horse care. She feeds them daily, cleans out hooves, gets them ready for the hoof trimmer to arrive, and works with them during that time. She also is a **huge** help in the house when Denise is extra busy (for example, during calving season). She loves to cook, and we love to eat her food! Micaiah has had his own chickens for several years. Now he is the main “coop mover” (along with Noah) when Anna Beth (our employee) isn’t here. The coops have to be moved twice a day with our farm utility vehicle. Micaiah also can troubleshoot and fix problems with the chicken water system and fence. Sarah Grace was shepherdess until we sold our flock of sheep in October. She is hopeful that we will get sheep again one day or that Mama will agree to **pigs** (“Mama

says ‘no’ for a long time!”). She loves checking cows, especially during calving season. She can remember cattle faces extremely well and knows what calf belongs to what cow as well as Denise does! Noah raised his own chickens for the first time last year and sold them as pullets. He was able to keep a few for himself to go in our main flock, so he also helps a lot with the chickens. As the youngest of the family, he has always wanted to do everything the bigger kids do, so he is pretty proficient in all of the farm tasks too.

Cf: *What has been your children’s attitude concerning working on the farm, and how do you encourage a child who may be unwilling to work?*

Our children are just like any other children in that sometimes they do not enjoy all of the work that needs to be done. Having said that, they have been involved with the work around the farm from a very young age. They are more conditioned to the idea of work and the understanding that it is necessary. We sometimes ask if they would rather just not have a farm, and their answer is always “no.” Of course, we all enjoy “most” of the work that is involved with the farm, and for really difficult or less enjoyable jobs we reward the kids, and us! The kids do find it extra fun to go “work with Papa” or help Anna Beth do our daily chores. Additionally, we have been able to teach our children about money by paying them for some of the work that they do and giving them the freedom to run small side businesses/projects and make additional money. Money is a good motivator too!

Cf. *In which ways has farm life benefited your family?*

Living on a farm has given our children (and us) an appreciation for the amount of work that is involved in providing for the things that we have. In a truly real way, they have been able to see what it takes to put food on the table, and that helps them not to take that for granted. They have learned disappointment as weather or sickness creates a loss. Our family is blessed to witness God's creation daily (Job 12:7-10). We learn to depend on Him as we are sometimes at the mercy of the weather. They learn hands-on and critical thinking skills routinely. This serves them well now and will continue to in the future. Selling products directly to the consumer has also allowed us to meet and interact with a tremendous amount and diverse group of people in our community. The children learn communication skills as they help weekly with our farmers market booth and meet clients on the farm. We continue to pray that God will use us to reflect His love to those whom we encounter.

Cf. *How do you balance farm work, spiritual time, and church life?*

This is something we struggle with often. We find ourselves needing to refocus and prioritize the things we need to be doing. About a year and a half ago, we were able to hire a local homeschool graduate to help us with the daily chores on the farm. This alleviated a lot of the work that Denise was doing outside daily and allowed her more time to devote to home-

school as well as other farm business tasks. It has been easy for us to take a good thing (work) and make it the "ultimate thing." There is always work to be done, and our list of things to do never seems to get shorter. That focus has been something that the kids have picked up on as well. Wesley was doing a study about the Sabbath a while back and asked the children, "What would happen if we stopped working?" One of our children immediately answered, "Everything would fall apart!" As Christians, we know that it is Jesus who holds all things together (Colossians 1:17), not ourselves. That is the reason we named our farm, "Thousand Hills Family Farm." We took this name from Psalm 50:10, where God states that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. We never want to lose our focus that it is **God** Who provides and that everything that we own belongs to Him.

Cf. *Why is it so important to instill in children a healthy view of work?*

We firmly believe that it helps our children tremendously to have responsibilities. Along with the help they give on the farm, their household chores help them to realize how important they are in our family. They are needed. They play a vital role. Our children are not here for us to entertain or to be a burden to us. God planned that our children would be a blessing (Psalm 127). We are grateful for these blessings and pray that we are stewarding and training them well. ■



Lessons we have learned from FARM LIFE



Be flexible. Things happen, like cows might have trouble calving, or a job might take longer than we plan (that happens all the time). This summer, there was a thunderstorm that knocked down at least 50 trees or giant limbs, so we spent about a week cleaning up trees. I learned from this experience that we should always depend on God to keep us safe. It reminds me of Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" —*Hannah Kate*



Living on a farm helps us see what all God has created. —*Micaiah*

I have learned to be brave because it can be a little scary working with large animals. Our family's "not scared verse" is Isaiah 41:13, "For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" —*Noah*



Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them." I really loved the sheep when we had them. They loved me, and when I called them, they would run to me. My mama, daddy, and siblings had to work harder to get the sheep to come to them. —*Sarah Grace*



I am constantly reminded of the consequences of sin in this world. Adam was told that the ground would be cursed, and he would have to fight thorns and thistles. We constantly deal with the reality of things breaking down or going wrong. It is really easy to get discouraged when our work does not produce the desired outcome. This reality reminds me that we are looking for a homeland to come (Hebrews 11:13-16). —*Wesley*

Farming, especially farming with kids, requires a lot of patience. We learn patience when animals don't do exactly what we want, children's rowdiness or inexperience cause things to not go so smoothly, or we desperately need rain, but it won't fall; sometimes we just have to take a deeeep breath, pray, and learn some extra patience. —*Denise*



DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING YOUR SELF-IMAGE



Daren Schroeder

The already difficult transformation from childhood to adulthood is increased through societal pressures and challenges. While the devil is always available to present obstacles, God can use challenges to make you stronger. What can you do to continue developing and cultivating a healthy view of yourself through the teenage years? Here are three principles that will go a long way.

Right Thinking

God created you to think rightly, rationally, and godly. The Lord created us in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). While it may be impossible to fathom all that means, it is an amazing compliment to who you are!

Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” God’s Word is the perfect (inspired) agent or guidance system for transforming your thoughts. Allowing the Lord to train and change your mind where needed will greatly aid you in prop-

er self-image, as well as help you flush out anything you need to.

Social media, as well as our social media culture, does your thinking very few favors. Usually, it teaches a worldly and negative way of looking at life and even yourself. It tempts you to constantly compare yourself with others, and the comparison is usually between an amazing strength of someone else and perhaps a weakness of yours. Beware of unfairly comparing yourself to others. Beware of too much social media!

Counter misguided thinking with disciplined Bible reading and study (and prayer, too). God’s Word will properly train your thinking! Along that line, Paul said in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” Guard your thinking! Take in a strong diet of Bible!



Right Ambitions

Possessing the right ambitions in life can go a long way in combatting difficulties with self-image. Seeking to bring glory to God through your life and offer a helpful hand to those around you takes your mind off of yourself and makes you feel good. You are designed to be selfless! You are designed to honor the Creator! Seek to do so now, “in the days of your youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). When you “lose” yourself, you will find yourself (see Luke 9:24).

If you find that your self-image is not what it ought to be (you are either thinking too highly of yourself or too lowly), evaluate your ambitions and your primary pursuits. As strange as it seems, when your ambitions are not properly aligned with what God wants them to be, discouragement often ensues. You have been “wired” to serve God. When you do not pursue the purpose for which you are created, difficulties can be expected. Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). You may be amazed at the transformation that takes place through adjusting your priorities. Be ambitious about serving God and others! (read Matthew 22:37-40).

Right Actions

Your actions are a natural product of your thinking and your ambitions, but make certain that you are following through in the action stage. Be certain you are doing the right things, God’s things, conducting yourself as a Christian ought.

The young Timothy was told by Paul, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Timothy was urged not to “despise” his youth. Instead, his life was to be an example both in word and in deed.

God has not forbidden sin to merely keep something from you. Sinful things hurt you and hinder healthy feelings toward yourself. The sensitive conscience is a wonderful gift of God when properly trained and used. If there is something that you are doing that is sinful, stop, repent (Luke 13:3; 1 Peter 2:1-2), put it behind you, and replace it with something virtuous (Psalm 34:14).

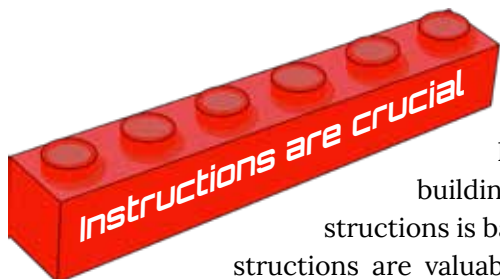
The battle for a healthy self-image is a difficult one that you can win through persevering with God’s wisdom and help! ■



What I have learned from BUILDING BLOCKS

Ella Pinedo

When I was younger, I loved building and playing with building blocks, usually LEGO® bricks and elements. I still do, to this day, love to pick up an uncompleted set and build it. I remember when my mom would have to come and tell me it was time to stop because I had been playing with building blocks for hours. I loved being able to create something new and feel accomplished about what I had done. I loved going to the store and looking at the building sets that seemed to be calling my name: “Ella...!” One year for Christmas, I got a new set, a roller coaster set, which I thought was the coolest thing ever. Within about 30 minutes, I had completed the set and was ready to start playing with it. Building blocks are a neat thing to play with, and they have helped me learn some good lessons in life.



I have found that a building set without instructions is basically useless; instructions are valuable when trying to build a set. Without the instructions, one would be clueless about where to start.

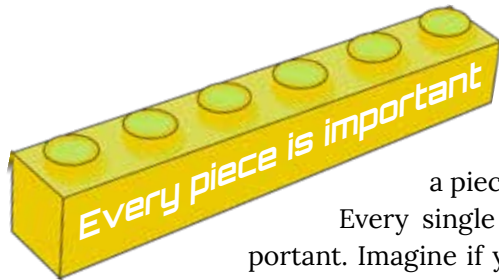
Instructions in the Bible are crucial to follow too. It is very important to follow **every** commandment that God has given. Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” We can see in this passage that God’s commandments are to be followed; we are to follow every commandment if we want to “build” the life God intended for us to have. God has left clear instructions for our lives in His inspired Word, and only by following those instructions we can spend eternity with Him in heaven.



When I first started playing with building blocks, I found them sometimes to be hard and frustrating. Over time, I learned patience and began to enjoy the process much more. Some sets took me longer than others, and sometimes that would frustrate me. But then I realized that, no matter how much time it took to build the set and how challenging it was, I just needed to be patient and the result would be rewarding.

Paul states in Romans 5:3: “tribulation produces perseverance [patience].” Patience doesn’t always

come easily; it is developed in hard circumstances. It is not easy to be patient when you are hurting, hungry, bored, tired, or even excited, but patience is important in life. God is a God of patience (Romans 15:5). I want to strive to be like Him! Also, patience is not something that comes instantly; it comes over time by not giving up. Patience may be hard, but the result of a life filled with patience is surely rewarding.



Have you ever lost a piece of a building set? Every single piece is very important. Imagine if you lost a wheel to a car; how would you be able to complete the project? Finding the piece is necessary; otherwise, your building project may not look right, may not have the stability it needs, or may come to a stop.

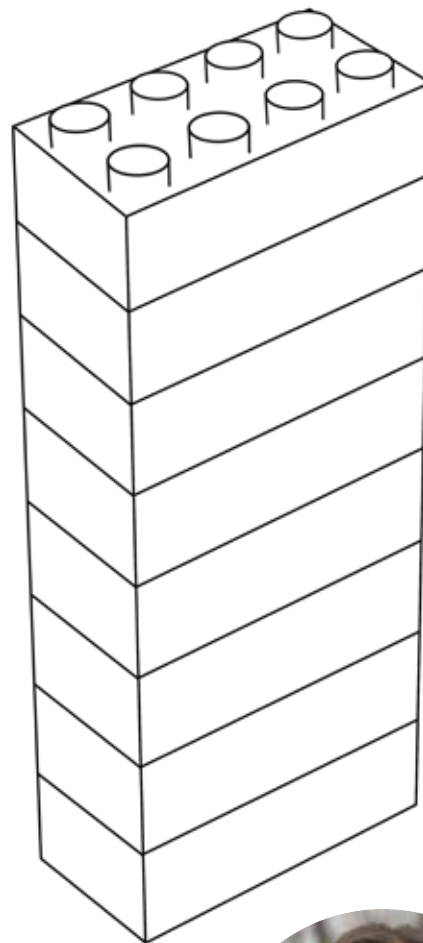
Just like with building blocks, everyone is important in your family and the church; everyone has an important role to fulfill. You may be little, but you are important, and there are many things you do and can do to complete the lives of others. In the same way, other people are important to you, like your physical and spiritual family. They will help you as you learn more about God so you can have a complete and satisfying life.

I am glad I had the opportunity when I was younger to build sets and make things I was proud of. Although through the process came difficulties and frustrations, they were well worth it in the end. There are several important lessons I learned that help me in my daily walk through life. Instructions will show me the way; patience helps me to be less frustrated, and my family, the church, and I are important to each other and God. As you play with building blocks or other toys, see what amazing spiritual and practical lessons you can learn! ■

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BUILDING BLOCKS of godliness

In 2 Peter, the apostle wrote that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness; these are the building blocks for a strong spiritual life. Build a “tower of godliness” by writing in each building block (from bottom to top) a virtue found in the instructions in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Then, color your tower. Don’t forget to practice those virtues.



2 Peter 1:5-7



Illustrations on this spread by
Kelsey Pinedo (age 14)

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Q: *How can I help my family grow in holiness?*
—ARGENTINA

God, through Peter, tells us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Jesus commands us to grow. We will define “holiness” as “being more like God”; that means we go to Jesus Christ as our standard and we go to such lists as Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Peter 1:5-7. Encourage your family to try to practice these qualities daily, and gently point out to them when they need to act more like Christ. But also ask them to tell you when you are not living like Christ. We can help and encourage each other. —PH

Q: *Is it right for a Christian man who has children with three different women to preach in front of the church?* —TEXAS, US

More background information is needed to give an exact answer to this question. Is this man living in fornication—either with the three women, one of them, or any woman at all? If so, he should **not** be in the pulpit but should be admonished to repentance so that his soul may be saved (cf. 1 Corinthians 5). On the other hand, if it is the case that this man had children with three different women in his **old life**, but now that old life of sin has been left behind (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11), and he has consistently shown fruits worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8), an example of holiness of life (Hebrews 12:14), and growth in Christian knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), then, there is no reason, as his current state of life is concerned, not to have him as a pulpit preacher if the church decides to do so. Remember that Paul himself was a murderer of Christians in his previous life, but thanks to the grace of God and his determination to leave behind sin and glorify God with his new life, he became the great apostle to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Having said that, the past life of sin of this man may be of such a **public** or **recent** nature that having him in the pulpit may be a stumbling block for some in or out of the church. In this case, the church may consider waiting or using the man in a different office where his past life may not be in the spotlight and the church may not become an object of slander. The reputation of the Lord’s church is more important than a man’s holding of a public office. —MP ■

