



NO GREATER JOY

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." III John 4

Sibling Squabbles

Children attempt to control their environment, which means the people around them, through pity or threat. Most children come to rely on one approach more than the other. One child will display anger and threat while another just looks broken and hurt. Though the angry child appears to be the most aggressive and intolerable, the two approaches are equally selfish and equally repugnant. The one will grow up trying to settle all personal relationships in an explosive manner; the other will grow up to whimper and have "tender feelings." Of course, some of us have grown up to become versatile, employing combinations of anger and emotional manipulation. Regardless of whether the lever is anger or pity, the end is the same: to get one's own way, to be gratified in the senses, take what the other has. It is the lazy, selfish, self-centered approach to life.

The self-centered child is marked by constant conflict. I repeat: The self-centered child or adult is marked by constant con-

flict – self-centered children, self-centered teenagers, self-centered mothers and fathers, self-centered preachers and churches, etc.. Conflict is a clashing of interests – a difference of opinion as to who



should be placed first, who should be most highly regarded. Children all want to be first. They want the most, the best; they want it now. At what age do they grow out of this? Somewhere around seventy or eighty, when their flesh dies. Nothing can stop it other than the sanctifying work of Christ; though early training can awaken the conscience

to such a high state and discipline the soul to such a degree as to cause the child to grow into adulthood functioning in a most gracious and saintly manner. If you are the primary caretaker of a young child, you have the power, with the grace of God, to mold an eternal soul into the beauty of holiness.

What do you do with kids who just can't get along, who fuss and fight all the time? The atmosphere is punctuated with, "Stop!" "No!"

"Give it to me."

"Maaamaaa." To exacerbate the problem, most parents take the side of the younger child, or of the girl, who is usually perceived as weak. Parents feel compelled to rush to the defense of the one who appears helpless, the one whose selfishness is manifested in hurt feelings and a persecution complex. The other

child appears aggressive, but in reality they are both aggressively using their best weapons to get their own ways. It is a mistake to interpret conflict as aggressor and victim. Occasionally that is the case, but not usually.

Children are as smart as they are selfish. The ones who don't

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have the personality or brawn to rule through intimidation will soon discover the power of playing the victim, thus eliciting parental power in gaining an advantage over their more explosive brothers and sisters. If the parents are blind to this ploy and are always intervening on behalf of the “victim” they will increase the tension, making a solution impossible. The one playing the victim and manipulating parents into running defense will just become more selfish; and the aggressor will become more and more angry as he or she feels the injustice. I see some families where the parents treat all their children as victims of the outside world. Everyone is an aggressor, treating their children unfairly. The parents constantly run interference to see that their children are not mistreated. Talk about conflict! Families with this persecution complex are constantly on edge.

When siblings are in conflict, regardless of who is at fault, for the parent to set up a habit of intervening, with the result of one child getting his way while the other does not—one a winner and one a loser—is to create a game where there is always the possibility of one of the “contestants” gaining an advantage by calling the parent in as arbitrator. The parent is the wheel of fortune. The child only needs to begin a conflict, and there is the possibility of coming out on top. “You win some, you lose some.”

Some children learn to manipulate their parents better than others. Deb and I were visiting in a home with young children. I try to appear to be listening to the adults, but I

am usually observing the children. During breakfast, I observed the constant strain between the two children, a three-year-old girl and a four-year-old boy. The little girl, having awakened bright and cheerful, was sitting at the table full of playful mischief. The mother awakened the little boy and carried him to the kitchen table, still sluggish with sleep and cuddled in his mother’s lap. Seeing the entrance of her brother, the little girl’s contentment disappeared and was replaced by a sleepy whimper, as if she were full of scary emotions. Mama sat little brother down and picked up sister. As soon as sister was snuggled into Mama’s lap, she threw her brother a smirking “ha ha” look. When the mother left the table, the little girl continued to do small, almost unnoticed offenses that irritated the older boy.

Later, while the mother was talking, I could look past her and see the two children playing. The cute little girl was obviously smarter than the clumsy brute of a boy. She was poised and controlled, while he was explosive and violent. Now, behind their mother’s back, the boy was trying to put the top on a castle he had constructed. The little girl “assisted” and mischievously caused the castle to tumble. The boy, having had his fill of this little irritant, went into a rage and struck his sister. I could see it was only a token blow, but she began to cry as if she had suffered first degree assault and battery. The mother, responding to the crying, turned around to see the poor little girl sitting on the floor in the midst of a broken castle, the victim of abuse. Standing over her was her angry assailant quaking with rage. He couldn’t explain his helpless feelings of injustice. But he knew

that she had won again. He was carried into his room and spanked for bullying his poor little sister. As soon as Mother was out of sight, the little girl stopped crying, looking as if she had never cried at all, and smiling, said, “Brother is getting a spanking.”

We frequently see this sort of conflict in families. If this mother came to us for counsel, the boy would be the focus of her concern. She would tell how she had spanked him and made him say he was sorry, but he only grew worse.

The boy’s rage was a result of his feelings of misuse. Certainly he had the normal amount of selfishness, but nowhere near as much as the “precious” little girl. Taking pleasure in his spankings, she was actually more violent than he. Lacking brawn, with calculated coldness she just used her mother as the hit-man.

What can a parent do to break into this cycle and put a stop to it? As we have pointed out, the parents’ response is usually a part of the problem. The parent is thinking, “I just need to intervene more, spank more,” when, in reality, the children would be better off if the parents did nothing. As we have said, by arbitrating in favor of one or the other, parents are offering children the chance to gain ascendancy over the other. The parent who tries to discern which kid is at fault, punishing one and rewarding the other, is providing a continuing opportunity for sibling squabbles. The children are masters at bringing a situation to a head, with just the right scream or cry, which is a signal for the arbitrator to make an entrance.

So, if I as a parent am making the situation worse with my arbitra-

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See I'm happy

This past week there was another development in the ongoing saga of the Caroline files. Since she interrupted one of our Bible studies with an inappropriate announcement of “Heretic Heretic,” she has turned two years old and is increasing in much needed discernment. The other night some of the saints were visiting her parents when, in discontentment, she started whining. Her mother said, “Caroline, you be happy and stop whining.” When Caroline continued to attempt to gain control of her mother through whining, she was taken out and lightly spanked. A few minutes after returning to the room she



and happy. ~

Sibling Squabbles

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tion, should I do nothing? Doing nothing is not the only alternative to constant arbitration. There will be times when you must hear both sides and make a judgment, but it should be only occasional. Just make sure that when you do arbitrate, both sides feel they would have been better off if they had settled it themselves. Remember, the rule in child training is: Always make their negative behavior counterproductive. Determine what, in their passion or lust, they hope to gain from this, and see to it that the opposite occurs. When two children fight over who got the chair first, leave the chair idle for the evening. When they fight over who is responsible for the mess in the bedroom, let one clean it up and then mess it up again and let the other

one clean it up as well. If they are always fighting over the swing set and the slide, put tape on it which declares it off limits for one day or one week until they both can come to you and declare that they have worked out a system to share.

When two of our children developed bad attitudes and started coming to Deb every half hour to tattle on the other, Deb just spanked both of them regardless of who did the tattling. No one ever said I sired dumb kids; they quickly discerned that the best course of action was to mind their own business. If your children learn not to bring their complaints to you, but continue to argue, listen until you discern what each hopes to gain and then deny each of them the indulgence.

One Mother told how she dealt with two boys who just seemed to have constant personality clashes. It appeared they just couldn't stand

each other. Now, according to our rule of child training (determining what, in their passion or lust, they hope to gain from this, and see to it that the opposite occurs), how would you cause these two boys to experience more of what they despised, which was each other, and less of what they wanted, which was distance? She taped their arms together, the left arm of one to the right arm of the other, shoulder to shoulder—and that with a sense of humor, not anger. Imagine these two enemies trying to coordinate every action to just perform the daily functions. She has some funny stories to tell. The boys think it's funny now. I won't tell you what happened when they tried to go to the bathroom. Can you see them trying to cooperate in buttoning and zipping, or pulling up an extra chair so the other can sit down? They had

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T.J. Slayman

Many of you have joined me in fervent prayer for Laos and specifically for the release of the Christian leaders being held in jail without trial. We have much reason to rejoice, for after two years of imprisonment, two elders have been released. On top of that, it is being said that a high official of one of the provinces has become a Christian. My job here is to bind the strongman according to Mark 3:27. I feel we have the cuffs on one arm, yet he is still struggling. Three more elders have been arrested in southern Laos. Please join me in prayer for them and for their testimonies.

Christmas proved to be a profitable time for the gospel here in Vientiane. In addition to

Missionary

several evangelistic (and in my critical opinion, "well done") services held at the churches, a private Christmas party was held at an individual's home. The Lao government (in Vientiane) isn't concerned with Christians gathering together if it coincides with a legitimate holiday. So, I and 3 others preached to a crowd of 100 people, half of which were not Christians. About eight people got saved that night and two more the following Sunday. Similar events took place on

New Year's Eve. So now I find myself thinking like I did seven years ago before I got saved: looking for any reason to throw a party!

T. J. is still studying the Lao language at the National University and has received an invitation to teach there in a couple of years. There are many exciting things about T.J. and Laos that we just cannot make public.

One correction: In an earlier newsletter, I said T. J. did not have any promised support. His mother, who is a volunteer worker in the office, and handles all his correspondence, tells me that he does indeed have several people who support him regularly. If you want more information or prayer letters on any of our missionaries, it is yours for the asking. ~

Sibling Squabbles

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to cooperate to even walk through a door. Imagine them trying to dress, tie shoes. They soon began to see the humor in it and sought to cooperate just for the sake of survival. Today, the boys, now several years older, can laugh and tell of their experiences together without fighting over who was the best one-handed zipper.

A father told how he dealt with two sibling enemies. When they just couldn't tolerate each other any longer, he made them stand facing each other with their noses touching. It makes my eyes cross just to think about it.

"Oh, your breath stinks."

"Yours smells like that dead cat we found in the tool shed."

"Don't press so hard; you're making my nose flat."

"Boy, my eyes are crossing."

"When I look to the side, one eye is still seeing you."

"Ugh, I'm getting dizzy."

"I wish you were as tall as me, my back is starting to hurt."

"Well I have to stand on my tip toes to keep your nose off my forehead."

"Don't talk so much; you just slobbered on my chin."

"It's a good thing neither of us has a cold."

"I told you we should have settled it before Daddy heard us."

"Yea, listen to him and the girls laughing."

"What are you laughing at

now?"

"I was just thinking how funny this will look if we are still standing here when the postman comes. They will probably haul us off to one of those foster homes."

"Oh, Mama will let us stop before he comes... She will, won't she?"

We are not suggesting that you implement either of these methods; we just want you to see the principle involved. Again, the principle in training is to make the negative behavior counterproductive. Children who are so tired of looking at each other that they want to fuss and fight will think twice before risking a nose to nose confrontation. Children who have made it a way of life to complain of abuse will find it

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Rebekah Pearl

Rebekah Pearl, 22 years old, is our oldest child. She lives among the Kumboi tribe in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. God has called her

there to translate Scripture into their language. She was sent out by her local church and is supported by friends who share in this ministry. After several years of college and Bible study elsewhere, she received a degree in linguistics and translation from Bible Baptist Translators in Bowie Texas.

At present, our son Nathan,

18 years old, and Tim Stoll, an elder from our church, are visiting Rebekah and assisting her in any physical needs. They will be there for one month. On his return trip, Nathan will stop off in Laos and minister with T. J. Slayman for one month.

Following is a letter Rebekah wrote to her grandparents.

Dear Nanny and Daddy Bill,

Do you know there is a village in PNG that knows you by those names? When they see your pictures they say, "Napus Nanny, Basunt Daddy Bill", (Your Grandmother Nanny, your Grandfather, Daddy Bill). It is a rare thing to have grandparents in PNG. People don't usually live past 50. I hope you don't worry about me too much. I'm not suffering by any stretch of the imagination. I'm never hungry, cold, or miserably lonely; and the prayers are what keep me so healthy. In fact, its the best time in my life that I can ever remember. The hardest, yes, but climbing Mount Everest is hard, yet people still do it so they can stand on the top and savor the victory of giving your all and achieving the heights. Living for God is like that too. Every sense is sharpened; and though sometimes you cry with the pain and weariness of it all—there is nothing to compare with the victory—victories along the way. So don't fret for me. I'm doing what God wants me to do and what I also want. Seems like I get more letters from Nanny than anybody else. I know you must be praying for me. Thanks. I don't think you will be able to climb these mountains and visit me. In fact, I don't think Mom and Dad could either. But I shall come home to visit before you know it and we can have "Thanksgivings" even if it is April. I love you both and smile every time I see your pictures or remember you.

Living by Faith

Sibling Squabbles

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inadvisable to protest anything less than bloodletting when they know complaining brings deprivation and disapproval rather than sympathy.

You must relax so that your creativity can come forth. Never lose your sense of humor. Never allow yourself to cease to delight in your children. When their behavior is undesirable, ask yourself, "What do they hope to gain? What is their

selfish motivation?" And then come up with a creative solution that will cause them to choose a different course of action the next time. If crime didn't pay, there wouldn't be any criminals. If children don't profit from fighting and quarreling, they will choose another course.

One caution: This "cause and effect" principle assumes that you have provided a nourishing environment, a home of love and honesty. If parents are always fighting with each other, they will fight with

the kids as well. If you have lost dignity with your marriage partner, you will not relate to your children in dignity. Maybe we will say more about this next month. ~

By Debi Pearl

I often ask myself, "Have they chosen to be bound?" Though I know in my heart, no one, not even the insane, chooses to be bound. Then why do they remain so?

I look out over the crowd of fettered couples, I wonder, do they even know of their bondage? I see pampered flesh, pious faces, composed emotions, and disciplined wills concealing the self-imposed bondage. Yet, on occasion the pretense fails and their souls are seen through the bars of their making.

I look to my husband seeking the answers in his face, while silently whispering a prayer for him to have the wisdom he needs for so great a task. Can he say something that will cause them to see that the web binding their family is of their own spinning? Will he be able to tell this critical wife, wrapped in thick cords of bitterness, silly imaginations, contempt for her man, and romantic emotions which she thinks is spirituality, that the cords binding her husband, chords she so despises, are cords she tied?

Like Eve, she plucks the fruit of bitterness, shares it with her husband, and then decries his lack of leadership. His lack of confidence before God and man, the apparent lack of interest in studying the Word, and his hesitancy to lead the family are

not cords of his own making; they are cords she tied through her dissatisfaction with him as a man. He doesn't understand what binds him. His anger at circumstances he doesn't understand and



to master drains his confidence before God. How can he soar before a mighty God if he can't please his own wife? They are "heirs together of the grace



of life," but they can never maintain a togetherness long enough to inherit. So their children must face life without the grace of life. What hope have they?

The woman sees couples where the man is mighty, he is confident, he receives honor of many. She feels his magnetism and manhood as he looks at his wife and smiles. "How can it be that that woman should get a mighty man of God, such a loving husband?" She can't understand why life should have permitted her such fate. She has so much talent, so much poise, so ready to minister, but she must tag her husband along.

The wife goes to women's meetings and "shares" the sad story of her enslavement to a carnal, insensitive husband. She bemoans the mistakes she made when she was less "spiritual." Now she suffers the consequences of having "married the wrong man." But she bravely "dies to herself" and lets her husband know of her longsuffering – with an emphasis on the suffering. She makes sure he is aware of the time she puts into prayer and Bible study.

She grieves over her lost opportunity and dreams of what it would have been like if she had only married a strong, mighty man, a man known for his wisdom. Does she not know her man could be all of that if she only allowed him to be free? Like Delilah cutting away Samson's strength, she cuts her husband and leaves him exposed to the Philistines of this world. Any man she married would soon pale in her eyes, because he too would be weakened by her criticism. After she cuts her husband, her dissatisfaction grows, and she seeks out others to condemn or control. Other men, her children, and eventually the

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BOUND

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church leaders feel the sting of her tongue.

As I look across the room, how many in the audience are so entangled? It is sad, the mockery of this enslavement. More than anything the wife wants her husband to be a "spiritual man;" and more than anything he wants to please and serve the living God. Why then doesn't someone, anyone, just tell them about the cords that bind their spirits, slowly squeezing abundant life from their relationship. Why doesn't someone

loose them? But, perhaps someone has tried, tried many times.

Dear Sister, are you one of those in my audience who have allowed your bindings to enshroud your husband? Have you stolen his manhood with your discontent? Would you release him? As a man whose hands are tied, it might take a while to get circulation flowing, but it will flow. Will you tell your heart and soul to leap with joy and delight when you think of your husband? Will you enjoy the thrill of not only serving him but blessing him with absolute abandonment?

No wonder you don't feel loved. He is not free to love. His

job is not to serve you; and your job is not to see to it that he does. Dear Sister, put away the things that bind you, and God will show you what a wonderful, delightful, precious relationship you can have on this old planet earth. The things you are missing are beyond explanation. When I looked out over the audience I whispered, "God, how do I tell them there is light when all they have ever known is darkness? How can I tell them to cut the cords when they think it is someone else who is bound?" ~

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God, Do it Again & Again

This month New Guinea gained another missionary couple and The Church At Cane Creek is minus one more quality family. Raymond and Susanna, with their three children, did something they had never done before: they boarded a plane and spent two days traveling to the bottom side of the world to give their lives in service for the glory of God. As we entered the airport, there was a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Such a departure would be trying on us, but for people raised Amish, it must have been scary indeed.

Their background and temperament makes them most suitable to the task before them. They grew up doing everything the hard way, making their clothes, carrying their water, washing their clothes by hand, grinding their meal, sawing firewood with a crosscut saw, and raising their own food.

Raymond is an elder in the church. They went by faith, trusting God to provide their needs. The church is back down to eight families again. It seems that when we add one, God calls another one out. I wouldn't have it any other way. We sit on the beach of eternal glory. Would to God we could do more than get our feet wet. ~

One for the

When we travel, teaching seminars, Deb and I enjoy observing the many different families, each with its own unique personality. The personality of a family is as distinct as that of an individual. The parent who has the most influence in the home cultivates the family into his/her image. Some families are joyous and enthusiastic, while others are somber and stern. Some are thin skinned, quick to take offense to those inside or outside the family circle, while others are confident and secure, enjoying a continual by-play, never having their feelings hurt, believing the best of every situation. Some feel the path through life is one of struggle and suffering, while others sing their way through.

This past week in Texas, we renewed acquaintance with a family we met about a year ago. The father is tall and angular. His crew cut hair reveals a bony head reflecting nearly as much light as his face.

It would take a plastic surgeon to remove his smile, and then there wouldn't be anything left but his muscular neck. His wife is equally joyous. She seems to be having a lot of fun being a wife and parent. They appear to be below any income bracket, and couldn't care less. The wife spoke with me when he was not around. She was proud of her man. Their children were animated.

They told several tales about how they dealt with problems that had arisen between the children. Their solutions were so creative, I wished I had thought of them first. Their little girl (I think they said, four years old) was terribly afraid of the roaches sharing their humble dwelling. She would scream and try to flee, only to run into a creepy creature on the other end of the house. No amount of encouragement could relieve her of fear, but the father's sense of humor and creativity prevailed. He conceived of

a way to rid the home of roaches, at less cost and danger than by an exterminator, and to occupy his energetic boys. He simply put a bounty on the roaches. The boys' hunter instincts, coupled with a touch of the entrepreneur, turned them into crawling safari men.

As the roach population diminished, the boys were becoming independently wealthy. After all, the wealth of a country is its natural resources. Day after day the little sister stood quietly watching the boys counting their pennies and bragging about their exploits. The stack of pennies grew higher and higher, yet there seemed to be no end to the terrible creatures. Then one day, watching the boys line their dead roaches up and receive their reward, the little girl said, "Hang this, I'm catching roaches!" So the timid little girl who couldn't control her emotions gave the boys a run for their money as she scurried around under the furniture snatching up the crawling pennies.

The moral to this story is that self-control is a matter of sufficient motivation. ~

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