

# No Greater Joy

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## To betroth or not to betroth? That is the question.

In the last year, since we announced that our daughter Rebekah was getting married, many of you have asked if we practiced betrothal.

Our children were raised in (for want of a better term) "an old fashioned Christian culture" where dating is understood to be nearly synonymous with fornication. Not that we think everyone who dates will commit fornication, but recreational dating, at its best, is foreplay—psychologically and emotionally, if not physically.

Rebekah was twenty-six when she married, and she never had a "boy friend"—never shared any kind of emotional or physical relationship with anyone. Her husband need not be concerned that someday a man may walk up to him and say, "Your wife and I used to be very special to one another." He is her first and only.

Not that she didn't get offers. She had more proposals than fingers and toes. She traveled the world and freely circulated and worked around many men. She was not naive, as are most homeschooled kids. We insulated

our children from within; therefore, as they got older, we did not need to insulate them so well without. They have never been houseplants.

As Rebekah's father, I turned away five or six men before they ever got close to her. She turned down at least a dozen others. In addition, there were three young men, that I would have been proud to have had as son-in-laws, that approached me, asking for Rebekah's hand in marriage. I said to them, "Hey, it is fine with me, but it is her you must convince." But Rebekah never gave any of them the time of day. I am sure that if I had been of the modern persuasion and had started proceedings with the young men, eventually presenting her with my choice, being a dutiful daughter, she would have worked hard to surrender to my choice. But I did not speak to her on behalf of these young men, for I would never disrespect my daughter by commencing an arrangement without her knowledge. If my kids come on hard times in their marriages, I want them to know that it is they

who chose their life's partner, not me.

### **He came seeking a wife**

The man Rebekah married, Gabriel Anast, came to me, wanting to get acquainted with Rebekah. She was overseas at the time, and, without making promises, I invited him to come and work for us in the office—which he did for several months. We got to know him and his family well. I told him that he passed muster as far as I was concerned, but that it was his job to win my daughter's favor. After about six months he moved back to New Mexico without ever meeting Rebekah. Rebekah returned, then left again, and still they did not meet. I thought maybe he had lost interest. After being home for several months, she went to Israel for one year, and it was several months after she returned that they finally met. I had never spoken to Rebekah about his possible interest.

After they met, he began to communicate with her regularly by email and telephone. After several weeks, one night he called to speak to me. By the way he was stuttering and "beating around the bush" I knew it was "another one of those" phone calls. After about two minutes of garbled, random

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irrelevancy, I was certain of his intentions and began to laugh at his stress. He had always been so intellectual and logical. During a break in my laughter, I was able to utter, "Just say it." He said the stupidest thing, "I want to date your daughter." He was 1300 miles away, so I said, "What do you mean?" He answered, "I want to consider her for marriage; Ugh...I mean...I...Ah...do consider her. I mean...Ah, if it is OK with you. What I mean is...Ugh...", and from there it went downhill. I am thankful now that I didn't subscribe to one of those complicated, multi-layered betrothal schemes. He would never have gotten past the first step. He had several friends who have been burnt by the betrothal systems, and he was not willing to go that route.

I finally said, "Look, the two of you are old enough and mature enough to determine the will of God and make up your own minds. If you can get her to agree, you have my blessing." They communicated on the telephone and by email, and warmed a plane

seat a couple times between Nashville and Albuquerque. In a few weeks Rebekah approached me, seeking my permission for her to accept his proposal of marriage. Deb and I consented, and they announced their agreement to marry. They were married four months later, which I considered a rather long engagement.

They made an agreement between themselves to abstain from kissing until after they were married. It didn't seem to have set them back any. As part of the wedding event, I told them that I expected to have a grandkid nine months and one week after the wedding. They didn't disappoint me. They tell me it is due nine months and two or three days after she threw the bouquet. I always taught my children that if it needs doing, don't fool around; get it done—pun intended.

Gabriel was, and remains, her first and only boy friend and lover. That is as it should be. They did all things in truth and honor to God, their families, and each other. We are proud of them and delighted in every way—

looking forward to being grandparents.

### On the scout

In our travels, we have met several young girls or fellows that seemed suitable possibilities as spouses for our children. On occasion I have arranged for my kids to meet prospects, but they usually don't like my pick. The other siblings also get involved seeking a good match for their brothers and sisters. It is a family endeavor. However, the choice does not have to originate with us. The kids can come to us with a choice, and if we think it is appropriate, we assist them.

Our son, Nathan, met his wife-to-be at a missions conference in Texas. He came to us asking if it was all right if he got to know her better. At that early stage, he was not making a commitment to marry. He just didn't want to go in a direction that could lead to marriage unless it was with our approval. He approached her father about coming to visit, and was well received. After she had

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visited with our family and successfully passed “the test,” he asked us if we would approve of his approaching her father about marriage. We readily approved, and he asked her father if he could marry his daughter. I don’t remember the order of events, but I do remember that Nathan had to do extensive home repair and remodeling down in Texas on the Zicheck home, but he eventually got the agreement to marriage.

Until a few weeks before marriage, they were always chaperoned by at least one, usually two or three, of their brothers and sisters. When Deb and I took them out to dinner, we “made” them sit at a table by themselves. We did not guard Rebekah and Gabriel so closely, because they were much older and more mature. But then, living 1300 miles apart, and with a short engagement, they did not have protracted opportunities to

be alone and develop frustrated drives.

### The dating game

The modern concept of betrothal is a long overdue swing of the pendulum away from the licentious practice of recreational dating. The liberties taken by “Christian” couples in the modern dating game would have been viewed as philandering or immoral in former generations.

Most “Christian” young people are “damaged goods.” Church youth groups are hotbeds of immorality. And I am not limiting my evaluation just to those that have copulated. Would you buy a candy bar that had not been eaten, but the wrapper had been partially removed? What if it had not been handled, just displayed in a partially unwrapped condition? Would you buy the candy bar if it had not been eaten, but just

licked? After all, licking by one or more persons would leave the proud, new owner plenty of candy bar to take home for his own.

Let me ask you another question. If you saw your preacher walking through the mall, holding hands and rubbing up against a lady that was not his wife, would you call it sin? Suppose they didn’t “go too far?” Suppose your preacher just needs companionship on the weekend, and likes to spend time with the opposite gender, but is careful to not “go all the way.” Does that make it OK? You say, “But my preacher is married.” What if his wife died, and he was lonely and needed a social life. Would you then approve of his “going out” with girlfriends? I have shocked you haven’t I?

Sin is sin at any age, regardless of one’s marital status. There is

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## WHICH VERSION IS THE BIBLE?

Did you know that when writers or preachers use “the Greek” to correct the K. J. Bible, they are not using the Greek text from which the K. J. was translated? They are using a Greek text invented by two unbelievers in the late 19th century. Did you know that considering all ancient language manuscripts, over 95% of them support the K. J. Bible? Did you know that the reason there are over 200 different English translations, a new “bible” every nine months, translated entirely different from its predecessors, is purely for economic gain? The King James Bible remains the only Word of God to English speaking people.

How could so many “good godly men be so wrong?” Read this 281 page scholarly book and find out. Be ready to lose your innocence concerning the trustworthiness of institutionalized Christianity. Intellectual blindness isn’t confined to the evolutionists.

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not a special dispensation for young people whereby they are at liberty to do what would later be called sin. When a young man kisses a girl, he is kissing someone else's wife. The fact that the kissing and necking occurs before either of them is married does not change the fact that they do not belong to each other. Assuming they do not get married, they are kissing someone else's spouse. And if they do get married, they are marrying someone that did not hold sexual contact sacred enough to limit it to marriage. Distrust and jealousy will follow that marriage.

I am glad to see Christians waking up and seeking to approach marriage and "giving in marriage" in a godly manner. Recreational dating is not for holy people.

### Do we practice betrothal?

Let's go back to the original question as to whether or not we practice betrothal. Several years ago I attended a lecture on betrothal. Since then I have heard quite a few testimonies from those involved in it. Many of you have sent me your favorite book or tape on "betrothal." I have read or listened to all of them and studied the Scripture carefully. We asked for testimonies concerning betrothal, whether good or bad. We received quite a few letters from people that had sour experiences through betrothal, some of them now married. As of the writing of this article, two months after publishing the request, we have not received a single testimony from anyone that practiced it and would recommend it. The short answer is, "No, we do not practice

betrothal." Though I agree with all the assessments as to the problems, and though I agree with much of what is put forward as a solution, we do not practice betrothal as it is defined in the things I have read and heard." We have not adopted a rigid system with superfluous rules, time-frames, pre-defined conditions, and protracted parental meddling. We want the will of God, and it doesn't always come packaged the way we think it should.

It is with great caution and reluctance that I go on record as disagreeing with many of you on this issue. Your cures, in most cases, are far better than the disease, but I am convinced that there are too many side effects from the medicine that is being prescribed. Your cures are overkills.

Betrothal cures have picked up too much nonessential baggage. The systems are weighted down with fine-tuning, and worthy young men are walking away from fine young ladies because they do not want protracted emotional involvement with a girl's father. Nor do they want to make a commitment until they know they are going to have something in common with the girl. The system prevents young people from getting acquainted. Many see betrothal as a fence with but one door, prior commitment, and it is irreversible.

But the most disturbing thing is the way writers have taken their fanciful interpretations and imaginative ideas and attributed them to the Word of God. I have read books and articles that are half Scripture, yet with close examination, nearly every quote proves to

be misapplied or skewed in some way. The Bible clearly defines Christian conduct, which of course applies to the processes of marriage and "giving in marriage," but it does not give us a betrothal plan. If parents and children walk after the Spirit, and the community and family put in place reasonable safeguards to prevent the flesh from running away, God will have the liberty to bring couples together as he sees fit.

### What is Betrothal?

Some of my readers may have no idea what we are talking about when we speak of betrothal. In a moment we will examine the Scripture, but for the present we are limiting our discussion to the current trend that is sweeping the homeschooling movement. There are variations in the views, but basically, betrothal is the idea of arranged marriages. The young people are prevented from having any kind of romantic or emotional relationship with each other until they enter a binding marriage agreement. With this part I fully agree. The engagement (betrothal) usually lasts one year or more, and it is viewed as binding as is marriage itself. They tell us that once one is betrothed it would require a divorce to break it.

The father of the bride, approached by the father of a young man (though it can work the other way), will begin secret deliberations with the young man, writing letters and prepping him for the possibility of marriage. During this time, the young man does not spend time in the girl's presence, and they develop no relationship

at all, no talking on the phone, no letter writing, no gifts, nothing that is boyfriend-girlfriend. The father may conduct this get-acquainted procedure for some time and then cancel it if he thinks it is not best for his daughter. In time, after the father of the bride has meddled in the life of the young man, directing him in altering his person or his lifestyle, and when he thinks they are both ready, he will approach his daughter with the idea of betrothal.

Testimonies recorded in the literature on betrothal speak of how often the daughter is totally surprised as to her father's choice. At first she may be adverse to the idea, but being a dutiful daughter she gives herself the chance to come to terms with the idea. She is allowed to say no, in which case the father tells the young man something to the effect that he just wasted one or more years courting a man twice his age. The father must then wait for a more acceptable suitor to come along and commence arrangements.

But in most cases, ideally, the daughter will surrender to her father's choice. If she agrees, they go through a betrothal ceremony—as binding as marriage—and then, under carefully controlled family settings, the young man and young lady are permitted to get to know one another and begin to develop some kind of feelings for each other. They are never allowed to touch, and the young man is under the constant tutelage of her father. In time the father will give his approval, and they will be married.

Some of the proponents of this system proudly proclaim that they

practice “arranged marriages.” They point to former generations and other cultures to arrive at the conclusion that God has inculcated this knowledge of betrothal in every culture as far back as ancient Babylon and Egypt.

As I said, there are different be-

trothal schemes, and there are all kinds of wild appendages attached here and there by various authors. Some of them are so absurd that they are too embarrassing to laugh at.

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## The wisdom of K. Litchfield

My husband and I have been married for 17 years. We didn't date to find each other. We did not know anything about courtship or betrothal and all the rules. We decided to wait on God to find our mate and God worked in our lives.

My father survived the holocaust as a German/Jew. He became a Christian right after the war, and God showed him he would find his mate for him. God led them to a retreat and they meet there, both knowing they were God's will for each other. He taught us children to trust God for our mate and he saw to it that we did.

When I was almost 19, my parents were at a revival meeting when my future husband sang and testified to God's work in his life. Both my parents knew that Don was the one for me, their daughter. They didn't have a list of requirements that Don had to measure up to, other than he had to be serious about following God—which he was and is! When my parents told me Don was coming to dinner, I already knew he was God's will for me.

At the time, Don had already dedicated himself to wait for God's direction for his wife. He had been in several relationships that had ended with hurt, so he was cautious. When a minister friend mentioned the likelihood that Don and I were meant for each other, he was ready. We began spending time together at my parent's home and we ran errands or had dinner together. Soon we were married.

I believe there is a lot to learn from the guidelines of courtship and betrothal. There is a lot of wisdom there. I don't believe there is wisdom in dating. The concern I have about courtship/betrothal is this: Becoming too concerned with rules—for example the prospective spouse has to be just a certain way, or the process has to move exactly a certain way. God does work in a wide variety of ways. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit supersedes what out human minds can conceive. Yes, it is good to practice the wisdom we know, but we should be so walking with God in our day-to-day lives that if the Lord should direct us in an unusual way, we should be able to hear.

K. Litchfield

One author I read pointed out that he is the one that coined the word “betrothal” and brought it to public light. He starts out by saying that the system he prescribes is “God’s plan.” But then, after taking extensive liberties with the biblical text, he concludes by saying that he does “not know” if the things he has said are the will of God. His plan includes a scheme whereby the couple would be married, but then the daughter would continue to live at home while the father would reserve to himself the right to decide when his new son-in-law could actually come and carry his bride away—could be weeks, maybe months. It is supposed to recapitulate Christ in his betrothal and wedding to his bride, the church. It was pointed out to the listeners how “exciting” this would be for the father. I kept saying to the tape, “Get a life!”

The Bible does indeed offer clear alternatives to the godless sport of dating, but you won’t find them delineated in the Bible under the word “betrothal.” Nor does the Bible support much of the silly trappings now associated with it. If authors and teachers would call the church back to the high standards of the Spirit and Word, the church would benefit. But the creation of a system that seems more designed to indulge parents in a vicarious romance than it is to assure that their children are properly matched is embarrassing at the least.

### Young men react

I have spoken with, and received letters from, many godly young men and some girls and

women that have been hurt by trying the betrothal system. They now avoid any girl or family that professes to practice it. Fine young men that were home-schooled and groomed to be good husbands are avoiding the pool of betrothal advocates and seeking their spouses elsewhere. It is not the purity of it that they are averse to. It is the protracted, blindness of the whole process. They feel they are being asked to make a commitment before they know who they are committing to. Fathers sit and wait on young men like sticky paper for catching mice. Young men are afraid to approach lest they find themselves irreparably snared in some medieval tradition.

I am for anything that maintains the purity of the couple leading up to marriage, but a system that centers around the father of the bride is strange indeed. Real men are not interested in becoming intimate with a girl’s father. They are reserving their emotions for more judicious use—something a little closer to nature.

It is not that these fine young men want to date around and develop recreational relationships. They are mature and do not want to play games with would-be father in laws. They do not want to make a commitment based on sight or hearsay. They would like to get to know a young lady to see if indeed they do have anything in common with her or her family. Mature young men, especially those in the early twenties or later, have too much man in them to want to get emotionally close to a would-be father in law. Some

men are just not into the touchy/feely stuff. They are not willing to endure a prescribed scenario that leaves them courting the would-be father in law for months. And they do not want to get into a marriage where the father in law has delusion of patriarchal rule. When a man gives his daughter away, she is completely under her husband’s authority, and in no sense does she remain under her father. Many betrothal proponents don’t see it that way.

### Properly paired—A good match

I want my children to be matched properly. And I do not think that some of the approaches to betrothal lend themselves well to finding a good match. They assume that the father can apply a few preset criterion, which do in fact rule out all the evils of dating, and that it will result in a good match. I submit to you that there is more to finding the right mate than pairing with someone that is righteous. I do not want my children shut into a betrothal system that prevents them from getting to know a young lady or gentleman before they are called upon to make a commitment. There are many good Christians that, when paired, would make lousy marriages.

### Trust

We have trained our children to understand their natural passions and to distrust their bodily and soulish drives. We have inculcated them with values that qualify them to make wise decisions. I have formed a fence around my daughters, and by their consent I guard them against unworthy suitors. I control the gate. I let young

men that I trust gain social access to my daughters. In a sense, I allow only those that are tentatively approved to pass in review. Out of that small lot of potential suitors, with their parents' guidance, they will seek God and determine their life's partner. Every step will be under our oversight. Again, by their consent only, we hold veto rights. A young man must go through my wife and I to get close to our daughters, but we don't make them sign on the dotted line before they get to know each other.

### Getting to know you...

Parents can be very helpful in bringing objectivity and experience into the process of determining if a young person is a compatible match. But, in the end, it is not parents, but the son or daughter that is going to have to live with this other person for the rest of their lives. Therefore I am firmly convinced that the final decision must rest with the ones to be married, not the parents.

I would never endorse some

form of betrothal that began with parents making the choice, and commencing extensive arrangements, that in time led to the child being presented with the parents' decision. An obedient, trusting daughter would be under significant pressure to accept her father's judgment. My son Gabriel said, "I do not want a young lady marrying me because her father chose me. I want her choosing me because she likes me for who I am." I think that is very wise. My son respects the human rights of others (potential brides) too much to make an arrangement with her father before the girl has had the opportunity to appreciate and respect him as a person.

### Getting to know all about you

Therefore, it is our view that no betrothal should be initiated until both individuals know each other, and the families are well acquainted, and inquiries had been made, and questions asked concerning many areas of likes and dislikes. We are not talking about dating or courtship, but just a time

of getting to know the other person in the context of everyday life. This would not be a time of romance or emotional bonding. They would not be boyfriend and girlfriend. They would not be allowed to visit on the phone or email. They would not be allowed to be alone.

This process occurs naturally in the social environment of church and family. There is no better way to get to know an individual than when playing sports. Do they get mad? Are they selfish? How do they treat smaller children, or the weaker and more inept? How do they act when they get tired or when they fail? Are they arrogant winners, or sore losers? Street witnessing and group singing is another way to observe and get to know the personality of potential spouses.

A young man or young lady should be exposed to many people and so develop a kind of "knowledge of good and evil" concerning personalities and character. Isolation is dangerous when

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**Michael & Debi Pearl published *To Train Up a Child* in August 1994. By November of 2000 over 270,000 English copies had been sold. It has also been translated into several foreign languages, including Ukrainian, Mandarin (Chinese), Portuguese, German, and Spanish.**

This publication came about as a way to answer many questions we receive in the mail each day. The Pearls receive no remuneration from the sale of these books and tapes. This is a ministry operated through The Church At Cane Creek where Michael Pearl is pastor/teacher. The low prices reflect our concern to make these materials available to as many as possible. We give a 38-45% discount on books by the Pearls when purchased in volumes of eight or more. We also make available a limited number of books and videos that we believe will be a great blessing to your family.

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it comes to choosing a mate, for the isolated individual is not choosy enough. Young people discover their own likes and dislikes in social contact with others.

Again I say, this is not a time for the potential couple to get romantic. All concerned will be praying and seeking the will of God. It should not take long for them to determine if they are compatible and suited. If it seems to be the will of God for all concerned, then the young man should approach the father and reveal his intentions. At this point, if the father thinks it is a possibility, he will want to have some serious talks with the young man, laying down guidelines for them to continue to peruse their acquaintance under controlled conditions that allow the possibility of them growing fond of one another.

I am absolutely convinced that young people should never be allowed to consider a mate until they are ready for marriage. Long engagements are filled with pitfalls. Until my daughters are ready to be married, I would not even consider entertaining the prospect of any young man. A young girl or young man will view life differently in just a matter of months. When mature young people do decide to get married, I think they should marry within the month—two or three at the most. It is just my view, based on lots of counseling and experience.

#### **Personal view**

Now I want to communicate a concept that I find difficult to express. It is a personal view and

nothing more. I think I am right, but you must be the judge of that.

**Are marriages made in heaven, or are we left to our own best devices?** God is ready to lead us every step of our lives, and so every event of life, including marriage, can be divinely ordained. But most Christians do not seek and do not receive the blessings of God, and so live a life of second best. Only a few Christians step out by faith and expect God to direct every step. They are never disappointed. Nothing is left to chance to those whose lives are fully dedicated to God.

A person that lives his life by his own best devices and does not get daily guidance has no right to expect anything special when it comes to marriage. If one is not accustomed to hearing the voice of God in his daily routine, and he is living life at its second best, he cannot expect God to interrupt his routine and give him divine guidance when it comes to marriage. How would he know the voice of God when he spoke? How would he get guidance to go to that distant place where his path would momentarily cross with that one mate whom God has cultivated for him? No, he will end up letting expediency and familiarity dictate whom his mate will be.

Yet, God often intervenes on behalf of his children, and, notwithstanding their failure to know his will, he brings them together with the mate he has chosen and prepared. Yes, God can bring about his match through various means, including a prearranged marriage. He can even bring about his choice in the life of two

unsaved individuals. He brings them together in anticipation of the day when they will be saved and in his service.

But I cannot believe that all marriages, not even all Christian marriages, are God's preferred will. I believe most Christian marriages are made on earth by various human endeavors—some wise and thoughtful, and some fleshly and carnal.

However, I do not think God stops working when people miss his first best. He works just as hard and seeks to bless even when we are living God's fourth and fifth best. Second, third, and fourth, best can be wonderful when God is in it. When God made Adam and Eve, he made woman-in-general to be a suitable helper for man-in-general. Any woman is equipped to be a suitable mate to any man, to meet his needs and be his partner and helper—provided they both have the proper frame of mind. But God has special blessings and

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## **Yes, it's OK with us.**

Several people have written asking if it is OK with us if they buy our material and resell it. Absolutely! We encourage you to purchase our materials in volume and resell them at homeschool conventions or wherever your imagination takes you. Some people have found they can supplement their income and have a ministry at the same time. We will also furnish you with a number of newsletters to give away.

guidance for those that seek him. Men seek God on different levels of commitment and expectation. God matches that faith.

Therefore I conclude that very few people will be led, or sovereignly brought, to marry that special person that God has cultivated from birth to be their first and best spouse—a marriage made in heaven. However, most Christians will marry of their own choosing, and God will give them the grace to make something blessed of that union.

### Wrong match?

Those of you who think you married wrong and are now trapped in an impossible marriage, understand, no matter to whom you are married, it is “what God hath joined together,” and should be reverenced as a divine union. God has a thousand ways to put the different pieces together and make a picture-perfect marriage. It is up to you to lay hold of his grace and obey his leading, right where you are, in your present situation.

But we parents want our children to have God’s first and best will. We do not want them to enter a marriage that is going to require all their energies just to make the marriage work. I submit unto you that no system is going to assure us of getting his will. If a father is a man of faith and prayer, with a proven history of discovering the will of God and boldly acting on it, then it would be wise to defer to him in arranging marriages for his sons and daughters. But if a man stumbles through life, experimenting with the will of God, sometimes on and

sometimes off, he should be very reluctant to assume that by following a betrothal plan he is going to assure his children of getting God’s perfect will. A system can keep our children pure, and it can guarantee that they will not suffer from the evils of dating, but it cannot guarantee that they will enter a marriage made in heaven. Only one thing can assure a young man or a young woman of getting the perfect will of God, and that is that they both be faithful disciples of our Lord, practiced in the walk of faith, accustomed to getting divine guidance, people of prayer and faith. Very few Christian young people are of that caliber, as are very few parents.

### God’s gift?

Before we review the Scripture on betrothal, I have one last concern. All betrothal plans start from the assumption that your son or daughter is God’s gift to a fortunate young man or young lady. Everyone adopts cautious and narrow betrothal qualifications as if they had a prize catch, deserving of the best, when in fact less than 5% of the homeschooled, Christian young men and young ladies are “excellent catches.” Let’s face it, most of us are immature and something less than ideal in many areas. If the marriage contract required periodical renewal, and my father in law adopted some of the betrothal standards, I don’t think I could pass all the tests for a continuation of the marriage.

I know of several families with daughters in their late twenties or early thirties that are still waiting for that ideal young man to come along. I know of young people that are now contentedly married,

but before they were married I would never have recommended them as a spouse for anyone. I not only considered them to be poor catches, I didn’t even consider them to be keepers. But somehow, by God’s grace, they found each other, and they made a fine couple. Together they are far more than either of them was apart. Neither of them measured up to any of the betrothal standards, but they do make a good match.

There are all levels and all degrees of people. Nearly everyone needs to get married. Most betrothal plans are designed to serve the cream of the crop, yet adopted by those who are just 2% milk. If the programs stringently applied to the average young person, they may be left to sleep alone.

Everyone wants their child to enter a marriage that is going to elevate them, but marriage is not the time to try to save your child from what he has become. Most people are just average, mediocre. Don’t allow your betrothal plans to place your daughters beyond hurdles that capable young men may be discouraged from leaping. You might not get any grandkids. Or, worse still, your daughters may reject your authority, and when they break out, the young man that is waiting to win their affections may be much less than what they would have chosen if they had maintained open lines of communication with you, their parents. It is very important that young people trust the wisdom of those that are wise. Parents can see pitfalls that young people gloss over. Stick with your high standards, but don’t adopt a high betrothal plan that places your

daughters out of reach. Adopt an approach that will guide your children in maintaining the highest standards and that will lead to them being able to make intelligent and objective decisions based on an informed world view and the leading of the Spirit.

### All scripture on betrothal

Finally, let us examine every passage where the word betrothal appears, and see what the Bible has to say about it. The word is used 13 times in 8 different passages. We have printed every reference found in the Holy Bible (KJV).

### A slave girl purchased for a concubine.

#### Exodus 21:7-11

**7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant,** [In Eastern cultures, then and now, women were treated somewhat as property to be bought and sold as wives, servants, or concubines.] **she shall not go out as the menservants do.** [“go out” means to go free at the end of seven years, as was the law concerning Jews who were slaves to Jews.]

**8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed** [If her owner changes his mind about marrying her, he should immediately allow her to go free (“redeemed”).]: **to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.** [He bought her under promise of marriage, and so cannot now treat her as an ordinary slave to be sold for profit.]

**9 And if he have betrothed**

**her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.** [If the father does not want her as a second or third wife, then he can betroth her to his son. If the son fails to fulfill his promise of marriage, her status as a slave is upgraded to that of a natural born daughter of the man who purchased her for his son.]

**10 If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.** [Economics is the issue here. If she is kept in the household, as a maid servant, the father should give to her the financial security promised to her in the prior agreement to marriage. Since she is a slave, she has no father to receive the bride price, so she receives the financial remuneration that would normally be paid for the privilege of betrothal.]

**11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.** [The owner of the woman has a choice. He can either release her from slavery, to become a free citizen, and that without any redemption price, or if he chooses to keep her as a slave, he must treat her as a daughter, with the same economic advantage she would have had if she had married the son of her owner. But if she remained, she would still be a slave.]

### The economics of fornication.

#### Exodus 22:16-17

**16 And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.** [She is not un-

der contract to marry anyone, and she willingly consents to fornication. If he would take her as a wife, he is under obligation to pay her father the marriage price.]

**17 If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.** [But if the father refuses to allow his daughter to marry this man with whom she fornicated, the man is still under obligation to pay the father the going price for a virgin, for in her tainted condition, she may never marry. The fornication was viewed in terms of its economic

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Dear Pearl Family,

We thank the Lord for you and your ministry. Our family has been greatly blessed by the videotape set we ordered. The other week, two of our sons, ages 8 and 4, were playing a new game they made up. It's called, "What's that for?" They had an old windshield wiper with the blade pulled out—a bit like a whip. One would pretend to do something wrong. The other would step up quietly and give a swat. Then the one 'not doing right' would jump with a smile and say, you guessed it, "What's that for?"

The G family

Children seem to learn more from the videos and tapes than do their parents.

implications. This guaranteed that her father was not defrauded of the bride price that accompanies betrothal. It also discouraged a young man from lying with a girl for temporary pleasure. He would be forced to marry her, and he would have to pay the bride price anyway—which would doubtless be high under the circumstances. Whereas if he had approached the father in an honorable way, he could have negotiated a better bride price.

Fornication with a slave girl that is betrothed does not carry the death penalty as it does with one that is free. (**Deut. 22:22**).

#### **Leviticus 19:20-22**

**20** And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. [Under the social system of that day, a slave (bondmaid) did not have the same rights as a free woman. If a man were to lie carnally with a free woman that was betrothed, they would both be put to death—no recourse. But if the betrothed woman was a slave, then she would just be whipped severely, and the man would not be killed or punished. He would have to offer a sacrifice.]

**21** And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, even a ram for a trespass offering.

**22** And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the

**ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath done: and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him.**

A man that is betrothed is exempt from the draft.

#### **Deuteronomy 20:5-8**

**5** And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

**6** And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

**7** And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. [For any of these three circumstances, where a man had commenced a major endeavor, he was exempted from the responsibility to go to war.]

A virgin that is betrothed is treated as a married woman (put to death) if she is caught in the act of fornication.

#### **Deut. 22:23**

**22** If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

**23** If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

**24** Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. [The betrothed woman is under public contract to be married. As such her legal status is that of a wife. When a man rapes her, the penalty is the same as taking another man's wife.]

**25** But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: [If it is rape, the woman is innocent but the man is put to death.]

**26** But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter:

**27** For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.

If a man fornicates with a virgin that is not betrothed, he can avoid the death penalty by marrying her, but he also must pay the betrothal price to her father, and he can never divorce her, as he could under normal cir-

(Continued on page 13)

Dear Pearl Family,

My wife and I just finished reading your book, "To train up a child," for about the 4<sup>th</sup> time. It has changed the way we look at raising our children. Our first child, Jr., is very compliant, eager to please, and when he was a toddler, a stern look, along with a "No," was usually enough to get the message across. We thought we were doing such a fine job raising him, then along came his little sister.

I've never seen a more strong willed and stubborn child than Ann. The same stern "No" that worked so well with Jr. just brought a smile and a laugh from Ann as she went right back to doing what we had just told her not to. I am reminded of an old movie scene in which the bad guys are trying to torture the hero to get information from him, and they can't break him. When she was 18-month-old she was beating us.

Now that Ann is 2 years old, she is a joy to be around. Instead of begging, bribing, or yelling, we now train. Mama doesn't get upset anymore. We just follow the training guidelines. Everything's not perfect, but we are on the right track. And the children are happier too!

We also have a 6-month-old girl named Amanda who will benefit even more from the wisdom we have received from you. We are also going to home school all our children. Thank you, and may God bless your family.

Your friends in Christ Jesus, The Wright's

## A MIRACLE?

Dear Pearls,

I just borrowed "To train up a child," and I must have my own copy! After just one day, there was an improvement. My mother was a yeller. I became one too, even though I knew it was detrimental to discipline. I struggled to overcome it. It has been 2 weeks since I read your teaching on using a calm voice, and I have not screamed since! This is a major victory in my life.

God even used your book to complete a physical healing in me! Almost four years ago I woke up unable to open my jaw. I suffered from TMJ (jaw disorder) due to stress and strife. The Lord began healing me, allowing me to open my mouth enough to eat solid food. He also removed the daily ear and jaw ache. What was left was stiffness each morning after grinding and clenching my teeth all night and the inability to open my jaw enough to yawn. Still, I was grateful for the healing God provided. After all these years and reading your book, I can yawn and have no stiffness. All the yelling and disobedience in my house caused such strife; my body dealt with it by clenching and grinding at night.

When the yelling stopped and obedience came, the strife left and the completion of my healing came to pass! God is so good! I am thankful for the wisdom the Father has given you in training children and so blessed that you have shared it.

May the Lord bless you richly, Mrs. A

## RADICAL

Dear Mike and Debi,

I was first introduced to your newsletter approximately 6 months ago at a time when I was ready to end my marriage. A friend, who has read your materials for quite some time, sat me down and handed me one of the newsletters with an article that, at that time, was very difficult to read. It was your stand on divorce. Coming from a family with a history of divorce, I had never even heard of such a radical stance as yours, but praise the Lord, God used you and your newsletter to keep me planted in my marriage. Although it has not been easy, God has continued to bring me to the point where I am grateful to you, both for your stance and for your newsletter. I thank God for a friend that was willing to make me hear, and for people like you. I have no doubt that that article was indeed a Godsend, and it couldn't have come at a more crucial time. Just wanted you to know what an impact you've had in my life, and say thank you for being so radical!

In His Love, K. Brown

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cumstances.

#### Deut. 22:28

**28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;**

**29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.** [If a virgin is not under contract, not betrothed, and a man forces her (lays hold on her), or she consents (They were discovered, and apparently she did not cry out), then the man must pay her father the high bride price of fifty shekels of silver. And because he forced her, and was married under threat of death, he is never allowed to divorce her. See Judges 21 where the men of Benjamin were allowed to take wives by force. The women were not allowed a say in the matter.]

#### Deuteronomy 28:30

**30 Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.** [This is a prophecy that the nation of Israel would come under severe and ugly judgment. The man that was under contract to be married would never have the opportunity to lie with the one to whom he was betrothed.]

God will again betroth his divorced wife (Israel)

unto himself.

#### Hosea 2:1-23

**7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; [This woman had left her husband (which typifies Israel and God) and taken up prostitution.] for then was it better with me than now.**

**10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.**

**11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.**

**19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness,** [God will once again betroth the nation of Israel (the estranged wife) to himself by paying the bride price—his death on the cross.] **and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.**

**20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.**

**23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.**

In summary, having examined the 13 uses of the word betroth, in these eight events we have a clear picture of betrothal as used in that

culture. First, notice that neither God nor a prophet, ever gave commandment or stipulated any regulation concerning betrothal itself. Like slavery and multiple wives, it was an indigenous part of that ancient culture, practiced by heathen who were steeped in all manner of sin and idolatry. In the Bible, we find it mixed with slavery, buying and selling females, fornication, adultery, and finally in Hosea betrothal is what a man does when his wife has become a prostitute and he would forgive her and restore her to himself. Except in Deut. 20, where the man is exempted from the draft, and Deut. 28, where God threatens to judge the nation by allowing the enemy to come in and rape a man's wife before he gets a chance to lie with her, all references to betrothal are centered on the economic or moral consequences of violating this contract. The economics of it seems to be the driving force in at least three, possibly four, of the eight passages.

Unless one engages in careful and selective cherry picking, these passages have little to say in regard to the normal processes of marrying and giving in marriage.

We have learned from these passages that in the event of an unbetrothed couple engaging in premarital sex, both of them should be put to death or be forced to marry. Or the father could refuse to give his daughter in marriage and demand that the boy still pay a high bride price for the shame he has caused the girl and the economic loss he has caused the father. That is clear

and Scriptural.

However, if a man seduces a betrothed girl that is a slave, he does not have to marry her, nor does he have to pay any bride price, and he cannot be put to death as would be the case if she were a free woman. He must offer a sacrifice at the temple. His sin was not as great because the slave girl did not have the same value as the free girl. I am not quite sure what we learn from this or how to apply it today. I suppose that to apply this passage, one would have to go live in the countries of the east where slavery and betrothal are still practiced as it was in the heathen cultures of that former day.

We also learned from these passages that if one buys a slave girl for the purpose of marriage, and then decides he will not marry her, he cannot treat her as an ordinary slave. She should be treated as a daughter until the seventh year of release, or she should immediately be released to her freedom. Likewise if the old man decides he will not marry her, but will give her to his son, and after betrothal the son decides he will not marry her either, then if they decide to retain her in the household, they should give her all the economic benefits of one of the man's wives. That would include a house of her own, food, clothes and all necessities and luxuries that the other wives enjoy. This was a great humanitarian law, to protect slaves from abuse.

These passages on betrothal have one more thing to teach us. Men that are engaged to be married should be exempted from the draft.

### No, we do not

You asked, "Do we practice betrothal?" I answer, not the way it is described in the Bible to have occurred in the eastern cultures.

It may trouble some of you that the Bible seems to sanction some very unchristian practices. Remember, the culture in which the patriarchs lived was not of God's making. They lived in a society torn by violence, slavery, idolatry, polygamy, and even human sacrifices. It is there that God found them and began to try to call them out to something more holy. Nothing of their customs was God ordained. It took God 2,000 years to wean his people away from most of their ungodly culture and instill some of his own values. He did not place a heavier burden of revelation on any given generation than they were able to stand. Slavery and the selling and buying of girls for marriage was an ugly part of that godless world. In time, the light of God drove those practices into oblivion, where they belong. The practice of arranged marriages has always had in view economic and social elevation. It was never instituted as a way of producing a godly heritage.

Neither God nor his prophets ever revealed or sanctioned any betrothal practices. It was not part of the law or the civil code handed down through Moses. The church never received commandment, nor was there a reference as to the form for taking a wife.

However the New Testament is quite clear as to the conduct of a young man and young lady before marriage. "**Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto**

**me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:1-2).**" That is something you can teach your young people to put into practice.

### God's marriage plans

The Bible does not give us a cut and dried method for taking a wife. Isaac was betrothed for the length of time it took to run from a camel to the nearest tent. His marriage ceremony was attended by two. He was the groom, the best man, and the officiating minister. Rebekah gave herself away, said, "I do," and instead of walking down an aisle, she went to bed. That was it. They didn't appear in public long enough for anyone to comment on "what a nice couple they make."

If one wants to create a program to be followed in taking a wife, or in giving your daughter in marriage, that is perfectly fine, but let us be honest with the Scripture. You can call it betrothal, and you can give it any kind of twist you like, but don't call it "God's plan for taking a wife." If God wrote a book of great length and did not choose to give a rigid order for taking a wife, let us not put words in his mouth nor pretend that our words are Scripture.

### Out on a limb

Dear reader, I have gone out on a limb with the things I have written in this article. This is new water that has not been tested to any extent by any of us. One of the major writers and speakers on betrothal has never gone through the experience with any of his

Dear Pearls,

I have read your books, listened to your tapes, and read your newsletters. I have cried and prayed. Every time I attempt to train with a joyful countenance, I fail! I am bossy, rude, belligerent, selfish, and crazy about my kids. I stress and strain my kids with my behavior. I holler and scream like those men do in boot camp. I am the grown up "Sue." I hate me and wonder how God loves me. I can't train my kids because I can't train me. Help me get the "Sue" out of me. I am desperate for my girls to see Jesus in me.

Monster mom



#### ANSWER

Dear Monster mom, I suspect you are harder on yourself than you are on your girls. Do you take personal offense, so as to get mad enough at the girls to scream at them? Go back and think about this. They are in training. They are learning how to read, they are learning how to pick up their clothes, they are learning how to answer when addressed. You can't be mad at someone who is working on learning. So far, the things they have learned is what you have taught them. Parents who stay stressed stay exhausted. Children who stay stressed can't think clearly and are usually poor learners or nervous. I had a friend years ago that talked about people all the time. She hated herself for her spiteful talk, and hated the way people dreaded her tongue. She hated her habit so badly that she decided to start singing "Praise God, he is able to deliver me" every time she even thought about saying something underhanded about someone else. She broke herself of the habit, and God has the glory even to this day.

Try that.

Deb

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young children. Our views may change. In time, if the Lord taries, all our views will moderate in some direction. We will find equilibrium. We all want the same thing. We want our children to reverence God and marry in the Lord with honor and purity. We want to see our children escape the sick customs of the modern church and enter a marriage that will last for eternity. We want to see the flesh put in subjection and truth triumph.

I am sorry to have to criticize the views of other sincere and godly men. I am sure I will get some of my own back. All shifts in doctrine or practice must go through a period of argument and counter argument until we have examined all views and sifted our beliefs. I do not claim to have the last word, but I felt it was time to throw my dog in the race and bring some balance. There you have it. May God guide us into all truth—for the sake of our children. ☺

# THANKFULNESS

Dear Pearls,

I have so much enjoyed your books and tapes that I would like to order 10 copies of "To train up a child." I have found a new gift to give to others. Our Father has given us so many gifts in addition to the Bible and His Son. Your ministry is one of those gifts!

I grew up in over 10 homes. My "parents" divorced when I was 8. Even though my "Dad" was not my biological father, I never would have known it except that someone told me. But since he had no legal claim to me, once the divorce was final, there was no contact, for many reasons.

My mother "suffers" from paranoia, schizophrenia, and manic-depression (BI-polar). She mostly "suffers" from selfishness and childishness.

During my "travels," I was sexually abused more than once, mentally and emotionally abused repeatedly, neglected, used, and slightly physically abused! No one wanted me, once they had to deal with the "baggage." Sadly enough, "family" did most of this.

I became very selfish and didn't even realize it. I focused on school and getting myself away from this. I was going to be better, and show them a thing or two!

I was well on my way - good grades, great friendships, a job etc. Then I became interested in boys. With no example, guidance, or LOVE, I strayed into dangerous and evil territory. I then began to drink, and drink, and drink!

Then I got saved and I began a journey of healing. There was a lot of pain, crying, sleep, reading, praying, and trips to church and to Bible studies. It has taken 10 years to come to where I am now. I love myself, because "He first loved me!"

My marriage is getting better every day. I am letting go of anger, bitterness, pain, selfish ambition, guilt, self-pity, and so much more. The Lord is setting me free every day!

Then your newsletter arrived at my house one day. I have no idea how! Actually, I do - He loves me!

I read some of your books and listened to the homeschool tape. I prayed for strength and guidance, and He gave it!

I am now a daily Bible reader and faithful prayer! We homeschool our children with so much fun and learning! (Using no real curriculum) We attend church every chance we get. We volunteer as much as we can, but the greatest accomplishment recently is training our children. They are so happy and loving, yet if they find a piece of candy, they will ask if they can have it! They are obedient in public, and they work around the house as if it is what they want more than anything.

We still have a long journey, but one that I look forward to with peace. I now have the security and love that I so longed for, and it all came from having a repentant heart, following through with it, being humble and giving it to God, and striving everyday to be close to Him! He gives us this!

He has used you! Thank you! I will pray for you and help to spread the light!

With Love, CM

## ANSWER

Dear CM,

Tears burn my eyes as I read of your thankfulness. If I had only one thing to teach moms, it would be thankfulness. It is the key to a happy marriage, it is the thing that brings the light to a child's life, and it is the fruit of believing God is good and just. I want to always be found thankful. Thank you for reminding us.

Deb

# From behind bars

Mike and Debi Pearl:

Hope this letter finds you both well and standing as always on the promises of our Lord and Saviour. As for me, well, I am just now getting a settled in to my new residence. After all the years I've done behind the walls and fence, God has surely blessed me to be able to go out and do some physical work. I've been assigned to Natchez Trace State Park and Pickwick State Park a few miles from Mississippi.

Brother Mike, you told me before I left CCA that you would help with some gospel tracts, books, and tapes. I have the tapes on John, but none of the rest.

I've spoken with our chaplain, and he advised me that you could send all the tapes, tracts, and books you wanted, however, they must go through his office. I spoke with him in an effort to allow you some time to come and preach and teach. The men and I sure are praying that you'll consider this and pray about it. This camp is in need of your ministry.

I sure do miss Saturday mornings, but God will see me through, whatever I face here. Brother and sister Pearl, there are only a hand full of men here that I feel are God fearing Christians. We pray together at night and rejoice in what benefits God has supplied to us each day. Brother Mike, we surely can use some books on Revelation, By Divine Design, and Repentance. We are allowed to even pass out Gospel tracts when we go out in the community. We had a few last week and placed them on the windshields of the cars as we walked past. If one person would take time to read them and believe on Jesus as Lord and Savior—angels will rejoice in Heaven.

I've also enclosed a list of names that I would like to add to the mailing list if possible. I've put my new address on there as well. I am still active with singing and playing. God has truly blessed me, and I can only pray that He will continue to keep the doors open for the opportunity to sing praises unto Him, that He be glorified, and the name of Jesus be exalted for ever and ever. Amen.

Please tell the brothers at CCA that I truly miss their fellowship and worship time together. Let them know that although I'm gone in the flesh from their presence that I pray for them daily that God will continue to teach them and they will strive for the mark of an overcomer.

All of us here at Wayne County Camp are praying for your ministry and your family. Please say hello to your family and keep us posted as to Sister Rebekah.

Well, I must close for today. I want you both to know that you have been a tremendous blessing to me. I thank God for your devotion and love for the oppressed. I look forward to seeing you again, if not in this life, then when we all get to Heaven and in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.

Dewayne

Dear Brother Pearl, Thank you so much for the Romans teaching tapes. I was in the Mormon cult for seven years. By God's mercy and grace He plucked me out of that darkness and planted me in His light. I have had a lot of false teaching in my head. God's Word finally makes sense to me now. Wow, I rejoice in His goodness. My heart is overwhelmed by His love for me! My three little children thank you; they will never walk in insecurity in Christ Jesus as I did!

God Bless you! Kay

Please continue your work. This is what I needed, as I was brought up and taught to use the rod, but it was mostly used in anger. I was taught to be cheerful and happy, but only outside the home. Once at home everyone was angry, overworked, irritable, lied, hit, and degraded—only to mention a few. Thankfully, I married a kind, considerate, firm husband.

God bless you, L & J

# Breaking the bondage of shyness and fear

Shoshanna was shepherding two small children the other day and noticed that when the little fellow, nearly three years old, asked for something, he reverted to baby talk with a whine. His parents often ignore his requests until he resorts to pitiful baby talk, at which time they are provoked to respond. So, when he is making a request, he has learned to bypass the preliminaries and get down to language that moves people to pay attention to him—baby talk.

When he came to Shoshanna with a request for water, his body language changed. He slumped and swayed as if in a near fainting condition; his head rolled and hung to the side. He pulled on her dress, and when he spoke, his speech was slurred and babyish. He said, "I una dink a wotta." She asked, "What did you say?" He repeated, "I onna dink a watta." With no emotion, and a slight note of rejection in her voice, Shohanna said, "I am sorry, I cannot understand you when you talk like that. You will have to speak plainly." She sounded as if she was giving him one last chance to make an intelligent request before she turned to more important matters. He straightened up a little and tried to speak more plainly. When she saw that he was making a sincere attempt to act his age, she took that for compliance and helped him by asking, "Are you

saying you want a drink of water?" Her accent was decidedly English, overly articulated. He watched her mouth stretch into the different shapes as she carefully pronounced the words, and he understood what she wanted him to do. He tried it and was much clearer in his speech. All the slump and drag went out of his body language as he tried to imitate her dignity. Without further ado, she turned to give him his drink of water.

This is a good opportunity to point out something that is easy to miss but so very important. Note that when the little fellow made a sincere effort to change his tone and conform to her leading, Shoshanna immediately gave him his request. She did not take that opportunity of compliance to lecture him on the importance of speaking correctly. He had taken responsibility to yield to her leading, to rise above slovenly habits. If she had rewarded his correct response with a reproving face and brief lecture about speaking correctly, all her efforts would have been in vain, for a three-year-old child has a very short attention span—about three or four seconds. He cannot see the relationship between two events that are separated by thirty seconds, but when two things happen together, the child relates them to each other. It only takes one touch on a hot surface for a child to

make the correlation and not touch it again, but if the pain had a thirty-second delay, the child would never make the connection. He would keep touching it and keep getting burned.

If Shoshanna had delayed giving him the water and returned his compliance with a frown and a lecture, the closest thing to his proper speech would have been her negative reaction, so he would have associated her negative response with his actions and concluded that she did not want him to speak plainly. After all, he spoke like an adult and she immediately frowned and punished him with a lecture that lasted fifteen seconds. His shoulders would have slumped and he would have returned to his immature mental state with the baby talk. Instead of making an association between grown up talk and getting water, he would have made an association between his baby mentality and getting the water. Next time he wanted water, he would affect his pitiful, broken demeanor and speak like he did when he was two years old, and everyone rushed to serve him.

Children are what you make them. You can make them shy, withdrawn, weak, and emotionally disturbed, or you can make them stable, intelligent, socially balanced, and confident.

Don't buy the line that brokenness or weakness is inherited personality. It is all in the kind of example you lay down and how you respond to them. Remember the rule, "Affirm all positive behavior and make all negative behavior unrewarding."

In our travels we meet many families. I was visiting in a home where a little boy about thirty months old was playing. I looked at him and made a friendly gesture. He jumped up and ran to bury his face into his mother's skirts. She petted him and very lovingly said, "You are shy, aren't you." He squirmed deeper into her understanding embrace, eyeing me accusingly. This little fellow has a sister about four years old, who is also very "shy." Her parents explain her emotional spells, patting her on the head and saying, "She is a very emotional child."

She was playing on the floor with another small child. When it came time to go, they were told to put the toys back in the box. Her smaller companion began to clean up, but this little girl responded to the command by looking pitiful and fretful. Eventually she retreated into quiet fretfulness, not picking up the toys. All eyes turned on her parents to see what would happen. True to form, her mother and father joined together to explain their child's behavior, "She is a very emotional child; she gets upset easily." And that was it. They have no idea that their sweet little girl is going to hate them when she is fourteen. She will be angry and resentful. They will sigh and say, "I will be glad when she gets married; she is a bad influence on the other children."

Now learn another lesson. When you label a child's unpleasant behavior with a name like shy, emotional, or fearful, you legitimize it. Every time you explain

that child's behavior with a defining word, you confirm him as broken, and in so doing, relieve him of the responsibility to act differently. I could take a perfectly stable child and make him shy or fearful within a week. I would watch for the smallest sign of fear or shyness, and respond by placing a loving hand on the child's shoulder, smiling my most understanding and healing smile, and sympathetically explain his behavior as fear or shyness. The child would cuddle up to me for comfort and I would offer assuring words of concern. After three such experiences the child would get the message loud and clear, "I am a fearful child; I need love and understanding; let me go find something that makes me afraid."

The child would come to recognize the power this "handicap" afforded him, and he would begin to use it as a means to avoid unpleasant situations and to dominate others. When he didn't want to pick up toys, he would be confused and fearful. When someone invaded his space and competed for his mother's attention, he would reject them with symptoms of shyness.

Just as you could do reverse training on a child, causing him to manifest any symptom of weakness, conversely, you can make a weak child strong within the week. Parents get into ruts that perpetuate negative behavior in their children. The rule is, "Make all negative behavior unpleasant and make all positive behavior profitable."

Parents excuse behavior by calling it personality. Personality is a

starting point, not a boundary.

Now there are some children that are truly afraid. We are not talking about those who are absolutely terrified of danger, whether real or imagined. That is another matter and is very rare. We are talking about the social response of fear or shyness that causes the child to retreat to his mother's security. Without lecturing or spanking the child, you can end this negative behavior.

When Johnny shows shyness or social fear, attempting to withdraw into your embrace, never hold him or reassure him. When he gets behind you, push him away and say something remote and indifferent like, "Don't get behind me, go play." Express mild disapproval in your facial features and the tone of your voice. Never protect the child who wants to emotionally nurse. Never affirm his feelings by assisting him in his expressions. Indicate the kind of response you want, and brag on the child's strength and boldness. As you shove him back into the public, briefly state that he is "a big boy now, and big boys don't act like that."

Strength never comes by showing understanding for the weakness. Fear is not overcome by dealing with the fear; it is overcome by DOING the fearful thing. You overcome fear by facing the tiger with your fear and discovering that you can walk away alive. In time you laugh at the tiger, for it was only paper. But if your child flees from the tiger, and you call it fear and then offer sympathy or protection, you legitimize

the child's fear and the paper tiger gets bigger and more threatening every day. If you treat the paper tiger with indifference, the child will feel the same. Wild animals learn what to be afraid of and what to tolerate by watching their parents. What do you want, a pitiful, weak child, cowering for comfort, or a tiger tamer? You will make the child into the image of your own responses. ☺

Dear Pearls,

I just wanted to say thank you. The Oct 99 issue had an article about abusive husbands. It arrived at my house 2 days after my husband was arrested for assaulting me. This was the second time, and the second time he went to jail. He is now a recovering alcoholic, and after 10 months of separation we are now back together. There is still a long way to go, but your article helped me see my areas of wrong doing and encouraged me that I had done the right thing in letting the law deal with him. He is now sober and is working at a better job, he has more pride in himself in a good kind of way, and his self-esteem has been lifted. It was a hard road to travel but I am thankful that God used you to encourage me.

Dear Pearls, As a 73-year-old grandmother of 34 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren, I truly enjoy your publication No Greater Joy. My husband and I married 54 years ago and are blessed with good health and six wonderful children who honor and love us. I would like to add married grandchildren to your publication list. Sara

The following note comes from a family that sent money for the John tapes, telling us that they were using money they had set aside to buy a new dryer. Seeing they were making such a sacrifice, we included the Romans and Ephesians series. We got the following note in response.

Thank you for donating the teaching tapes on Romans and Ephesians. And guess what else—after we used Momma's dryer fund money to buy the child training video, Grandma went and bought us a dryer! D & L

# NEW

No book is more needed in our day than the book of Galatians. Learn why Biblical Sabbath keeping, whether it be Saturday or Sunday, is not the will of God. The movement to adopt Jewish culture, dress, worship, music, and doctrine is a wholesale denial of Jesus Christ. Many are "falling from grace." Don't be among them.

**Six tapes in a vinyl  
album \$18.00**

**Before you write,** seeking answers for your own unique issues, read the two books: **No Greater Joy Volume One & No Greater Joy Volume Two.** In them you will find over 200 pages of answers to questions we received in the mail between 1994 and 1998.

# Overall Training

Dear Michael and Debi Pearl,

First, thank you so very much for your books, tapes, and all you do to share that which the Lord has shown you regarding the raising of children. We received the book "To train up a child" when our first child was only 2 months old. He is now 3 years old, and we have an 11-month-old daughter as well. How much joy the Lord has brought to our family through implementation of the principles you explain! It is so clear how happy our children are when they are obedient, and how unhappy they are when they are constantly trying to "win." We are so thankful that the Lord has designed it such that His ways are not only peaceful and helpful to the parents, but also are life to the children as well!

In one of your past newsletters, you asked for examples of child training that you could use. I have enclosed a separate little story of a lesson we went through not quite a year ago.

Thank you again for your faithfulness. May God bless you and draw you closer to Him in every way possible.

Love in Christ, Andrea

## Andrea Writes

**A**t 2 ½ years old, my son decided that he did not like to wear overalls. One morning I had put out some sweat pants for him, but needed a shirt. Opening his drawer and reaching down below for one, Timmy saw overalls sitting on top and assumed that I was reaching for those. He immediately howled "Nooo, I don't like those!" and started to cry. Fits are pretty rare in our house, so I was dumbfounded for a moment while I tried to figure out what was going on. I felt unsure as to what to do. Once I realized that his overalls were the culprit, out they came. With a couple of switches to calm him down, I asked, "Do you ever get what you want when you fuss?" "No" "Well, because you fussed, you must wear these

now." He started to protest, but a sting on his leg reminded him. Once calmed down again, I dressed him and explained that I had not intended to get the overalls, but because he fussed, he had to wear them now. I then led him to practice the proper way to have asked for different clothes.

That particular day is the day appointed for cleaning, and he got wet and dirty "helping" me. While he cleaned the bathtub, I went into his room for some new clothes. As I opened his drawer, I saw another pair of overalls, and I knew what I had to do. With a deep breath and a prayer, I laid them out for him to put on after his bath. After drying him off, when we came into his room, he was carefree until he saw the

overalls. He stopped dead in his tracks and looked like he was going to work himself up and hyperventilate. He began, "No, I don't ...," and then he caught his breath, tilted his head to the side, and said with a smile, "May I wear something different please. I don't like those." My heart leaped. I praised him for asking so nicely, but explained that he needed to wear them this time. He handled it well.

That night I told my husband about the lesson. "Well, you know what you have to do now, don't you?" he said. "What?" I asked, not sure I wanted to hear. "Tomorrow, when he gets up, you have to have overalls for him again." Ugh. The next day we were going out, and I don't like dealing with overalls in public restrooms. But he was right. This time we decided that if Timmy asked nicely without fussing, then we would allow him to wear something different. I prayed he would have self-control. And he did! Next morning, he eyed those overalls, and I could see the wheels turning, "Please no," he finally said, "I don't like those." "Oh," I replied, "Thank you for telling me so calmly and nicely. Would you like to wear something different this time?" "Yes, Please," he answered with a smile that could have made me cry. We have since made sure that we revisit the overalls, sometimes requiring him to wear them and sometimes not, but he has maintained self-control. And believe it or not, he even requests them at times!

Thank you,  
Andrea Hahn

# Husbands, Love Your Wives

Husband, learn how to sanctify your wife and cleanse her of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes.

You have the power to bring your wife into the fullness of all that God intended.

**NEW**

Wife, learn the freedom of honoring and ministering to your man. You can help him become all that God intended.

Two video tapes – \$18.00

# Wives, Honor Your Husbands

Michael Pearl teaches from the Word of God on Husband and Wife relationships.

Our missionaries are going forward in faith. T. J. continues to make speedy progress in translating the Scripture in a country where missionaries are not allowed and Christians are persecuted. He has several nationals working under him. They had a scare last month from the hostile government, but God delivered them.

Steve and Margaret are continuing their ministry in Cambodia, and Tom and Kathy have expanded their prison ministry in Bangkok, Thailand. We have been sending Bibles, books, and tapes to assist the prisoners in study. Some of the buildings now have more than 50 active believers. The church is alive and growing in the prisons of Bangkok. They now have two full time workers going into the prisons with them, five days of the week. This is a very fruitful ministry. If you are a soul winner and would like to visit that ministry, contact us.

Join our new email list and when we add the latest newsletter to the site, we will notify you by email.

**Website Address:**

**<http://NoGreaterJoy.org>**

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