



Volume 10, Number 11

# The Family Friend

*A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.*

November, 2008

## Challenges Facing a Retired Couple

If things proceed as currently planned, we will both be completely retired within the next two months. Ann spent more than forty years as a nurse before health problems sent her into retirement. Norman just celebrated his 73rd birthday and within the next few weeks will complete 51 continuous years of service on ministerial staffs of several churches in various capacities.

Are we looking forward to it? Yes and no. We are faced with new challenges, new opportunities, and new fears. For us, it means a change of residence, a change of schedule, and a long walk into the unknown. In this article, we want to identify some of the challenges we face. Perhaps some of our readers have faced some of the same challenges and met them successfully. If so, we will appreciate you input. As we see it now, our challenges include:

♦ **Learning how to live on less income.** When Norman went into partial retirement a few years ago, he received a

note from our friend, Dale Smith. Dale said, "Retirement is great if you don't starve." Many retired people are trying to make it on social security alone, which was never intended to supply all of our economic needs. According to the US Census Bureau 12.3% of the population lives below the poverty level. While we don't expect to live below the poverty level, we can expect our wallets to be thinner.

♦ **Boredom.** An internet blogger wrote, "There are 3 things you can't escape in life: 1) death 2) taxes 3) boredom in marriage." The temptation to settle into long established routines increases with retirement. While one can find books, and internet suggestions with titles like "Keeping Marriage Alive After Fifty" we're still looking for the one titled "Keeping Marriage Alive After Seventy." It's tempting to think there are no new challenges, no new goals, no new adventures to be experienced. When individuals stop growing, so do their relationships. Instead of being the golden years, they become frustrating years.

♦ **Life Changes.** Joanne Austin of Washington State University Cooperative Extension noted, "Never before have so many couples been married long

enough to experience such a variety of life-changes that occur in the later stages of marriage." Amazingly, people seem to be the most resistant to change at this age. Why do we need Blackberries? No, we're not talking about the fruit that grows on a prickly vine? We think we can survive just fine without learning how to text. Why do we keep thinking that everything new is better? We reluctantly gave up the car we've driven for the last seven years (after somebody ran into it). Now we've got a rougher riding, less comfortable automobile. Don't tell us that all change is good. But it also makes us wonder just when will we have to give up driving. We're already faced with giving up home ownership, and living in smaller quarters. It's not that we have a right to all these things, but these changes require adjustments, and it's a challenge. We've also got to figure out how we adjust to the change of spending a lot more time together.

♦ **Health Concerns.** In our case it means changing physicians, health care providers and supplementary insurance. All that's going to cost more even as income goes down. On top of that our bodies continually remind us that we are in a state of slow

physical decline. We tire easily, and things like respiratory infections seem to have a lengthier recovery time.

**Changes in Our Physical Features.** Long ago we learned an old folks' song that includes the following lyrics:

*My face is a well-written page, Maggie,  
As spray by the white breakers flung,  
But to me, you're as fair as you were, Maggie  
When you and I were young.*

That's somewhere between a lie and self-delusion. One pundit put it this way, "At my age, a mirror is a lethal weapon." I (Norman) am not the man that Ann married. While I never was a candidate for a leading role in movies, there was a time when I had smoother skin, more hair, and fewer pounds. I (Ann) am not the woman Norman married. I was a lot thinner, no gray hair and have the need for a lot more Mary Kay creams to keep my skin smooth and not wrinkled. (In my case, that is called vanity). I keep telling myself that I just want to stay attractive for the wonderful man I married. Our challenge is to learn how to accept and even admire these changing physical characteristics.

◆ **Maintaining our Spiritual Growth.** It's easy to become smug, and think you've gained all the spiritual knowledge and achieved all the spiritual formation you can reasonably accept to accomplish in this life. Our challenge is to remain in a growth mode until our eyes close in death. As long as we're together we

have the opportunity to reinforce our mutual growth as God's children. As Paul said, "*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

We're not sure how we're going to adjust to these challenges. We can't anticipate what they'll all be. Perhaps we'll build bridges that we never have to cross. Perhaps we'll need someone to throw us a lifeline when the bridges collapse. We don't know. What we do know is that we have each other and this moment in time, and we're going to hold on to each other. If we'll just be willing to let God work, things will turn out well for us in the end. You might want to check back with us in a few years, if we're still kicking, to see how well we're doing.

**Norman and Ann Gipson**  
**—Via All About Families**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Research Shows Parenting Approach Determines Whether Children Will Become Devoted Christians.** The Barna Group, a research group studying cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, has just released data demonstrating the importance of parenting. The research looked at the three dominant parenting approaches in America today. They were: *Parenting by default*—the path of least resistance, *Trial and error parenting*—the process of experimentation and improvement based on success and failure, and *Revolutionary parenting*—taking God's word on life

and family at face value and applying those words faithfully and consistently.

Perhaps the most startling difference in these approaches has to do with outcomes. "Parenting by default" and "Trial and error parenting" enable parents to raise their children without the effort of defining their lives. Revolutionary parenting, based upon faith in God, makes parenting a life priority defined by intentionally facilitating a faith-based transformation in the lives of their children.

The results of what Barna calls *Revolutionary parenting* in the lives of children were as follows:

1. Knowing, loving, and serving God as a top priority.
2. Described their faith in God as being of highest importance.
3. Contend that absolute moral truth exists and is defined in the Bible
4. Believe that their main purpose in life is to love God with all their heart, mind and strength.
5. Are currently active in a vibrant church, as demonstrated by their consistent engagement in worship, prayer, Bible study, and spiritual accountability.

George Barna's statistics show what we know to be true. God's word is true and powerful. —Larry Snow

Barna, George. *Revolutionary parenting*. Tyndale House, 2007. (Limited footnote information available.)

—via Maryville Messenger

