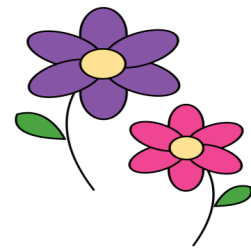


# The Family Friend



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

Volume 18, Number 4

April, 2016

## **Enabling**

The rebellious son in Luke 15 was ready to change his attitude and actions when he found himself in a pig pen because of his own willful sinful actions. This was also a result of his godly father not enabling him in his irresponsible and sinful behaviors. His father could have easily changed his expectations and standards to accommodate the son, but instead he refused to enable his son in order to keep him at home. Instead he set boundaries, then waited for his son to come to his senses and own the responsibility for his own actions. Then the father showed compassion and forgiveness when he returned.

An enabler is a person who recognizes that a bad and sinful behavior is occurring on a regular basis and yet continues to enable—or rescue without consequence—the individual, allowing them to continue in their detrimental and sinful behaviors.

The outcome of enabling is that it creates an atmosphere in which children of any age, can comfortably continue their unacceptable and sinful behavior with no real consequences here on earth. Enabling often starts out unintentionally as parents attempt to quickly rescue the child before any

negative repercussions arise from the child's objectionable behavior. Enabling can take on many forms. For example a 12 year old continually forgetting to take their lunch box to school or a healthy adult child living in your basement because they are unwilling to work. Each needs to be taught that behaviors have consequences. The 12 year old may have to go hungry for a day. The adult child will have to learn that every healthy adult needs to be productive in society. Freeloading needs to stop and being a provider is required. This may require the adult child to get a job and their own place to live. These examples may be quite benign in that no one gets hurt.

But there is a much more serious enabling going on in society today and it could likely affect members of the church. There are sins between two people that have real consequences, not only here on earth, but for eternity as well. Premarital sex runs rabid in our society being condoned in films, on TV, and sadly by most in society. But that activity ought not to be found in the church of our Lord. But more horrifying is finding parents that will condone such ongoing sinful behavior by providing birth control or condoms. When were we taught that preventing the consequences of sin is acceptable while ignoring the eternal consequences of sin (an

eternity in Hell)?

Some will say they are not condoning these sinful acts, but just avoiding the possibility of a child being conceived. More often than not, the real excuse is avoiding the embarrassment to the parents and negative stigma on their daughter. God does not want us to prevent consequences in order that we may continue sinning. Premarital sex consequences may result in being kicked out of school, or interrupting an education, painful childbirth, guilt, shame, motherly care of the newborn, changing dirty diapers, and a myriad of other consequences. I remember a phrase of long ago, "If you want to play, you have to pay".

When parents continue enabling their children allowing these behaviors to occur, a pattern in behavior becomes set and will be hard to change. Enabling can unintentionally be encouraging or condoning the sinful behavior by the enabling parent.

In order for children to overcome unacceptable and damaging behavior, parents must stop allowing their children to continue in those behaviors. Establish clearly defined boundaries and enforce those boundaries consistently. Consistent enforcement means both father and mother must follow through on the enforcement at

all times. It is never helpful to allow someone to continue in unacceptable and sinful behaviors.

Jack D. Cronk, via Mt. Juliet, TN newsletter

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## “Know who you are—and whose you are—before you commit to ‘till death do us part’”

Recently a man that fairly often shares morning coffee with me casually reported that, after he had been married 22 years with a grown daughter, he and his wife divided everything evenly and went their separate ways.

This seemed no surprise to anyone at the table but me. My parents were married 64 years. My wife’s parents were married 49 years. Most of my friends have been married decades.

When I looked at my plan for columns this year, I wondered if I wanted to write about marriage near the first anniversary of my wife’s death. I wondered only briefly because I remain as committed to the importance of marriage as ever.

Since the late 1960s, I have regularly been honored by former students who ask me to perform their weddings. I have never been a marriage counselor, but I have been a careful observer of that complex and meaningful relationship.

When two people stand before God, family and friends to make vows concluding with “Till death do us part,” they need to know who they are. A strong marriage can only develop when two people know themselves.

Each person needs to be old enough and have had enough experiences to understand the potential for their lives. A whirlwind romance may be exciting and passionate, but it may keep a couple from knowing as much about each other to be certain they can live up to those traditional vows, which I still think have great merit.

As I reflect on the challenge of spending a lifetime together, I am sure that nothing is more important than each person’s commitment to understanding the heart and mind of the other. We are all very different, and we are all growing, changing. What is true of a person one year will change over time. Keeping up with the spiritual, physical and personality changes in a spouse is not easy, but vital. It means never taking each other for granted. Four centuries ago Shakespeare observed:

*“Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediment. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove: O, no! It is an ever-fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken; ... Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks within his bending sickle’s compass come; love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom.”*

In this sexually charged society, many young people believe that sexual satisfaction is the chief measure of a relationship. I recently heard a noted sex therapist counsel that couples should determine sexual compatibility early in a relationship because if other aspects of a relationship are more established, leaving the relationship becomes difficult.

I have no doubt that God

Published Monthly by  
Calvert City church of Christ

approves of satisfying sex, but I don’t believe it is the measure of a relationship.

I believe that each person should ask the question, “Will this person help me live closer to God and eventually live eternally in heaven?” I don’t think this is a one-discussion issue. Couples should explore their thoughts and feelings long enough to be sure they are on the same page.

I also believe that couples should talk about parenting. My wife, Joyce, and I both knew we wanted children, and we were satisfied with that. But when our children came, we discovered we were miles apart. Joyce, who was probably the most obedient person ever, had parents who were very strict and controlling. My parents began treating me as an adult as early as I can remember.

I am really happy that most couples today go for marriage counseling. The process begins the open discussion and communication so important to building a healthy relationship.

“Till death do us part” is a serious commitment and can make life joyful, happy and shared.

—Baily McBride, *Christian Chronicle*, March, 2016

