

The Family Friend



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

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From a Preacher, to the Moms and Dads of Small Children

I've thought about this a lot lately. During our quiet time at the beginning of worship (or during communion or while I'm preaching), I often hear the sounds of kids: giggling, whining, squirming, playing, fussing.

And I love it.

I hope you know how much we appreciate you, and how thankful we are that you're bringing your kids to church. It's stressful for you, I know, trying to wrestle one, two, three, or more kids throughout a worship service and keep them somewhat civilized. I wasn't usually much help to my wife, of course (being otherwise engaged), but I remember how difficult it was for her when our four kids were small. One of them (I won't say which one) almost made us reconsider our position on demon possession!

I've been to churches where you don't hear noises from kids, and it's almost al-

ways a bad sign about the future of that church. I've heard stories of preachers from years ago who got irritated when kids would make noise during their sermons, and I couldn't disagree more. Let me say this—as a preacher, I love the sounds of babies crying during sermons, because I know what that means. It means you're here, and it means that you care enough about Jesus to struggle with an eighteen-month-old for what seems like forever.

I've heard of church members in some places who frown at moms and dads who can't keep their kids quiet during worship, and I can't help but think about how unlike Jesus that sounds. Don't get me wrong—there's a time when kids need to be taken out—but the parents I know are doing the best they know how to do and deserve our praise and support, not our criticism. I'm thankful to be part of a children-loving church, and I pray it will always be so.

To our parents, when you get frustrated, exhausted, stressed out, and burned out, please know how much we appreciate you. Thank you for loving Jesus, and thank you for bringing your kids to spend time with him. You're doing hard,

important stuff, and we're glad you're here.

-Chuck Webster
Hoover, Alabama

Marriage After Your Golden Anniversary: Priorities

(Final installment)
Norman and Anne Bales

There's one principle that virtually all successful people recognize. It's important to establish priorities - to separate the temporary from the permanent, the mundane from the important, the trivial from the significant. It's as true in marriage as it is in business. Retirement demands giving attention to relationship priorities.

Relationship priorities for married couples during their retirement years ought to include the following.

•**Carpe Diem.** The phrase occurs in a Latin poem written by Horace, and it means, "Seize the day." The book of Ecclesiastes contains an interesting passage that applies the phrase to marriage. "Live happily with the woman you love through all the meaning-

less days of life that God has given you under the sun. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil" (Ecclesiastes 9:9 NLT). You could start each day with something like, "I'm sure glad I'm married to you." This could be the last day you'll ever spend with each other. Make the most of it.

•**Take up the slack.** If you advance into your older years, you will have health problems at some points. Most likely one partner will be healthier than the other. Before that happens, a couple should agree that the stronger person will take up slack when the slings and arrows of old age cause one person to be physically weaker than the other. As Christians, we need to view these circumstances as opportunities to pick up the towel and serve. After all Jesus set the example for us. He told his disciples, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (John 13:14-15). If you aren't willing to serve your spouse during a time of need, all other pretensions of servanthood are hollow.

•**Encourage one another.** Mutual encouragement is a big part of the Christian faith. The phrase "one another" occurs 94 times in the NIV New Testament. Several times Christians are urged to "encourage one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:25). What's good for the church is good for the family. In marriage we have the opportunity to reinforce one another every day. Don't wait for some big thing to

occur before you express appreciation, and don't think your spouse doesn't need to hear praise from your lips because you've been together for so many years. If praise is sincere, you can't overdo it.

•**Make constructive use of leisure time.** There's a common saying among retired people. "I'm so busy I don't know how I ever had time to go to work." To some degree that may be true. We don't sit around watching soap operas and working crossword puzzles all the time. But we do have some unstructured time - more than we've ever had before. It's important to use that time in a way that's significant. Ann recently took on the task of sending correspondence courses to people in Third World countries. That's a task she can work on at her leisure, and she's not required to keep a log book that records how she uses every fifteen minutes of the hour. Nevertheless time is important. Time is not a product that's manufactured and sold at a store, but we ought to treat it as if it were a measurable asset. We need to be aware that we have a limited supply of this resource. Paul put it this way, "Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15-16).

•**Share your faith with each other.** One of our great blessings at this point in our lives is the opportunity to spend some devotional time together. We are convinced that faith is never a static thing. We keep looking for those things that challenge us, force us to think outside the box, make it necessary for us to re-evaluate

our assumptions. To be sure we sometimes feel a certain inclination toward inertia when we are being challenged, but it keeps the gears oiled that operate our brains.

In his book, *Family Ministry*, Charles M. Sell devoted a chapter to the "Expressive Features of Marriage and Family." While our current culture lays heavy stress on romance, sensuality, and intimacy, that has not been a major emphasis throughout most of church history. The Bible lays more stress on what one does than what one feels, but it does not totally ignore the subject of intimacy. Anyone who has ever read the Song of Solomon (also called the Song of Songs) knows that. Genesis 2 lays stress on the incompleteness that Adam felt before Eve was created. We were designed with the capacity to care, to experience emotional closeness, to cultivate what the therapists call "intimacy." But Sell warned, "This does not mean that the love of husband and wife will always be easy, flowing from a vast reservoir of romantic feelings" (p. 115). It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking there's no further need to work on the expressive side of marriage, but that can be a fatal error. Retirement can provide the time and the opportunity to make our relationships more satisfying than they've ever been before.