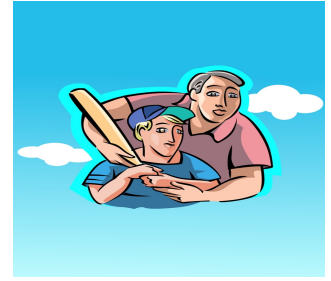


# The Family Friend



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

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## Getting Settled

All of us who have preached for any length of time have received them. My fellow preachers will immediately recognize the phone call I'm describing. An apologetic, somewhat sheepish voice on the other end of the line saying, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I need your help. Now, I want you to understand, I *am* a member of the church. The reason you don't know me is because I just haven't gotten settled yet in a church home."

The unfamiliar caller then goes on to explain his or her request: perhaps they want assistance in making a utility payment, or they are seeking free counseling to deal with family problems, or maybe they're looking for someone to conduct a wedding. I even received one phone call from a family with whom I was unacquainted asking me to provide a personal reference in a custody battle! I thought that over the years I'd heard them all, but I ran across a story that topped any of my experiences.

In the December, 1999 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, Neil W. Anderson tells the true story of a funeral director in Nashville, Tennessee who called the minister of a nearby church of Christ to ask if he would conduct a funeral. The

minister was informed that the family of the deceased did not "have a preacher" because they had not yet gotten settled in a church home after moving to Nashville.

When the good preacher visited the home of the bereaved, the family expressed their appreciation for his willingness to help them out in their time of need. They assured the minister that they had been active in the church before moving to Nashville, but they just had not yet connected with the church in their new home. The preacher asked them, "And when did you move to Nashville?" The family answered, "In 1941."

You might think I'm going to use this story to make some cynical comment about freeloaders who take advantage of the ministry supported by faithful Christians, only to disappear until the next crisis. Few preachers I know, however, will refuse to help a family in genuine need, even if they aren't members of his congregation, and I've done my share of funerals for strangers over the years. Moreover, I realize that occasionally a crisis can be used by God to lead people back to faithfulness.

No, I am more concerned by this story because it doesn't surprise me at all. I know from long observation that it is all too easy for people who have moved to fail to connect with a new church home. In the hectic busyness of "getting settled" in a strange new city, without the sup-

port and influence of Christians who know and care for them, some folks let their priorities slip and never get around to searching for a new church home. Before long, regular worship and participation with a body of believers become distant memories, and a life without active service in the body of Christ becomes an entrenched habit.

By losing the healthy influence of Christian fellowship, and by failing to make themselves accountable to the oversight of the leaders of a local church body, these individuals become more vulnerable to Satan's attacks, a condition Jesus described in the awful phrase, "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36; cf. Acts 20:28-31, 1 Peter 5:8-9).

God never intended for His children to be spiritually homeless. As soon as Paul returned to Jerusalem after his dramatic Damascus conversion he sought to "join the disciples" (Acts 9:26).

So, when you move to a new location, get your phone connected, get your power turned on, and get your soul secured in a new fellowship of believers. Don't put it off until you encounter some spiritual emergency; now is the time to get "settled"!

- Dan Williams  
Vice-President for Church Relations, Harding University  
Searcy, Arkansas

# Our Culture of Infidelity

I am fully aware that statistics can be twisted to say a variety of things. When it comes to data regarding sexual behaviors, I often wonder how the questions were worded, who actually responded to the surveys, and how honest folks are about such intimate details.

Even with these disclaimers, the results of Joshua Bouchard's study that was published late in March are somewhat shocking. Among other observations he reported:

- ◆ 57% of men and 54% of women admitted to infidelity within their relationships. The average length of the affair was two years.
- ◆ Of these indiscretions, 37% involved co-workers and 17% involved various in-laws of the spouse.
- ◆ 74% of men and 68% of Women stated that they would have an affair, if they knew that it would never be discovered.
- ◆ 31% of the relationships survived the discovery of an affair. In only 3% of the cases did the man divorce his wife and marry the woman with whom he was having the affair.

Statistics can isolate us from the damage and pain that adultery causes. The emotional toll on the parties directly involved is incredible; their lives will never be the same. Few consider the collateral damage that harms children, parents and churches on both sides of the illicit relationship.

Maybe the most amazing statistic that Mr. Bouchard reported was that 90% of those involved in the survey believed adultery to be morally wrong. Our culture has produced a generation of hypocrisy in matters of faithfulness. It is time that we reaffirm our marriage vows, put moral safe guards in place, and demonstrate self control in the way we live.

**By Don Loftis, Minister Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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## “The Limits of Anger”

Anger is a natural response to being hurt or challenged by someone else. Parents, children, husbands, and wives all experience anger within the context of “family.” While anger is normal, the Bible does warn, “Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.” This demands two responses.

### #1—SELF CONTROL:

It is unacceptable to hurt others with our anger through physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. We must choose the proper time and method of communicating our displeasure and frustration.

### #2—FORGIVENESS:

Since we all make mistakes, we are called to forgive one another. Such a release prevents the formation of bitterness or the taking of revenge. In addition, the sooner that forgiveness and reconciliation can take place, the better.

**By Don Loftis, Minister Old Hickory Church of Christ**

## Blessings of Fatherhood

1. Fathers have the opportunity to provide a role model for their children.
2. Fathers have the opportunity to provide a safe, stable environment in which their children can progress from birth to independent adulthood. Putting groceries on the table is still a rewarding task.
3. Fathers have the potential to receive honor and appreciation from their children.
4. Fathers can pass along the wisdom they've gained. Once in a while, an adult child will actually say, "Dad, what do you think about....?"
5. Fathers have the opportunity to learn about the value of sacrifice as they subordinate their own wishes for the sake of the children.
6. When fathers grow old and face health issues, they can have the pleasure of knowing their children, grandchildren, and other extended family are offering their prayers and moral support. As a man who has lived well past three score and ten, I can tell you that it is great to pick up the phone and hear one of them say, "Hi, Dad."
7. We have the opportunity to share our faith with our children.
8. We have the opportunity to train and discipline our children. Every human life needs structure. We learn that better at home than we do anywhere.
9. We have the opportunity to leave behind a legacy that will survive us.
10. LASTLY. When the kids are small, and one of them climbs in your lap and says, "You're the best Daddy in the world," it gives you the best feeling you can ever have. —List by Norman Bales, *All About Families*