

The Family Friend

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

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Maximize Your Child's Mind

—Don Loftis, Minister of the Old Hickory church of Christ

A neurologist at the children's Hospital of Michigan has done extensive research which reveals the great capacity of the human brain to absorb information. He discovered that by age two the infant's cortex is operating at adult levels. At age four, the child's brain is twice as active as the adult brain and will continue at that rate until age ten. By 16 the functioning slows to the rate it will maintain throughout adulthood.

I suppose this explains why it is easier as a child to learn a foreign language or memorize a poem. It may also give some insight to why children who are not challenged at home or in the classroom often become behavior problems.

One of the challenges of parenting is to be sure that these fertile years are used to help children learn values in addition to facts. A child's mind needs to be fed the type of knowledge that will allow them to make good choices about morals, careers, and marriage. Too often we neglect our youngster's religious

education, because we are too busy with our own lives. We get them to school, but not Bible School. We get them to read books but not the Bible.

Solomon offered that advice in the words of his famous proverb (22:6), "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." The apostle Paul bragged on his young preaching friend, Timothy, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

Remember, we only get a few years; let's make the most of them!



MY WIFE

A touch in the night, a gentle smile that makes a stranger feel at ease. A tear that falls in the middle of a sad story . . .

This is my wife.

A paint brush, still wet with the mix of colors of the rainbow .

. . . An understanding heart reaching across the years to a young child . . . The counsel of wisdom to one caught in a tragic life . . .

This is my wife.

The quiet movement of her early rising . . . The eerie squeak of the bedroom door . . . The fresh smell of coffee brewing . . . The filling of the mind with beautiful thoughts from an open book . . .

This is my wife.

The Monday night journeying to ceramic class . . . The dry brush technique that looks antique . . . The Thursday night meeting for those who love to pray . . .

This is my wife.

The strawberry pie at Shoney's (without the whipped cream) . . . The tall slim silhouette standing by the picture window . . . The one who sits beside me on the porch, watching the hummingbirds . . .

This is my wife.

She is charm, love, enchantment, hope, dreams, grace and gaiety. She is a great and wonderful woman.

This is my wife.

(Written February 14, 1985—Valentine's Day)

From *The Wisdom Box* by Jack Exum

My Christmas Wish List

Every year family members ask for my Christmas wish list. Every year it gets harder to compose the list. My actual needs are few, and my want list isn't even what it used to be. When I see merchandise attractively displayed in stores, I'm not usually impressed. In most instances, I've already got it, and the model I have works just fine. Sometimes I see something on the shelves, and I think, "That would be nice, but the truth is 'I don't need it.'" I suppose I need to buy some of the merchandise so I can help the people who market their wares support their families. After all, it's bound to be a lean year for retailers.

So, what's on my Christmas wish list. Not much that has a dollar value, actually.

1. I want to hear from my family members at some point during the holidays, even if the only thing they have to tell me is something like, "My arthritis hurts more than it used to."
2. I want my family members to love one another.
3. I want to spend as much quality time with friends and family as I can.
4. I want to see others enjoy their families. I hope they have a holiday free from domestic strife and conflict. To me it's really sad when mind-altering substances ruin the holiday.

I want to live in a world where there is less bickering and more building, less crime and more compassion, less self centeredness, and more servanthood, less hate and more love, less gloom and

more gladness.

Walmart won't run a blue light special on any of these items. Target won't slash their prices for the holidays. You can't put them on layaway at Sears. They don't cost money, but they are incredibly expensive. You can't get any of these gifts without giving of yourself. The price is sensitivity, caring, self-denial and thoughtfulness. It's funny how these gifts work. The more you give, the more you get. You can't ever get even. "If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated" (Luke 6:38 - CEV).

—Norman Bales

Preventive Medicine For the Family

The other day we stopped by the doctor's office to get our flu shots. It was a bit of an inconvenience and we've never actually enjoyed having our skin penetrated by needles. But it's a tradeoff. We prefer an interruption in our schedule and what the nurse calls a "little stick" over a couple of weeks in bed with the flu.

Keeping your family healthy can also be an inconvenience. We're not talking about making sure you get your flu shots and seeing that everyone wears appropriate layered clothing on cold days. We're talking about preventive medicine to preserve the health of the family relationship. Here's a short list of things that need attention if you want to

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keep the family healthy.

• **Give honest praise.** Praise each other frequently. Don't worry about whether family members will get the big head if they receive too much praise. That's a low level risk. You run a much greater risk of breaking down family morale when you withhold praise. It's always good to remember the observation of Proverbs 25:11. "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."

• **Make yourselves mutually accountable to one another.** Sometimes people think the two of us are embroiled in an argument when we are actually fulfilling a mutual agreement to make ourselves accountable to each other. We all have blind spots. We all run the risk of making mistakes we'll regret later. Correction by someone you love and trust deepens your love for one another even though you may initially resist it.

• **Keep humor alive.** Humor can damage a relationship if we indulge in clever put-downs. They aren't clever to the person who receives the brunt of the barb. On the other hand if we can laugh at our own shortcomings or if we can look at the humorous side of our mutual problems, we can actually gain an edge on dealing with our troubles. Again, we call on Proverbs. "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (17:22).

—Norman and Ann Bales