



# The Family Friend

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

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## An Open Letter to Parents

**Editor's note:** Recently this letter was reprinted by brother Williams in his email forum, *PreacherStuff*. Though it was written for, and related primarily to, the congregation for which he preached at that time, it contains vital principles all parents need to ponder.

January 1, 2006

Dear parents,

As I listened to the sweet voices of our young people singing Christmas carols at our congregational party last month, I reflected on how blessed we are here at College Avenue to have so many precious children! We are indeed a wealthy church, because our children are truly our treasures.

The sight of those children up on the podium also caused me to meditate on how *fast* they grow, because it seems like just yesterday when my own sons were part of that group, and yet the calendar tells me my memory is amiss. Over the past 21

years I have seen so many young people develop and grow, come and go, and those years of observation are what occasions this letter.

Every parent dreams of having their children grow up to be healthy, happy adults, and every parent knows that there are so many potential pitfalls that can derail a young person's development. The youth culture of our society is permeated with rampant immorality, alcohol use, rebellious attitudes, bad associations, and a whole host of self-defeating behaviors. If you want your children to beat the odds and enjoy a spiritually successful life, I have three urgent perspectives for you to consider:

**First, the most effective "youth ministers" are PARENTS!** I am so thankful for the work of Kent & Cara Jobe; for the efforts of our deacons who serve in this area; and for the support of the Youth Council. NONE of them, however, can raise your child. God has given YOU the responsibility to train your children in faith (Ephesians 6:4). This good church will support your parenting, but it cannot be a substitute for Christian parents who are

actively involved in the spiritual development of their children.

**The most important thing that parents can do to help the successful development of their children is to BE FAITHFUL AND ACTIVE CHRISTIANS!** When parents are "hit-and-miss" in their discipleship, are sparing in their service and sporadic in their church participation, the message to their children comes through loud and clear: faith isn't really that important. No matter how good the youth programs are (and we have some very high quality programs) they cannot compete with the power of poor parental models. If you have been allowing almost any other activity – from Little League sports to fishing to sleeping late on Sunday – to have priority over your own service to God, will you reconsider; repent; and redirect your life?

**The most important person in the parenting partnership is the FATHER!** We get all sentimental about mothers, and their tender love and nurture is essential, but recent research confirms what I had already concluded from long observation: there is no good

substitute for the active influence of a godly father. Simply put, children who do not have an active, faithful Christian father are more likely to leave the faith when they grow up.

There is a reason why God specifically gives MEN the responsibility for spiritual leadership in the home (Ephesians 4:22-25) and with their children (Ephesians 6:4). Men, I urge you rise to the challenge and be a hero to your kids: make Jesus your Lord, become a genuine man of God now, and become actively involved in the lives of your children while they are still in the formative state of their development.

With the beginning of this New Year we all have the opportunity to reflect on our priorities and resolve to make changes for the better in our life. My plea to parents is to be Christians in 2006 – to be active, faithful, dedicated Christians – give your children the precious gift of the example of a mother and father who are committed to Christ. You will never regret that decision!

Your brother,  
Dan Williams

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## BUFFERS TO STRESS

Recently I was looking up some material about stress. I wanted to see what I could find for the subject of family stress. I went to the Internet and plugged in "family stress" for a search. Up came 2,220,000 entries on the web. Just out of curiosity I plugged in simply "stress." Up came 8,550,000 entries. But then it is really not

news to any of us that we are a stressed people. But Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1) He further admonishes us in Matthew 6:25-34 that worry accomplishes nothing. We only need to trust in Him.

Just as individuals suffer from excessive stress, so do families. Too much stress can bring a family to a point of grave distress and total breakdown. Grave distress exhibits itself in such family crises as domestic violence, substance abuse (relapses) illness from weakened immune systems, divorce, accidents, abuse and neglect of children.

The Great Depression of 1929 was a time of extreme stress for our entire nation. Professor Reuben Hill studied the families who survived the depression and contrasted the surviving families with those families who did not survive. He found two very important variables, which seemed to make the difference. These variables seemed to be a buffer for the families, which protected them from the devastation that can be wrought by stress. He developed what he called his ABCX theory of family stress. A represents the family stressors, B his first support buffer, C his second support buffer and then X would be the level of family of crisis as a result of the stressors.

The B factor, which buffers the family, is social relationships. Hill found that intra-family relationships and inter-family relationships were important to create the B factor, which protects against stress. A family

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needs positive social connectedness within the family and outside the family. These connections support the family when the family experiences stress.

The C factor, which buffers the family against stress, is family perception. This has to do with how the family perceives the stress and understands its own strength. A shared family cognition that the family is resourceful and up to the challenge of difficulty was significant in determining the level of impact of the stressor.

Conversely if a family is socially isolated and out of touch with one another and if they do not see themselves as empowered and positive, then the family is at increased risk for a debilitating crisis.

As I studied these two factors, it occurred to me that God provides for both of these factors. Being a faithful member in the church provides for the social supports. Having a perspective of the cross and remembering the principles of Romans 8, assure us that nothing here can destroy us or take away what really matters.

None of us want difficulty. But as children of God we are equipped to face the bombardments of Satan. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

—Mikal Frazier, LMFT,  
LPC, via All About Families,  
August 28, 2002