

Supernatural Parenting

Sue Bohlin points out that we can be supernatural parents when we are relying on a supernatural God for direction and strength. It is important that we include parenting as an integral part of our Christian worldview. Applying a biblical perspective is crucial to imparting the truth needed for our children to live truly successful lives.

There are certain universal truths in parenting.

- If you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42 pound boy wearing Pound Puppy underwear and a Superman cape. It is strong enough, however, to spread paint on all four walls of a twenty by twenty foot room.
- If you use a waterbed as home plate while wearing baseball shoes it does not leak—it explodes. A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 2000 square foot house four inches deep.
- The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy. It will, however, make cats dizzy.
- Cats throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.

Dr. Dobson says that parenting isn't for cowards. It ain't such a hot job for mere mortals, either. What a daunting task—being completely responsible for an infant who cannot do a single thing for himself except make a lot of noise and a lot of dirty diapers! Teaching them to walk. And talk. And act like civilized human beings. Even more importantly, their eternal destiny is in our hands, and we have the awesome opportunity to show them what God is like, and to lead them to saving faith in Christ!

Praise God, as believers we're not limited to our own strength

and power. Christ died for us, to give His life to us, to live HIS life THROUGH us. We can parent with the same supernatural energy that raised Christ from the dead. We can parent with the same infinite supply of wisdom and patience that Jesus had. We can let Him parent through us—we can be supernatural parents!

The Bible says that Christ is our life. What does that mean when you're about to change your fourteenth diaper today? "Lord Jesus, I don't have the stomach or the strength to do this, so You change this diaper through me. Here are my hands—use them—here's my face—show love to my baby by smiling through me."

"I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." What does that mean when you've been giving, giving, giving all day and you're on empty? "Lord, I'm empty and weak and out of resources. You be strong in my weakness. I will do this in Your strength because I don't have any left."

"For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." How do we live that out in parenting kids who would rather snarl at us than look at us, who have swallowed the junior-high-culture's dictum that the only good parent is a dead parent? "Lord Jesus, Thank You for giving me this child. I choose to remember she is a gift and not a punishment. I don't have what it takes to be kind today, Lord. You be kind in me. I cannot love this child today, Lord, so You channel Your perfect love through me. I am Your willing vessel but I'm fresh out of unconditional love and acceptance. So You be a loving and wise parent through me."

You can be a supernatural parent. Even without a Superman cape.

Helping Your Child in School

Introduction

Over the course of their growing up, our two children have attended private Christian schools, public schools, and have been home schooled. To some, this personal experience makes us experts and is far more valuable than the twelve years I was a teacher and principal in public schools. To others my wife and I were merely confused and couldn't make up our minds. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle.

I do know that nothing can be more exciting or frustrating than watching your child engage in the learning process and ultimately move towards mature independent adulthood.

Looking back at our twenty years of parenting, I would encourage all new parents to take the long view regarding the mental and moral development of their children. There are times when our little ones amaze us with their insight and precocious behavior. At other times we become desperate for any sign of intelligent life. Fortunately, most of our children will grow up to be capable adults. If we are patient and compassionate, not exasperating our sons and daughters with unreasonable demands (Eph. 6:4), we can not only enjoy a good relationship with them, but often they will follow our steps of faith.

A second axiom is that you are your child's first and most important teacher. This point cannot be emphasized enough. In most cases, no one cares about your child as much as you care nor do they know your child like you do. This means that you must be engaged in the educational process of your child at every step regardless of the setting. Part of this

responsibility includes deciding what goals should be accomplished by your children's education. The answer to this question might seem obvious. However, quite a variety of goals have been suggested. Some believe that learning to live in a democracy is the ultimate educational concern. Others emphasize vocation training. Still others seek character development or becoming a global citizen. It would be time well spent to think about the kind of person that should emerge from twelve or sixteen years of schooling.

Next, I would argue that there is no such thing as a perfect school, but there *are* some really bad ones. Unfortunately, this is true about private schools and home schools, as well as public schools. Just because a school has chosen to call itself Christian, it does not automatically follow that the school offers a sound curriculum or that its teachers are capable and motivated. In fact, private schools can fall victim to many of the ills found in public schools.

Finally I would argue that, as parents, we are called to use discernment when making important educational choices. This demands that we take very little for granted when it comes to our children's education. And one of the important aspects of our children's education is the parent-school connection.

The Parent-School Connection

There is much more freedom today for parents to choose a school that fits their educational philosophy and goals. Rather than being the end of a parent's responsibilities, selecting between a public or private school is really just the beginning. Once a child is placed in a school, the parent's job as chief advocate begins.

Although teachers, counselors, and administrators are usually well intentioned, students slip through the cracks in even the best schools. Students can sometimes find themselves at odds

with a teacher or administrator because of an oversight or immature behavior, or they fail to get important information regarding their course selection and requirements for graduation.

Under ideal circumstances, a parent would want to get to know, and be known by school administrators and other personnel before a problem occurs. Volunteering at the school—in the library, on committees, or in the classroom—is not only a positive civic service, but is also a good way to ensure a sympathetic hearing if a problem occurs later.

In order to be an effective advocate, a parent needs to be aware of the school's authority structure and rules. Every school should publish a handbook with all the important rules and regulations, as well as graduation requirements. Students are notorious for not reading or taking these documents seriously. It is often parents who must guide their children through course selection and run-ins with school personnel. Another important source of information is the school's open house. Schools usually host an open house each semester for the purpose of allowing parents the opportunity to meet their child's teachers and see the rooms they are assigned to.

Though most parents are hesitant to interfere with their child's schooling, my experience says that if something feels amiss, it is better to get involved rather than simply hope things will just work out. Teachers and administrators are public servants. Parents who are courteous, yet assertive, often get results when problems occur. Unfortunately, waiting and hoping for a positive resolution to a problem can result in long term difficulties for your child.

One obvious place for parental involvement is in your child's placement. In grade school this might mean tracking or special education classes. In high school, it might be the choice between vocational college prep, and honors programs. Such decisions should never be considered final. Unfortunately,

once a student is placed in one program there is a tendency for school personnel to stick to that decision. But children change. Sometimes an honors class proves too demanding, or a vocational curriculum is not challenging enough. The parent is usually the best person to make these assessments.

The Parent-Teacher Connection

Teachers are often hard working, dedicated, and sacrificial in the amount of time they devote to their profession. However, like most other workplaces, schools also employ many mediocre and some highly incompetent staff. No matter how good a school's reputation might be, your son's or daughter's learning experience will be directly dependent upon the teacher standing in front of him or her. It is often left to the parent to determine the capability of their child's teachers and then decide whether or not to leave them in the care of a particular teacher. If signs point to an abusive or merely incompetent teacher, do not wait for the administration to act. The impact on your child's education and well being can be substantial.

Elementary level teachers who demand too much or too little of students, or who do not understand or manage classroom behavior well, are widespread. High school teachers who are asked to teach outside their area of expertise or who fail to do the work necessary to become minimally competent are also common. Unfortunately, new teachers are sometimes thrown into a classroom with very little support and that can result in problems over discipline or grading policies. Remember faculty difficulties occur in even the highest-rated schools.

When a problem does arise, meet with the teacher as soon as possible. Although one wants to hope for the best, look for signs that the teacher is disorganized or preoccupied with problems outside of the school environment. Talk with other parents to find out if the concern is a new one or if a pattern exists. If a serious problem exists, go to a guidance

counselor and request a classroom or schedule change for your child. If this is not allowed, get the principal involved. Often, what appears to be an impossibility from the school's position becomes a reality if a parent is patient and does not give in to the first "No."

Let's hope incompetence is not an issue. Even so, meeting your child's teacher or teachers and letting them know that you are engaged in your son's or daughter's education is important. If a teacher already knows you, he or she will be more likely to contact you if need be. They will also be more inclined to engage your help in motivating your child before more serious problems occur. Most teachers really want students to succeed; if they feel that you are on their side, you will become an important ally in their work.

We should also to remember to pray for our child's instructors. The group "Moms in Touch" does a great job of this. Most of all remember to be gracious; teachers have a remarkably difficult job and will appreciate anyone who supports them and acknowledges the importance of their work. We are ambassadors for Christ, even in our interactions with school personnel.

The Parent-Student Connection

It never seems to fail that you will hear how great all of your friends' children are doing in school just when your son or daughter is experiencing their most severe classroom difficulties. The pain parents can feel when their child is struggling in school can be profound. Problems can range from relationships with other students to cases of severe underachievement or rebellion. Unsolved, these problems can destroy an academic career and worse, destroy the self-confidence necessary for a child's success in life.

A strong parent-student connection is fundamental to avoiding major school problems. Contrary to popular belief, the need

for this connection grows rather than diminishes as kids get older. High school students still need help in making critical decisions about class selection and extra-curricular activities, as well as occasional help in navigating the maze of modern high school life, and growth into adulthood.

Throughout a child's education one of the most important parental role is to be a good listener. Fortunately, most young children want to talk about school. Make it a practice to have a daily debriefing time. As children get older, particularly during the high school years, parents may need to be more patient and creative in order to stay informed.

Teenagers are much more likely to choose their own time to let you into their life. The most important thing for parents is to be available when that time hits (often very late at night when you are exhausted). Teens, especially boys, seem to enjoy making provocative statements just to shock parents. Don't react to the first words that come out of their mouths; eventually they will learn to trust you and realize that you really do want to listen, not just preach a sermon they already have memorized.

Parents should be constant encouragers. This doesn't mean giving praise when it is not deserved, but rather praising real effort and pointing out signs of growing maturity and discipline. Parents should also offer personal support like helping a child to memorize a list of historical events or think through a geometry problem. Let your struggling student know that you are with him for the long haul, that together you can accomplish whatever school requires. If a student will not let you help, find an outside tutor who is acceptable. The money will be well spent.

In the rush for academic excellence, parents and guidance counselors can pile on advanced classes that crush even hard working students. Watch for signs of depression and irritability, and be ready to help your son or daughter out of

a workload that may have become overwhelming.

Maintaining an honest and positive relationship with our children is essential if we are going to have much influence on their schoolwork. Compassion, humor, and loving guidance will go a long way towards keeping the door open to their mind and heart.

Summary

We have considered how parents can further their children's education by developing connections to their school and with their teacher or teachers, by taking the time to know their children's needs, and by being available to share their educational burdens.

In closing, I would like to spend some time putting academic success into perspective. Parents sometimes blindly accept the notion that academic success is the answer to every problem. Historically, this has been the position of Enlightenment thinkers from Rousseau to John Dewey. If God is out of the picture, human reason—enhanced by education³₄ is of paramount importance.

Christianity has always valued education because of the foundational nature of the Bible. Only a literate people could directly benefit from God's revelation. However, the Bible never teaches that education is the solution to humanity's problems. It is evidence of misplaced priorities if Christian parents stress academic achievements over all others. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. This is the only mandated education the Bible speaks about. If we push our children academically to the point where our relationship with them is in danger, we might just miss the opportunity to accomplish the Ephesians mandate successfully.

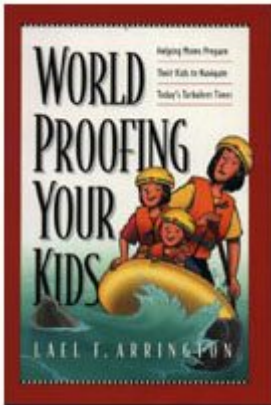
One extreme is to push talented students to achieve more and

more, earlier and earlier. Often, these students find themselves academically burned out by college. I recently met a gifted student who took part in a program that placed her in a nearby college as a high school junior. From there she went on to study engineering at UC-Berkeley. Now as a college senior, she realizes that she doesn't even like engineering and is worn out by the rush to finish. I have met other students who worked very hard in high school only to lose interest in college.

At the other end of the spectrum are those students who are underachievers from elementary school on and seem to need constant attention and encouragement. If we communicate that education is the only thing that is really important, failure in this area of their life can be catastrophic for both the child and the parent. Teenage suicide is one of the main causes of death among high school students and it becomes an option when a student feels trapped by rigid high expectations and sees no way out.

Our children need to know that God cares about school and their daily trials, and we need to pray with them about their schoolwork and the hard choices that they face everyday. However, He is even more concerned about the condition of their heart. As parents, our first priority is to teach our children to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind.

Worldproofing Our Kids



Lael Arrington has written a truly wonderful and exceptionally helpful book, *Worldproofing Your Kids*, [\[1\]](#) subtitled “Helping Moms Prepare Their Kids to Navigate Today’s Turbulent Times.” While she ostensibly wrote it for moms, any Christian parent who cares about helping his or her child develop a Christian worldview will enjoy it . . . and probably learn a thing or two (or three) in the process.

Lael has raised five questions that Christian parents would be wise to keep in mind, so we can relate them to what happens in our kids’ world and in the world at large. In teachable moments, we can help our kids to think through and then *own* their answers to these questions:

1. *Who makes the rules?*
2. *How do we know what is true?*
3. *Where did we come from?*
4. *What are we supposed to be doing here?*
5. *Where are we going?*

The first question truly is foundational, not just to the other questions but to a basic Christian worldview: Who makes the rules?

Who Makes the Rules?

As a nation, we used to believe that God makes the rules, and through special revelation He told us what they are. But there has been a shift in the culture, and now there are a great many people who “do not believe that moral truth is universal and final. They do not believe in special revelation from God that lays down what is morally right and wrong for all people for all time. They believe that . . . ultimately, *man makes the rules.*”[\[2\]](#)

We need to talk with our children about the consequences of each answer. When man makes the rules, when “everyone does what is right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), there are dreadful consequences. Sometimes the strong and powerful lord it over the weak and defenseless. Sometimes, when man makes the rules, everything breaks down into chaos. In *Worldproofing Your Kids*, Lael Arrington provides some wonderful activities to help develop the elements of a Christian worldview. For example, she suggests we watch a video of *Alice in Wonderland* with our kids, and she provides some excellent discussion questions to bring out the consequences of what happens when anybody and everybody can make the rules.

The bottom line to communicate to our kids is that much of the pain and suffering in this life is the result of making our own rules and violating God’s.

But when we agree that God has the right to make the rules, and we follow them, life works the way it was designed. That’s because there are good reasons for the rules. We need to give our kids the “whys” behind God’s commands. In his book *Right from Wrong*,[\[3\]](#) Josh McDowell explains that God’s loving heart makes rules designed to do two things: *protect* and *provide* for us. Our kids need to talk with us about *why* God doesn’t want us to have sex before marriage—because purity protects our hearts and bodies, and purity provides a better sexual relationship within marriage. We need to talk to our kids

about *why* God tells us not to cheat and lie: because He is truth, and He knows that honesty and truth telling protects us from the pain of lies and provides for a peace filled life.

The goal is not just to teach our kids that God makes the rules, but to choose to submit to those rules because it's the right thing to do . . . and because it will make life work better.

How Do We Know What Is True?

Truth has taken a beating.

The Christian view of truth is a belief in truth that is true for all people at all times: absolute truth. The western world used to believe that all truth was God's truth. After the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which produced the byword "Man is the measure of all things," truth became secular. People believed that there is a body of real truth "out there" that can be discovered through our reason. God was no longer a part of it.

Now we've moved to the postmodern view of truth. There is no such thing as "true truth," nothing that is true for all people at all times. Truth is now what I make it. Truth is whatever works for me. I create truth based on my feelings and experience.

So when we say things like "The only way to heaven is by trusting Jesus Christ," we get responses like, "You narrow minded bigot!" and "That may be true for you, but it's not true for me." And the classic postmodern response to just about anything: "Whatever!"

How do we help our kids know what is true?

First, we start with the foundational truth of our lives: God's Word. Remember, it's not just a body of truth, it is

alive and *active* (Heb. 4:12). We teach them the Bible's strongest truth claims: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1); people are infinitely valuable (Isa. 43:4); we have a sin problem and we need a savior (Rom. 3:22-24); Jesus claims to be God (Mark 14:62, among others [{4}](#)). Our kids need to know the truth before they can spot a lie.

Second, we teach them not to be afraid of criticism from those who do not believe in truth. Those who trumpet a postmodern worldview don't live by it, because it doesn't match the real world we live in. People who sneer at Christians for insisting that there is such a thing as absolute truth still stop at red lights, and they expect everybody else to do the same. They may say they decide what is true for them, but they don't try to pay for their groceries with a one-dollar bill and insist that, for them, it's worth a hundred dollars.

Third, we can strengthen our kids' confidence in the truth by teaching them logic. Begin with the simplest rule of logic: A does not equal non-A. Two opposite ideas cannot both be true. One can be true, they can both be false, but they can't both be true. Teach them to recognize red herrings, ad hominem arguments, and begging the question. Get Philip Johnson's terrific book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, [{5}](#) which has a great chapter called ["Tuning Up Your Baloney Detector."](#) He covers several false arguments.

Make it a game: "Spot the lie." Help them identify songs, movies, TV shows, advertisements, and articles that contain errors in logic or which go against biblical truth. Encourage them to recognize when people make up private meaning for words. Postmodern people who believe they can create their own truth say things like "Well, that depends on what the meaning of the word *is* is."

Truth matters to God, because He is truth. We need to teach our kids that it should matter to us as well.

Where Did We Come From?

I especially appreciated the way Arrington explained the importance of addressing the worldview question, “Where did we come from?” and the closely related question, “Who are we?” She points out that the way we answer these questions will also determine how we deal with the issues of animal rights, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

The “Where did we come from?” question isn’t about sex and the stork; it’s about creation and evolution. There are really only two basic answers. Either God made us, or we are an accident of the universe, the unplanned product of matter plus chance plus time.

If God made us, then we are infinitely valuable and intrinsically significant because God personally called each of us into existence. And not only are we valuable and loved, but every other human on the planet is equally valuable and loved. If evolution is true—defining evolution as the mindless, impersonal chance process that produces the stuff of the universe—then there is no point to our existence. We have no value because there is no value giver. Honest evolutionists recognize this: Cornell professor William Provine has said, “If evolution is true then there is no such thing as life after death, there is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning for life; there is no free will.”[\[6\]](#)

We come hard wired from the factory with a longing for transcendence, desperately wanting to be a part of a larger story where we are beloved and pursued. We long to know that there is meaning to the world and to our lives. We come equipped with an innate sense of fairness and justice, concepts that have no meaning in a world without a God who is absolutely just and moral.

As parents, we need to tap into these basic longings to teach our children that only the creation story adequately explains

our legitimate thirst for relationship and for significance, for fairness and for transcendence. Then we can explain how the creation story (and I define story as “the way things happened,” not “wishful thinking”) also helps us understand other issues. We can teach our kids that it is not murder to use the flesh of animals for food and the skin of animals for clothing because animals are not like humans; only human beings are made in the image of God. We need to be good stewards of the animals that God made, but not elevate them to the same level as mankind—or devalue man to the level of animals.

With an understanding that the creation story makes human life sacred and holy, we can teach our kids why it is wrong to kill babies before they are born (abortion), and after they are born (infanticide). We can teach them why it is equally wrong to kill the sick and the infirm when it is inconvenient for us (euthanasia).

Lael writes, “The common thread between evolution, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is the devaluing of human life and the way our culture has responded with options for disposal.”[\[7\]](#)

What Are We Supposed to be Doing Here?

This section of Lael Arrington’s book is called “Work, Leisure, and the Richer Life: I’m tired of paddling! Are we there yet? I’m bored!”

If we were to get an honest answer to the questions, “What are you supposed to be doing here? What’s your purpose in life?,” many high school and college students would probably say, “To have as good a time as possible.” Our culture has raised the expectation that everything is supposed to be fun and entertaining. When my mother managed the layaway department of a Wal-Mart a few years ago, she said it was frustrating to

deal with the young employees. They came in feeling entitled to a paycheck but didn't want to work for it. Work wasn't "fun."

One of the greatest gifts we as parents can give our children is to cast a vision for their part in the larger story of life, one that involves a planning and purpose for their life, a calling from God to play their specially designed part. Our innate longing for transcendence means that we need to teach our children that they are a specially chosen part of the cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption.

First, we need to teach by word and example that work has dignity and value. Work isn't part of the curse; it is part of God's perfect design for us. God gave Adam and Eve the responsibility of stewarding the garden before the Fall (Gen. 2). Part of our purpose in life is to be a difference maker, and work is part of how we do that. Whether one's work is to be a student, a fast food counter person, a house cleaner, a computer programmer, a mechanic, an administrator, or the really super important roles of mother or father, we are called to make a difference in the world and in God's kingdom.

Second, we can be a cheerleader for our children's God given gifts and talents. We need to be students of our children so that we can understand and appreciate the unique package that God put together. It helps to explore the various personality styles to help our kids grow in understanding of themselves and others. John Trent has written a book for children using animal motifs called *The Treasure Tree*.[\[8\]](#) Tim LaHaye[\[9\]](#) and Ken Voges[\[10\]](#) have explored the temperaments in slightly different ways, but they're both very helpful.

As we discern how our children are gifted with natural talents and abilities, we need to acknowledge those gifts and encourage our kids to develop them. If our children have trusted Christ as Savior, they have received a whole new set of spiritual gifts for us to be on the alert for. Of course,

we need to have a working knowledge of the gifts and learn how to spot them. God gives personality gifts, talent and ability gifts, and spiritual gifts to equip our children for whatever He has planned for their lives. What a privilege we have as parents to help them discover that they are called to a special place of service with a special set of equipment to do whatever it is God has called them to!

Where Are We Going?

The last part of the book *Worldproofing Your Kids* deals with citizenship—especially our heavenly citizenship. Another way to inspire confidence that the Christian worldview is true is to celebrate the fact that the best part of life is still ahead.

If we want our kids to recognize the larger, cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption, then we need to point them continually to their future (Lord willing) in heaven, where we will finally experience real life, real riches, and real intimacy with God. We need to remind them that their choices on earth, for good and for bad, are determining their future in heaven. This is an important part of our roles as parents, of course—to teach them the wisdom that comes from considering both the long term and short term consequences of their choices.

Lael Arrington urges us to take our children to biblical passages and good books that give them a glimpse of where we are going. Help them catch the vision of what C. S. Lewis was describing:

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.”[\[11\]](#)

And speaking of C. S. Lewis, please do yourself and your children the favor of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which is a series of books for children of all ages which will capture their hearts for the world to come and make them fall in love with the Lord Jesus.

Lael writes, "Perhaps we are now qualifying for what degree of power and authority we will be granted when we reign with Christ. The New Testament assures us that those who endure, those who serve now, will reign later (2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 5:10, 22:5). We can challenge our [children], 'Are we making daily decisions to serve, to develop our gifts and talents so we will be best prepared to reign with Christ?'" [\[12\]](#)

I love the story of the godly old woman who knew she was about to die. When discussing her funeral plans with her pastor she told him she wanted to be buried with her Bible in one hand and a fork in the other.

She explained, "At those really nice get-togethers, when the meal was almost finished, a server or maybe the hostess would come by to collect the dirty dishes. I can hear the words now. Sometimes, at the best ones, somebody would lean over my shoulder and whisper, 'You can keep your fork.' And do you know what that meant? Dessert was coming!

"It didn't mean a cup of Jell-O or pudding or even a dish of ice cream. You don't need a fork for that. It meant the good stuff, like chocolate cake or cherry pie! When they told me I could keep my fork, I knew the best was yet to come!

"That's exactly what I want people to talk about at my funeral. Oh, they can talk about all the good times we had together. That would be nice.

"But when they walk by my casket and look at my pretty blue dress, I want them to turn to one another and say, 'Why the fork?'

"That's what I want you to say. I want you to tell them that I kept my fork because the best is yet to come."[\[13\]](#)

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Notes

1. Lael Arrington, *Worldproofing Your Kids* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997).
2. Ibid, 42.
3. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right From Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1994).
4. See also the Probe article ["Jesus' Claims to be God"](#) on the Probe Web site (www.probe.org).
5. Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).
6. William Provine and Philip Johnson, "Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy?" (videotape of debate held at Stanford University, April 30, 1994). Available from Access Research Network (www.arn.org).
7. Arrington, 179.
8. John Trent, *The Treasure Tree*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998).
9. Tim LaHaye, *The Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).
10. Ken Voges and Ron Braund (contributor), *Understanding How Others Misunderstand You* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).
11. C. S. Lewis, *A Weight of Glory* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1949), 1-2.
12. Lael Arrington, personal correspondence with the author, February 26, 2000.
13. Jack Canfield, ed., *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (Edison, NJ: Health Communications, Inc., 1996).

“Help Me With My Adult Children!”

Hi Sue,

My name is _____ and I just read your article you wrote about [Dr. Laura](#). I just have to tell you, I am a Jew born anew (but I have been backslidden for years now). Maybe God led me to your article. I couldn't agree more with you. Dr. Laura just doesn't understand because she is still blinded like I was. And I was an example like the apostle Paul. One second I thought Jesus was a good man, the next minute, all I did was whisper his name in a moment of deep despair, and I knew he was the son of God and I believed.

The reason I decided to drop you a line is about my two boys who are 21 and 19. Trying to live on their own. I haven't been able to see them for 2 years now because I couldn't afford it after a bad divorce after 18 years of marriage.

I actually was going to write Dr. Laura, than I saw your article and I thought maybe you could give me some insight. I am now remarried, neither of us are living for the Lord but I did just buy a Bible because my husband is interested in all the scripture I do discuss with him.

The dilemma is, my boys just can't seem to buckle down and keep jobs and take on responsibility. They have no choice but to make their own way in this world, buy I still feel like I owe them even though I don't make much money. My husband and I got them started in their apartment and we told them now you work and pay for all the things you need, however, the youngest I think has gotten into drugs and hardly works, so the older brother was feeding him and paying all the bills. Of

course this is ridiculous but he now feels responsible. To make matters worse, the older son just called me to let me know he got fired from his good job in the computer field. He said something about missing a meeting due to oversleeping. I don't believe he is telling the whole truth. They want to move closer to me but of course they don't have hardly a dime to their name. I am in such a despair because I desperately want to see my kids, yet I know I have to believe in a tough love belief if I want them to grasp reality. We cannot support them and we shouldn't have to. What does God's word say about situations like this? I am a little afraid to find out because I do feel like I failed as a mom and as a Christian.

Is there any hope for me? or for my kids?

P.S. I won't be mad if you do not respond. This is a little freaky that I am even asking a complete stranger for help, but I don't have a church home and I would like a Christian perspective. Thank you!

Dear _____,

First of all, I'm so glad to meet a sister in Christ who has deep-deep-DEEP roots in Judaism!!! ☐

Secondly, my two boys are 19 and 21 also, and I understand COMPLETELY where you're coming from. I think huge numbers of kids/young adults struggle, because of our surrounding culture that says adolescence means you're entitled to privileges without responsibilities. But, of course, real life doesn't work that way.

::::::::::Putting my "Dr. Laura" hat on here::::::::::

May I suggest that the feeling that you "owe your kids" is misguided? You've done your best and now they're adults. (I know, 19 and 21 doesn't LOOK like adulthood as it did when we were that age.) You gave them the huge boost of putting them into an apartment, which is more than many parents could or

would do, and said, "You are now responsible for maintaining this. You are adults, now act like it." And they responded, it seems, by saying, "Don't wanna be an adult. I'm going to do whatever I want and not think about the consequences."

If you bail them out now you will be teaching them that someone else (YOU!!) will pay the consequences for their foolish and self-centered choices. And what do you think that will mean the next time? You can be sure they won't make MORE responsible choices!

Dr. Kevin Leman wrote a great book on child-rearing called *How to Make Children Mind Without Losing Yours*. It's really a book on "reality discipline." The whole concept is to use natural consequences—which is the way God set up the world, right? Consider His command: "If one will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). Those are natural consequences. Sounds like it's in the same ballpark as, "If one chooses sleep over work, let him have to settle for a less-satisfying job." Or, "If one will not work but takes drugs instead, let him discover there is no physical or financial support for that kind of selfish, immature mindset."

You say they want to move closer to you but they don't have money to do that. (And why not? Because of the choices they made?!) Well, guess what. In the real world, if we don't have money, that limits our options. Why do you think they want to move closer to you? So you can give them money and pretend they're little boys again! Not a good thing.

The book of Proverbs has LOTS to say about this issue, and I'm going to give you the privilege of digging out what applies to your situation. Look at it as a treasure hunt! <smile>

It's okay to strengthen your spine, Mom. Your kids will be better off for it, and so will you. It's okay to bite your tongue and not be "Mommy to the rescue." It will help them accept responsibility for themselves if no one else will. And

no one else should—they're adults now!

I do hope this helps. You are SO RIGHT about needing to adopt a “tough love” stance. Everybody will be better off for it down the road; your part is to trust in the Lord's strength and not your own as you take that position of loving your kids wisely by helping them grow into their adult responsibilities by letting them feel the full consequences of their choices.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

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