

Abundant Living

MINISTRIES

Encouraging Christian Living Since 1978

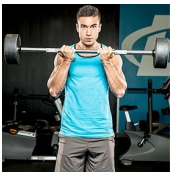
August, 2024



Question: I have been noticing an alarming trend in Christian circles. Seemingly-committed believers, children from devout families, even once-respected preachers and teachers, are renouncing their faith and proudly declaring their rejection of Christianity. This is so sad. And I admit this has me fearing that my own family members or friends might go down the same path.

Response: Scripture warns about this trend. Jesus stated that as the end of the age approaches, “because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12 NIV). Paul talks about “powerful delusion” that will occur as the Lord’s second coming approaches (2 Thessalonians 2:11). He describes a time when “people will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). Many other Biblical writers (Peter, John, Daniel, to name a few) refer to antagonism toward the truth in the end times.

This certainly sounds like a dismal forecast. However, there is no need for Christian families to live in fear and despair. The Bible teaches us how to stand firm when faith is challenged...



BUILD SPIRITUAL MUSCLE! Believers grow strongest through regular times of Scripture-reading and prayer. These provide an arsenal to combat lies. Matthew 26:41 instructs us to “watch and *pray* that you may not enter into temptation.” And Proverbs 19:27 warns that if you “stop listening to instruction, you will stray from the words of knowledge.” Christian parents need to be diligent in practicing habits of prayer and Bible study in their own lives, as well as instilling them in their children. But being able to quote a memorized verse is not enough. Children need to understand how Bible truths relate to their daily living.

Talk about Biblical principles at meal times, when riding in the car, etc. Pray *for* your children and pray *with* them, not just before meals or bedtime, but throughout the day. Talk enthusiastically about answers to prayer and consider recording prayers answered, in a journal. When children see evidences of God at work in their own lives, it will be more difficult to turn their back on Him as they grow older.



CHOOSE RIGHT THINKING OVER GOOD FEELINGS! Current culture admonishes that no person should be made to “feel bad.” Consequently, children are often permitted to behave rudely and disobediently... since correction or discipline might make them “feel bad.” Teenagers unashamedly justify their moodiness and nastiness. Many “fine adult Christians” seem to wallow in a variety of negative feelings (rejection, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, anxiety, contempt, hatred, jealousy, insecurity, to name some). They seem convinced that it is simply impossible to *decide/direct/determine* their emotional state.

How comforting that God, in the Bible, gives so many illustrations of “feeling-control.” Yes... many well-known scriptures provide examples of overruling one’s “natural” emotional responses. How about “Rejoice when people insult you and say all kinds of evil against you because of me”(Matthew 5:11-12)? Or, from Luke 6:28-30, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also.” That surely seems to indicate that we, followers of Christ, can rise above our natural feelings... we can *choose* to act in *loving* response to those who wrong us. And... we can experience the JOY of the Lord even when in the midst of very-painful life experiences.

Instead of succumbing to our children’s negative emotions, we parents can instead display a consistent peace, joy, and gentleness, even through tough times. This provides a great model for our children. We parents need to set an ex-

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Back in May of 2022, I had major surgery on my left leg, the recovery from which made it near impossible for me to get out my mower and cut the grass. My three sons told me, “Dad, don’t even give a thought to the outdoor work. We’ll do the spring clean-up, the mulching, the weekly mowing... we’ve got it covered.”

By the end of the season, two of my grandsons were trained on the mower and had taken over the weekly job. Now two years later, guess what... I’ve never gone back to the routine lawn work. Even on very-hot afternoons, my grandsons come over and bless us with the lawn care.

My point? In MY time of weakness and need, others stepped up to help. That is a lot like YOU and the way that YOU help others through your giving and your prayers on behalf of the ministry here at ALM.

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!



STAND FIRM - continued from page one)

ample, replacing unhealthy thoughts with healthy one, and teaching our children to do the same. If we parents routinely give in to our own negative emotions, it should not surprise us when our children reject the validity of *their own* faith.

Create some fun exercises, inviting family members to describe how their negative emotions were turned *upside down*, as they viewed a troublesome situation with thanksgiving and hope. Check out Philippians 4:6-9 for powerful weapons to fight mind battles.



BE SAVVY ABOUT THE ENEMY! Many individuals, who have fallen away from the faith, admit that they became critical of Christian doctrine as they increasingly spent time dabbling in less-than-best activities. Many unwholesome activities e.g. uncontrolled social media, sin-promoting video games, exposure to pornography, can launch adults, teens, and children alike on a path away from God. Flirting with “just a little sin” can quickly escalate... a little cheating, a little disobedience to parents, a little toying with the idea of an affair, a little use of drugs or alcohol... can easily develop into destructive habits or devastating addictions.

Parents can help their children formulate and rehearse statements they can use when invited to participate in questionable activities. Parents can courageously prohibit dangerous pastimes, even when the children/youth don’t appreciate those safeguards. Christians definitely do not need to sequester themselves from contact with unbelievers... we are, after all, encouraged to “go into all the world” (Mark 16:15 NIV). However, *companionship* with the world is cautioned against. As 1 John 2:15 & 17 (NIV) wisely commands, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in them. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” Believers need to daily ask the Lord for help in maintaining a loving attitude towards those “in the world” without succumbing to their Godless world-view.



LIVE RADICALLY! The Christian life is absolutely the best way to live! It provides daily joy and purpose in the here and now and, even more importantly, hope forever! Nothing Satan offers even begins to compare with this. We Christian parents can purposefully saturate our homes with love and laughter. We can open our home to those in need and give generously to bless others. We can pray with our children and expect God to answer miraculously. A humdrum faith holds little appeal to the next generation. Children must ultimately make their own choice whether or not to follow God. BUT... it will be harder for them to reject Christianity if they have grown up seeing a vibrant example of faith in our home. May they witness first-hand the “life more abundant” (John 10:10), that Jesus wants them to experience for themselves!

Jesus promised, “the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13 NIV). This is great news! So, when a report of another “deserter” comes down the pike, we should not despair and fall into our own pit of negative worry and anxiety. Rather, we can pray for the wayward one, and beef up our own defenses. Living above negative emotions is not an impossibility. With the Lord’s help, standing firm is a joyful reality for this generation and the next!

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