

# Let Sex Be God's Gift, Not a Worldly Curse

You see before you a three-year-old toddler in the tub. He's taking a bubble bath. His mom is tenderly watching over him.

In the course of his bath, he moves some bubbles away. There's something there. He discovers his testicles. He looks up at his mom, then looks down and says: "Mom are these my brains?"

Fast forward. I'm in my mid 30s. I'm at the airport, getting on a plane with my favorite magazines in hand for the flight. We go through the whole boarding thing. I sit down and put my bag underneath the seat in front of me. I start flipping through the magazines. I'm scanning some of the articles.

I turn the page. SMACK! I'm hit in the face with a picture. I don't know if it's a real photograph or an airbrushed cartoon. I can't tell if it's real or fake, but it's this vixen right there on the side of the page. Obviously it's an advertisement for men, in a magazine aimed at guys, especially businessmen. It's a woman, a racy portrait.

She is wearing sexy lingerie. She's on the ground and she's got two little horns coming out of her head. She has a pitchfork, and there is only one word on the page. At the top of the page, it says: "Curious?" This picture would have been considered pornography in the 1950s, but not now in the enlightened era of progress we are currently living in.

On the bottom of the page, there's a URL.

When I think about the whole issue of sex, sexual formation and men, I go back to my initial story.

"Mom, are these my brains?"

Advertisers and culture believe that to be true,

wholeheartedly. They have the bottom-line profit reports to prove it. If you buy into their cultural view of women, in so many ways the translation is “sucker.” People are making so much money off of something that was meant as God’s gift to husbands and wives.

**Sexuality.** Sex. It *is* God’s gift to us. Advertisers know that sex and sexuality are not only a gift, but that it can also be a curse. The reason we are talking about this—and it’s so silly that we don’t talk about this more, especially in churches, men’s groups and in common culture—is because there is so much shame connected to it; and yet there is so much powerful goodness connected to it.

Sex is such a powerful force because is it one of the greatest gifts from God. That is also why it’s attacked by the Dark One. All of God’s gifts are targeted by him for counterfeiting or corruption, and this is one of the most powerful gifts He’s given. It affects us on every level. But when misused or abused, it can become a tool for terrible destruction.

When I think about the kaleidoscope of sex and society, a couple of things stand out. There is the sexual development of our sons and daughters. Our sons are becoming men and husbands and fathers. There’s the sexual expression of our sons and daughters, our wives and ourselves as men in so many sexual contexts: internal sexual expression, the mind, who we are, our attachment to it, external expression, external acting out, sexual practice ... There is a plethora of sexual brokenness. There is no doubt about that. I have never counseled a man who hasn’t been hurt or who doesn’t have some regret somewhere underneath the waterline of his life in connection to this issue.

There is no disputing that sex is a powerful force: economically, technically, externally, spiritually and relationally. There’s sexual addiction, sexual slavery, sexual violence and more. It’s really very silly that as the church,

we are not leading the way in this area.

The biblical word for male is “zachar,” which means piercer. The word for female in the Genesis account means “the pierced one.”

When you think about male, female, sexuality and the sacredness of that created order, of course sin would bring distortion to it for you. Satan wants to distort it for you. The culture wants to distort it for you based on their godless misunderstanding of it.

It doesn't matter whether you are single, recently married, married for a long time, or single again. You are a sexual being. You are created by God and given the gift of sexuality. You have to be able to think about it, act on it and integrate it in a healthy way. If you are NOT thinking about it, acting on it and integrating this aspect of your life in a healthy way, the only alternative is to integrate, think about or act on it in an unhealthy way.

We have to get out in front of this because sexuality is central to masculinity. It is a critical part of our health and life, our very well-being. It is also the source of huge guilt, shame and consequences that blast forward through generations. Small sexual thoughts and actions lead to huge sexual consequences and brokenness of relationships.

Just ask Bill Clinton, Tiger Woods and General David Petraeus. Ask your buddy. It's huge in our lives, and because it combines the physical, mental and spiritual, we're going to talk about it. We're going to go after it pretty aggressively.

I hope in this first part of “The Sex Series,” you can just sit back and relax. I want to tee it up so that we can get some of these issues on the table. I have to say that if you are not talking about sexuality, then it is the 800-pound gorilla in the masculine room. Here's why:

- It's the way God made you anatomically.
- It's the way God intended for you to use it spiritually.
- It's how to restore health in broken relationships that are unhealthy, hurtful, unproductive, self destructive, immature and secretive, all of which is part of the battle.

Talking about it is healthy for you, single man, as you prepare to get married, or if you have the desire to be married again. It's healthy to talk about it, married man—no matter how long you've been married.

*Note: This is the first in a four-part series Every Man Ministries is calling "The Sex Series," where God's men receive the best from God's gift of sexual intimacy. Sex is physical, mental and spiritual and God wants us to use this gift in the way He intended it to be enjoyed. This series will help you understand sex through the lens of Scripture. It will teach you to understand what God expects from his sons when it comes to sex and sexual intimacy.*

**Kenny Luck** is the founder of Every Man Ministries and the men's pastor at Saddleback Church. His 20th book, *Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God Without Men of God*, is the proven blueprint for men's ministries, and was recently released through B&H Publishing. Watch and read more of Kenny's teaching at [. Follow Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter \(@everymm,\) and YouTube.](#)

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# God Loves a Selfless, Obedient Man

John the Baptist came preaching in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah (see Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14). He wore hair-skin clothing and ate locusts and honey (see Matt. 3:4). He was a man on a mission sent to prepare the way for Jesus. A lone voice, John cried out not in the big cities but in the desert. He didn't do it for headlines; he did it to make a people ready to meet Jesus so that "all people will see the salvation sent from God" (Luke 3:6, NLT).

John's mission was from God, who gave him the message. John knew who he was and who he wasn't. He said: "'I am not the Messiah'" (John 1:20) and "'Someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am'" (Matt. 3:11). John was not a self-promoter.

How many men confuse the message and calling of God with their own sense of importance? If our birth was announced by the angel Gabriel, would we still say, "'He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less'" (John 3:30)? Or would we go around boasting about who we are? John could have done that. Instead, he was obedient. He stepped aside for Jesus and God gave him the opportunity to baptize and announce the Messiah (see Matt. 3:13-16).

John was born of a parents who were faithful to God: "Both of them were upright in the sight of God" (Luke 1:6). But both were also old. John was God's miracle baby for them. In spite of that beginning and the joy he brought to his aged parents, he was never his own. He was a man called by God and he yielded to that call. During his life, John never had the things most men want: a family, house, prestigious job and easy death in his old age.

John's death came at the whim of a powerful woman and a weak husband who did what she asked. John was beheaded during a rich man's birthday banquet and his head was brought to the revelers on a platter (see -12). What did John do to get himself murdered? He told the truth to the king (see Mark 6:17-29).

"Unfair!" we cry out when a person is treated brutally, as John was. Why was he able to do that? How simple it would have been to keep his mouth shut about the king's morals. There is a way to live an easy, comfortable life? don't obey God. But John did obey God. He was faithful and for that faithfulness he was killed. John didn't invite suffering, but he accepted it.

Are you open to the leading of God even if it means that you must become less just as John did? Will it matter to you if your obedience takes you to the desert rather than to a palace? Will you always point people to the Savior? Jesus had something powerful to say about John: "None is greater than John the Baptist'" (Matt. 11:11). What an epitaph for an obedient man. What a selfless man of God. What an example for today's man.

**Roger C. Palms** is former editor of Billy Graham's Decision magazine and author of 15 books and hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles.

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## Are You a Man or an Ostrich?

Some men simply will not address "the issue." The issue that is so big, boastful and obvious that everyone else sees it in his life, but he himself is unwilling to confront it. He hides his face in the sand like an ostrich.

"If I don't recognize its existence, then I can avoid the pain of confrontation," he says to himself. It may be a financial issue. It may be a marriage issue. It may be an issue with his child. He may know of issues at his company, yet-out of concern for job security-he is unwilling to say anything.

You cannot correct what you are unwilling to confront.

Denial does not solve problems. Appeasement is not victory. Avoidance will not last. You must be willing to confront your problems.

## **5 Steps to Facing the Challenge**

1. Get wisdom. You need to go to the "knowing" for knowledge. Learn from someone who has faced this challenge and won. Don't get your advice from someone who failed.

If you want fitness, get a coach who is fit. If you want health, get a doctor who focuses on wellness. If you need financial security, learn from someone who has mastered money after facing similar circumstances as you. If you want a great marriage, learn from someone who has endured in relationships. If you want advice for raising children, find someone who is ten years ahead of you, who has raised strong, healthy, balanced and well-behaved children.

**2. Have the right attitude.** Facing a challenge can actually be exhilarating. Winning at this level will qualify you for greater challenges. The higher the risk, the greater the rewards in life. The struggle strengthens you. Don't cower when you are facing a challenge. If you fail in times of adversity, how weak is your strength? Man up!

**3. Expect to learn.** Every challenge brings an opportunity to learn. If you do not learn, you will repeat. Let me say that again. If you do not learn, you will repeat.

**4. Have confidence.** When facing a challenge, have confidence

to win. Don't be wishy-washy when confronting a challenge. Fear is a magnet for all kinds of evil.

Have you ever had to stare down an angry dog? If you run, or show fear, the dog is empowered by the smell of your fear. If you stand your ground, make eye contact, raise your voice, that dog will turn from you. Resist your enemy and he will turn tail and run.

**5. Don't assume.** Never assume a victory. You must inspect what you expect—meaning, if you want a victory, you must finish the challenge.

Most men want excellent lives with 80 percent effort. I have noticed that many victories are lost because of failure to follow through. When facing the challenge of Goliath, David said, "I will decapitate you!" David didn't even have a pocket knife. He was essentially saying, "I will knock you to the ground, grab your own sword and slice your head off." He did it!

The fact is, you are going to face challenges; the question is whether or not you will confront them head-on or drop your head and put it in the sand.

So which is it going to be? Man or ostrich?

*For the original article, visit . Fivestarmen was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. He has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Neil has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

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# Statins Tied to Lowered Liver Cancer Risk With Hepatitis C

People infected with chronic hepatitis C are less likely to develop liver cancer if they are taking cholesterol-lowering drugs, new research from Taiwan suggests.

The report doesn't prove statins ward off cancer, and one researcher not involved in the study says it's not reason enough to recommend using the popular medications solely for liver cancer prevention.

Previous studies have come to ambiguous and conflicting conclusions on the question of statins' cancer-preventing abilities, researchers noted.

"Observational studies do suggest a significant, modest reduction in the risk of (liver cancer) among patients with chronic liver disease who take statins," said Dr. Hashem El-Serag, a liver disease researcher from the Baylor College of Medicine and Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston.

Those trials, which follow different groups of patients to see who develops cancer over time, can't prove cause-and-effect.

"The downside to the observational studies, including this study, is because they are non-randomized, the decision to give statins to a patient with hepatitis C may or not may depend on factors that have a lot to do with severity of liver disease," El-Serag told Reuters Health.

For their study, Dr. Pau-Chung Chen from the National Taiwan University College of Public Health in Taipei and his colleagues used nationwide data to track about 261,000 people with hepatitis C from 1999 through 2010.

During that span, about 13 percent of them filled a

prescription for statins.

A total of 28,000 people were diagnosed with liver cancer by 2011 – or about one percent of those with hepatitis C each year. After the researchers accounted for patients' age, gender and other diseases, they found those who took statins were about half as likely to get cancer as non-statin users.

Higher doses of statins, as well as longer-term use, were linked to a further drop in cancer risk, according to the findings published this week in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

The researchers said statins may prevent the hepatitis C virus from replicating or slow the growth of malignant cells. But they can't prove the drugs stopped people from getting cancer.

One limitation, they noted, is that they weren't able to measure other health and lifestyle factors that influence people's risk of liver cancer, including their weight and whether they smoked or drank heavily.

Chen said a large study in which people with hepatitis C are assigned to take statins or not, known as a randomized clinical trial, is needed to clarify the drugs' effects in those patients.

In the United States, about 3.2 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis C, which is spread through blood. Having hepatitis C increases a person's chance of liver cancer up to 20-fold, Chen's team wrote.

The National Cancer Institute estimates 30,640 Americans will be diagnosed with liver cancer in 2013 and 21,670 will die of the disease.

The researchers did not find a link between statins and any serious complications.

“We feel more confident that statins do not cause harm in patients with liver disease,” Chen told Reuters Health in an email.

Until recently, El-Serag said, many doctors feared prescribing statins to people with liver disease, believing they might cause liver-related complications. He agreed that the new study should allay those concerns.

“Do not avoid statins because of underlying liver disease, because you may help the statin-related indication, such as cholesterol and heart disease, but you may still get additional benefit for reducing the risk of liver cancer,” he advised.

Still, El-Serag said, “I would stop shy of recommending it just to (prevent) liver cancer.”

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## **At Passover, Behold Yeshua, the Lamb of God**

John said, “Behold! The Lamb of God...” (John 1:29 NKJV). I want us to behold Him once again.

Beginning March 25, we celebrate the Passover. This year Passover and Easter will overlap. That’s not always the case. Sadly, in 325 AD, the church made the decision to separate Easter from the Jewish holiday of Passover. An official church document at that time declared that the “wretched [Jews] are ... blinded ... Let us have nothing in common.”

But it's hard to fully behold Yeshua as the Lamb of God without seeing how intertwined His passion is with the Passover.

### **The Lamb's Beginnings**

Let's behold Him from His beginnings on the earth. Thirty-three years before His death at Passover, Yeshua was born as a "Passover lamb." It's in the region of Bethlehem Ephrata that shepherds raised special lambs for sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem.

My wife Ann and I live in the southern part of Jerusalem. We're able to see Bethlehem. We still see shepherds with their sheep and young lambs grazing on those same hillsides.

It's no accident that on one of these Bethlehem hills, Mary's little lamb was born. Micah predicted that the Messiah would be born in the area of Bethlehem Ephrata, right where Passover lambs were raised.

"John saw Jesus [Yeshua] coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29) So we behold not just any regular lamb, but a lamb that was born to die. To fulfill the Passover sacrifice was one of Yeshua's chief reasons for coming to the earth as the Lamb of God. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "... Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us" (NLT).

We need the lamp of God's Word to behold the Lamb of God clearly. So let me remind you of what God's Word says about the original Passover. We read this in Exodus 12:12-14, "For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal. Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Yahweh [the Lord]. The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall be no plague on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. This day

shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by ordinance forever" (WEB).

At Passover, the Jewish people recall how the angel of death, God's agent of wrath against the evil empire of Egypt, "passed over" and spared the children of Israel from death. The Hebrew word for Passover is "Pesach." It literally means to "pass over" or "to spare."

During Passover we are reminded of what God requires to save souls: nothing but the blood. In the words of Exodus 12:13, "...when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (NIV).

On this mission to kill the firstborn of every household in Egypt, the angel of death would inspect each home for the sign of blood. Whenever the angel spotted a house whose doorposts and lintel had been freshly smeared with the blood of a lamb, he would spare that household's firstborn.

The blood was sprinkled on two sides, as well as the top, and possibly the bottom threshold of the doorway also, depending on how you translate the word "saf." Could it be that this was a prophetic picture? For Yeshua's blood dripped from his two hands, extended horizontally on the crossbeam. He bled from the top of his head, due to his crown of thorns, and he bled at lowest part of his body, from his feet. And isn't it interesting that Yeshua said in John 10:9, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved..." (NKJV).

### **The Passover Meal**

Once a year, Jews all over the world continue to eat what is known as the "seder" on Passover eve. This is the meal that Yeshua and his disciples were eating that night, which we call "the Last Supper."

You can't really understand Yeshua's profound words and actions at His last supper with his disciples until you understand that He is the Passover Lamb of God. He is the

final sacrificial lamb whose shed blood takes away the sins of the world.

During the meal there is the reading of the Haggadah, or the “retelling” of the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt. Haggadah is a word related to the Hebrew word “to tell.” The *retelling*, the story of that first Passover in Egypt, is so important for a Jewish family. Paul would later write to the Corinthians, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

That’s why it’s so important to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, for we need to constantly retell and recall the amazing work of deliverance that the blood of the Lamb of God has achieved for us. Otherwise we may forget, or take it for granted and be unthankful to God for the great deliverance he has provided from our own ‘personal Egypt.’

### **The Lamb’s Final Passion**

We’ve beheld the Lamb’s beginning in Bethlehem and beheld Him in the light of the Word, way back in the Exodus story. Now I want us to behold the Lamb of God in the light of the New Testament story of His Passover passion.

Just as the story of Yeshua’s birth takes up a large portion of the gospel story, so does the passion story.

What’s fascinating is that Yeshua arrived in Jerusalem in preparation for the Passover exactly four days before the day that He would be sacrificed as the Passover lamb. Like a Passover lamb, for those four days Yeshua was under the careful scrutiny of the Jewish religious leaders. They tried everything they could to find fault in Him, but no matter how hard they investigated, they could not find a single justifiable blemish in His character.

Even the Roman governor Pilate couldn’t find anything defective about Yeshua after his intensive interrogation. In

Luke 23:4 we read, "Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, 'I find no basis for a charge against this man'" (WEB).

There was another requirement to meet the stringent standards for a Passover lamb. In Exodus 12:5 the Lord said to Moses, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old."

In a lamb's years, the prime of life was one year old. I guess any older than that and a lamb is over the hill!

Yeshua was chosen from God's flock and made a Passover sacrifice also at the prime of his earthly life, at age 33. A priest couldn't even begin his career until he turned 30. So Yeshua gave up His life as a sacrifice for our sins in His prime. The sins of the world were simply so great, and such an affront to God's holy character, that only something of infinite perfection and value could redeem us all from sin and death.

I find it very fascinating that each Jewish family would take that little lamb into their home for four days. You can imagine that this cute, little, fluffy, cuddly creature would be quickly adopted by the children as the family pet.

We talk about the need to accept Yeshua as our "personal" Savior. Well, it's true. Until you ask Yeshua into your heart and home as your personal Savior and acknowledge that He is your personal sacrifice for your personal sins, God will not spare you; He will not "pass over" you.

As one preacher once said, "God has no grandchildren." It's not enough that your parents know Yeshua. You need to make Yeshua your own personal sacrificial lamb. You must allow Him to become your friend and allow Him into your life. He wants to be your friend, no matter how sinful and unworthy you feel.

Yeshua is our Passover lamb. He died once and for all for the sins of the whole world. But salvation is more than simply

knowing that He died for the whole world's sins. I need to believe that He died for me and you need to believe that He died for you.

Maybe you haven't yet applied the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of your heart by faith. Just as the children of Israel were to eat their Passover meal in haste, so now, not tomorrow, is the acceptable time to receive Yeshua as your Passover lamb. Now is the day of salvation. Look on Him today. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

For the original article, visit [.](#)

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## **Wisdom Keeps a Man Out of Trouble**

One of the most avoided portions of the Bible is the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. These books: Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, don't contain gripping narratives like the historical books.

They don't have prophets telling the future and condemning sinners. Proverbs contains short sayings and short parables on righteous living. The others contain a lot of Hebrew poetry and the meaning of their stories are heavily debated. Ecclesiastes and Job can be flat depressing. But God gave every book of the Bible to teach us (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

These wisdom books are to do just that, to teach us God's wisdom. Human wisdom can do a lot, but, as Solomon states in Ecclesiastes, it can't straighten the crooked or count what isn't there. It can't change reality. God's wisdom, on the

other hand, can do just that.

Wisdom keeps one out of trouble. Wisdom knows that the woman beckoning you to adultery leads only to the death of your marriage. Wisdom knows that a peaceful house is better than a rich house. However, wisdom doesn't just stop with one person. It also knows what to say to friends to teach them. Like love, wisdom grows whenever it is shared.

Wisdom starts inside, but it shows itself in everything you do. Being merciful and sincere are two examples of godly wisdom. Making peace between two people is also a use of godly wisdom. On the other hand, selfishness and jealousy are two examples of being unwise. Causing ill will in other people also shows a lack of wisdom.

True wisdom comes from God, and is learned by spending time with Him. It makes one fall deeper in love with Jesus, for Jesus was God and showed wisdom in everything He did. God's wisdom works against the earthly wisdom in our lives.

Earthly wisdom can do many things that make it appealing, but all its works are temporary. It can help you get ahead a little bit, but it can't help you stay ahead. Earthly wisdom has limitations that God's wisdom does not have. Earthly wisdom is only in the head while godly wisdom comes from the heart. Earthly wisdom is limited to things of this world and cannot help in the eternal kingdom.

Godly wisdom comes from fearing God and having an understanding of His holiness (see Prov. 9:10). It must be sought after on purpose and with sincerity. No one becomes wise accidentally. Likewise, no one becomes wise overnight.

One finds God's wisdom through devoted prayer and Bible study. Every verse of Scripture holds a wealth of treasure for the seeking soul. Every problem that one faces has a solution in Scripture. Ecclesiastes says there is nothing new under the sun. The details may differ, but the core of the problem is

covered. And while the details may differ, the solution is largely the same.

Note that both prayer and Bible study are needed. To read without asking the Spirit to guide you puts the words in the heart but does not help with applying them. Praying for guidance without also studying Scripture limits what the Spirit can bring back to your mind. God has given wisdom to people before, and to not read it closes off an avenue of learning.

Be assured, God blesses those who seek Him. He will grant wisdom to those who ask.

*Frank Luke and his wife are associate pastors in Iowa. They both hold Master of Divinity degrees from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (Springfield, Mo.).*

*For the original article, visit .*

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## Leave and Cleave, But Stay in Touch

In 2002 both of our children were married. They both “leaved and cleaved” within six months of each other—John in June and Jen in November. Wow! What an adjustment!

That got me thinking. How do you parent an adult child? What should that relationship look like? And how can we make sure it works well?

### **The Problem**

Patsy, my wife, has said on many occasions, “Your parents let us get away from them.” In other words, they didn’t work at

getting together with us, showing interest in our world, or letting us know what was going on in their lives. They rarely showed any interest in what I did. Even when I would share a detail they didn't ask any follow up questions. They rarely talked to me about any matters of the heart—was all surface stuff. As a result, getting together was pretty much obligatory.

Their motives were not dark—they just didn't think in those terms—but the result is the same: I have no sense that they took delight in me as their son. They may have, but I can't conjure up any memory of it if they did. I don't mean to be harsh—I really do love and admire them. They overcame a lot, and were a beautiful example in so many ways. My reason for mentioning all this is simple: I want to be a successful parent to my adult children, their mates, and a model grandparent to their children if God should so bless.

Until they married, we were vitally involved in the daily details of both our children. Basically, we were best friends. Now what? A lot of emphasis is put on “leaving and cleaving,” but relatively little is said about how to maintain the parent-child relationship.

So, I thought about this topic of parenting adult children—what does it mean, and what does it look like? Here are some thoughts:

**1. Keeping up with them.** We want to keep up with their “daily” issues—what are my adult children struggling with that I could/should be praying for? What makes their hearts soar? Where do they need a victory? Where do they need consolation?

What a huge loss it would be to not connect at the “real” level of what is actually important to them. Isn't it encouraging when someone asks you how the sore shoulder you mentioned two weeks ago is doing? An equally huge loss would be to not connect at the spiritual level of the heart.

**2. Keeping them up with us.** Let your children in on the “daily” issues you face—struggles, heartaches, joys, victories, big and little, good and bad. How I wish my parents had included me in their lives! Regrettably, I know they enjoyed golf and dinner with friends, but little else.

Your children really do want to know about your life! The best way to find the right boundaries for “how much” they want to know is to candidly, honestly discuss these issues with your children. I suspect my parents would have loved more contact, but if they did, I never knew it! Now they are both deceased.

**3. Getting together.** We want to make sure we get together. We have been discussing openly, “How often should we get together?” Looking back, I wish my parents would have taken that same initiative and said, “We want to make sure we see as much of you as we can, but we want to be sensitive to the many obligations you have in this phase of your lives.” Or something like that.

Be sensitive to the different levels of emotional energy people have. Sometimes short, but more frequent visits can be a good solution. Don’t forget to share holidays with the “other” parents.

Patsy has an awesome way of making our children feel welcome. For their first married Christmas they spent time with us. She wrote them in advance and asked, “What are your three favorite foods?” Then she made sure to be fully stocked up when they arrived.

**4. Verbal communication.** We want to communicate with our children. This raises the question, “How often should we talk on the phone?” I know this sounds simple, but growing up in my parents’ family it was not. We never had a conversation about it. In my dad’s later years, I talked to him every Tuesday morning and every day after mom died. But I hardly ever called my parents for 30 years—maybe 10 times. How did that happen? I

don't know how, but I know that I don't want that to happen with my children!

When our son, John, left for college we blew it. During the first week, we called him every day. Finally, on Thursday, he said, "Mom and dad, I appreciate your calls but you need to stop calling me so often." We talked about it, made the adjustment, and things were cool from then on.

**5. Written communications.** I started writing a weekly email to each of our two children and their mates. In this email I (variously) share how I've been praying for them, ask for prayer requests and share some "details" about what's going on with us. Here's an actual example:

*Jay and Jen...*

*Been praying for you every day—both your new classes, your new job, Jen, and your ability to juggle all your responsibilities, Jay, and especially for the evaluation process! Very exciting days!*

*Filled out app. for Ph.D—ordered transcripts—sent resume. NTC started this a.m. Speaking on "Better Days—Restoring a Broken Marriage" tomorrow. Patsy, Marilyn and Nancy (in town for Sara's cheerleading championships at Disney) are right now over to see a house Randy and Marilyn want to buy—they have contract to sell their house. Ed and June will be in town this weekend for Sara—stay with us Sat and Sun night. I fly to Nashville on Monday for NRB (natl. religious broadcasters) announcing our new relationship with OnCore Group. Gave Jamie Hart copy of YMIM on Sunday—Monday he called for 5 copies to start group Tues a.m. Katie can't walk anymore without the miracle leash.*

*Talk to you soon. With all my love and "delight"— dad*

**6. Special occasions.** Remember special occasions in ways that connect. There are many special occasions each year:

Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, New Year's Eve and Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, and Halloween (All Saints Day). These are opportunities for cards, calls and get togethers.

Instead of buying potentially unwanted presents at Christmas, Patsy asked our kids, "Would you rather have gift certificates or presents?" When they said, "Gift certificates would be great," she asked, "Which stores do you like?"

There are also special "once in a lifetime" occasions, like delivery dates, baptisms, confirmations, graduations, promotions, weddings, and funerals. These should be "must do" events. Presents and cards are a nice touch.

Of utmost importance are the birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Cards or letters are a must, and we try to give them a call.

**7. Prayer.** We want to pray for them, and have them pray for us. First, we pray for them every day and want those prayers to be specific as well as general. We want them to know that we pray. We want to know what is heavily on their hearts—whether joy, sorrow, need, injury, hope, goal or whatever else is taking a lot of emotional energy.

And we want them to know the same about us. We want them to pray specifically for us too. That's a real relationship.

**8. Roles.** Our son, John, recently said, "Dad, you're my number one consigliere." No words have ever brought me more joy.

Our roles do change as our children go out on their own. Some of the roles that come to mind are mentor, counselor, encourager and babysitter.

But we also have to be careful. Perhaps the biggest concern is what one friend called "intrusion." After all, they are married and they do have their own lives together. That is the

natural order of things. We have no business interfering in their relationship or giving unasked-for advice. On the other hand, we don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater either.

One friend practices what he calls "the ministry of availability." We want our adult children to know that we are "available" if they need us.

They may "leave and cleave" but with God's help, we are not going to "let them get away from us."

*Application:* Which of these eight ideas is most applicable to your circumstances, and why?

**Pat Morley** is the Founder and CEO of *Man in the Mirror*. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded *Man in the Mirror*, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

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## 10 Life Lessons From Coach John Wooden

John Wooden coached the UCLA basketball team to 10 national championships, including seven in a row from 1967 to 1973. It is a streak in modern major sports duplicated by only the Boston Celtics.

The most striking aspect of the whole thing is that the championships were the least of his passions. John Wooden

lived to teach. His insight and wisdom led to the publication of John Wooden's Pyramid of Success, which outlines behaviors necessary to achieve success in life. Let's take a look at some of his principles that every man should follow:

1. **Be true to yourself.** This is No. 1 in Coach Wooden's 7-point creed that was passed down from his father. We will look at them all among this list, but this one is first for a reason. Before we can become leaders of others, we must first understand ourselves. We need to distinguish our talents and strengths, as well as our weaknesses, and use each to their maximum benefit. Stay true to what you are best suited for and do not compromise your values.

2. **Always keep moving.** A former player of Coach Wooden said that he was always shouting, "Move, move, move!" He was not only referring to basketball, but to life in general. We must take action and we must always be progressing, building upon success and learning from failure. We must think and we must always be in motion. Coach Wooden would say, "Be quick, but don't hurry."

3. **Make each day your masterpiece.** *Carpe diem.* Seize the day. We are all familiar with this logic. However, we as a society tend to take the advice in a selfish manner. We seize what benefits ourselves most. The intent, and Coach's intent, was to spend each and every day using your abilities to their maximum value for the good of others. This is a great life lesson, because it is so easily misunderstood. In the words of Coach Wooden, "Perform at your best when your best is required, and your best is required each day."

4. **Help others.** Develop a compassionate and understanding heart. As we move forward, we need to lift others up with us as well. When we are only out for ourselves, we will eventually gain what we set out to achieve. A lonely and singular existence. If the goal is a well-rounded successful life, then it is not possible by following only individual

desires. Give wholly of yourself for the benefit of others to learn and follow. Here is a helpful All Pro Dad article on Raising Compassionate Kids.

**5. Earned, not entitled.** How often do we see this in life now? The fresh-out-of-college young person who wants a BMW and six-figure income right at the start. The rookie football player who demands a \$100 million contract before ever playing a down. The word 'earn' has been dropped from our collective vocabulary. Many people demand everything based solely on what they think they're entitled to. But to truly go far in life, realize you're not owed anything and if you want something, work unbelievably hard for it.

**6. Drink deeply from good books, especially the Bible.** This is to say, be careful what you pour into your brain. A man might read faithfully every single day, but what is he reading? What are we absorbing? In this day, propaganda is found everywhere we turn. Millions of dollars are spent each year on focus groups and think tanks coming up with new and improved ways to sway and form opinion. Coach Wooden was making the point to carefully filter and analyze the content and motives of your sources of information. Read well to live well.

**7. Make friendship a fine art.** We are all aware of the importance of friendships and the folks we surround ourselves with. Cherish those relationships and work at them the same way you would with family relationships. Give more than you take, and help more than you receive.

**8. Build a shelter against a rainy day.** Such important advice, and so overlooked in our world today. We have constructed our society to only function properly if we are all doing the exact opposite of this age-old wisdom. We can see the results in our own national debt. As our friend Dave Ramsey says, "Live like no one else so, later, you can live like no one else." Save for the future so, in your later years, you can be a giver.

9. **Gratitude.** Gratitude is essential for a peaceful heart and a balanced life. Create a daily habit of taking a moment of solitude to humbly express gratitude for the great many blessings of this life. Let others know why you're grateful for them. Let thanksgiving be the narrative of your life.

10. **Character matters.** When examining the life of John Wooden, one finds a tremendous man who influenced millions in his lifetime. The trait that stands out is his rock-solid character. Strength to do the right thing at all times, and to teach others to do the same. Most of us will never reach the sphere of influence John Wooden had, but our character matters just the same as his.

Without realizing it, our actions and deeds spread far and wide. We may think our sphere is relatively tiny, but it expands greatly when we consider the effect of it moving from one person to the next. Consider this reality as you move forward. Live in such a way that Coach Wooden would say, "You're a winner in life." Do you reflect some of the Characteristics of Growing Dads?

"The main ingredient in stardom is the rest of the team." – Coach John Wooden

**All Pro Dad** is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.

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# Staying Faithful in Fitness Reaps Sweet Rewards

Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, even the godliest men and women have labored to earn honest wages; build stable, respectable lives; and raise God-fearing children—all by the sweat of their brow (see Gen. 3:16-19).

“Labor” is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as an “expenditure of physical or mental effort especially when difficult or compulsory.” There’s a good reason “labor” is synonymous with “childbirth” and why a national holiday, aptly deemed “Labor Day,” honors those who sacrifice and devote long hours to both contribute to society and strengthen our economy. Labor is, well, *laborious*.

Even though Adam and Eve’s sin contaminated creation with the toils of the “nine-to-five” and the distresses of carrying and delivering a child, God graciously kept intact a promise of blessing and prosperity to those who work diligently. So while work, whether in a job or in the home, is often stressful, exhausting, and at times, nearly impossible, we can rejoice in the midst of it, knowing that rest and rewards are reserved for the faithful.

After coaching athletes through exceptionally challenging “workouts of the day” (WODs), I often ask them, “So, how do you feel?” I can’t recall a single time when one of them has responded with a negative or remorseful answer. After they’ve caught their breath and sipped some water, they reply with exclamations such as these:

“I feel awesome!” and “I’m so proud of myself! I didn’t think I could do it, and I did!”

Some even go so far as to say they want to do the formerly

“killer” WOD again soon! (In those instances, I suspect it’s just the endorphins talking.)

The next time they enter the box and see a formidable-looking workout scrolled across the whiteboard, they think twice before labeling it “Impossible!” Why? Because they’ve proven to themselves that they’re stronger than they think. They’ve proven that hard work yields blessings of confidence, strength, happiness and greater health. They know that if they authoritatively rid their minds of worry, boldly replace all fears with faith and courageously labor to conquer the day’s challenge, they *will* be victorious.

“ ... overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us” (Rom. 8:37, NLT).

In life and in fitness, with our families and with our CrossFit communities, giving 100 percent of ourselves is never a wasted effort. When we strive to honor God by working willingly and wholeheartedly at everything we do, as Colossians 3:23 instructs, the fruit we’ll receive will be sweet, full of life-giving nourishment for mind, body and soul, and we will soon catch our breath, sip some water and proclaim, *“I feel awesome!”*

Whatever challenge presents itself today, whatever WOD makes you perspire just looking at it, remember that victory, sweeter than any apple the enemy could offer, is waiting for you to bite into it if you would simply trust in Jesus to be your strength.

“You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours” (Psalm 128:2, NIV).

For the original article, visit .

**Diana Anderson-Tyler** is the author of *Creation House’s Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman’s Guide to Total Fitness*. Her popular website can be found at [and she is the owner and a coach at](#)

# **Stress Largely Factors Into Infertility Rate**

The rate of infertility, miscarriages, and C-sections are at an all-time high. Add everyday worry and anxiety to the equation and you will easily see how stress can contribute to these problems.

Stress, as it does in so many areas of our lives, interferes with the reproductive process and is a major cause for infertility and miscarriages. The reason is simple: lack of progesterone.

The word progesterone means “for gestation,” which means that women, you need this hormone in its right balance if you want to become pregnant and stay pregnant. Progesterone nourishes the uterine lining in preparation of the implanted fertilized egg. It is progesterone that continually feeds and nourishes the uterus during pregnancy. Unfortunately, constant stress causes a decrease in your progesterone levels.

When you are constantly in that “fight or flight” mode because of stress, your adrenal glands will produce additional cortisol and adrenaline. This is a normal bio-chemical process. The problem is that in order to make cortisol, your adrenal glands need progesterone. This causes your progesterone to be used in making your stress hormones, as opposed to what it is designed to do—support your pregnancy.

The adrenal glands cannot make cortisol without progesterone. Often referred to as the ‘progesterone steal,’ your body will

steal however much progesterone it needs to make cortisol.

This is one of the primary reasons some women are having a hard time with infertility and miscarriages; they don't have enough progesterone available to conceive or maintain a pregnancy.

The body is designed for survival, and when you are constantly in that "fight or flight" mode, it is more important for the body to run away from the saber-tooth tiger than it is to have a baby. The constant demand for cortisol is going to reduce your levels of progesterone.

Inadequate levels of progesterone not only interfere with the reproductive process, but that lack of progesterone is another reason so many women struggle with PMS, hot flashes, and night sweats— progesterone is being stolen away to make cortisol. The progesterone steal causes a deficiency, and also affects the balance of progesterone to estrogen and testosterone.

Supplementing with progesterone (I prefer sublingual progesterone over topical creams) can do wonders for so many women who are struggling with infertility, miscarriages, PMS, hot flashes, night sweats, and other hormonal imbalances.

However, I always encourage my patients to identify where the stress is coming from and support those exhausted adrenal glands. If we merely add progesterone without nourishing those adrenal glands, we are going to always have to supplement with progesterone. But if we strengthen our adrenal glands and manage our stress, we allow the adrenal glands to function the way they are designed to. Most importantly, you can never get your progesterone levels back to normal without first supporting and nourishing those exhausted adrenal glands.

## **Measuring Those Hormones**

Often women will tell me they had their hormones tested and were told everything was normal. Unfortunately, a one- time

blood or saliva sample doesn't give an accurate measurement of those hormones. That's because they fluctuate so much in a month. A more accurate picture and diagnosis can be made when several hormone samples in a month can be mapped out to determine if there are any abnormal hormonal variations.

I encourage anyone who is struggling with infertility, PMS, or other hormonal issues to take anywhere from 7-11 saliva samples to get a clear and accurate picture of your monthly cycle. When you map out your monthly cycle, you can easily see if your hormones are truly staying within their normal range.

If you are struggling with infertility, it is very important to also measure your LH and FSH, in addition to estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen and progesterone tell us if your ovaries are getting the job done, while the LH and FSH are more indicative of the communication between your brain (pituitary) telling your ovaries to start the ovulation process.

## **The Stress Connection**

Low levels of progesterone are often attributed to your adrenal glands stealing your progesterone. This is why it is recommended to first measure adrenal function and see how much stress you are truly placing on your body. The best way to measure your adrenal function is with a saliva test that measures both cortisol and DHEA.

Cortisol and DHEA are direct indicators of how much stress you are placing on the body. The constant demand for cortisol will eventually exhaust the adrenal glands and disrupt the production of your progesterone, estrogen, testosterone, and DHEA. It is basic cause and effect, and you will never get your reproductive hormones back to normal if your adrenal glands are burnt out.

A good 'adrenal stress panel' will include four cortisol measurements and two DHEA measurements, as well as a

measurement for your insulin levels. Measuring insulin is helpful and indicative to adrenal function, because high levels of cortisol trigger increased insulin, which is associated with obesity, cravings, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

The healing process is more than swallowing a handful of supplements. It begins by restoring normal function to the body. If stress is throwing your body out of balance, check to see if your adrenals need support. If they do, support them. Then it will be easier to rebalance those reproductive hormones.

**Dr. Len Lopez** is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of The Work Horse Trainer. He speaks extensively on diet, exercise, and how stress can affect your overall health and wellness.