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verticalthought®

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders



INFORMATION INUNDATION

The Values of **Young Manhood**

Preparing for **Womanhood**

Do Real Christians Persist **In Sinful Lifestyles?**

Finding Good Mentors

On Becoming a Man or Woman

Becoming an adult—becoming a man or woman—has always had its challenges. But today the choices are more complex and the challenges more perplexing.

It's common to hear advice to be true to yourself, to hold to your own ideals, to decide for yourself what is right for you. As some reason, the only way to be happy and successful is to firmly hold on to your own individuality. Expressing this sentiment, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the mid-20th century, advised: "Do what you feel in your heart to be right, for you'll be criticized anyway."

While we should always act in accordance with what we understand to be right, societal standards have shifted greatly since this former first lady uttered these words.

While many in her day strongly believed in things being either right or wrong, it's become popular today to accept all choices as being of equal value. And should anyone state that something is either right or wrong, it seems a chorus of political correctness shouts in response, "Don't judge me! Who are you to tell me what to think, believe or do?" Being "judgmental" seems to be the only remaining behavior considered sinful in our modern world.

Unfortunately, a society without guidelines is a toxic environment, not only for adults but also for young men and women. When we are taught that ideals are just someone's opinion and that other personal opinions are just as valid, we can become confused. Manhood or womanhood becomes a vague, illusory perception. It's whatever one wants it to be.

Delayed adolescence—a lengthening of the time it takes to become a self-sufficient adult—has become quite common for males in the United States. Here, an increasing number of young men continue living

at home, dependent on a parent or parents.

According to Dr. Michael Kimmel, author of *Guyland*, many young American men aged 16 to 26 are "totally confused and cannot commit to their relationships, work or lives. Although they seem baffled by the riddles of manhood and responsibility, they submit to the 'Guy Code,' where locker-room behaviors, sexual conquests, bullying, violence and assuming a cocky jock pose can rule over the sacrifice and conformity of marriage and family. Obsessed with never wanting to grow up, this demographic, which is 22 million strong, craves video games, sports and depersonalized sexual relationships" (guyland.net).

"A society without guidelines is a toxic environment, not only for adults but also for young men and women."

While boys struggle to become men, girls are offered a dizzying array of ideas on what it means to become a woman. Feminists suggest that women should compete with men in the corporate world and forgo marriage and having children. Others say that marriage and family are at the heart and core of being a woman.

Instead of falling for empty slogans and other people's notions of manhood and womanhood, we encourage you to learn what God says about these important subjects. Be sure to read our lead articles: "True Values of Young Manhood" and "Preparing for Womanhood."

VerticalThought

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HOW DOES A BOY BECOME A REAL MAN—
THE KIND OF MAN SO BADLY NEEDED IN TODAY'S
SOCIETY?

by Randy Stiver

YOUNG True Values of MANHOOD

The ancient Greeks said, “Know thyself.” (Well, they said it in Greek...) The hippies of the 1960s set out to “find” themselves. Even pointy-eared Mr. Spock explained that he had “found” himself in *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*.

Today, more than ever, young men face a confusing array of choices in their quest for identity and manhood. Psychobabble like “finding yourself” just doesn’t cut it in providing solid answers about what it means to be a mature, real man today.

Surprisingly, a good starting place can be found in sentiments expressed way back in 1901. Woodrow Wilson, who was later U.S. president during World War I, wrote a powerful essay on masculine maturity, “When a Man Comes to Himself.”

He said a man comes to himself “when he has left off being wholly preoccupied with his own powers and interests and with every petty plan that centers in himself; when he has cleared his eyes to see the world as it is, and his own true place and function in it.”

Despite problems in his philosophical views, Wilson was right in this statement as worded. Self-centeredness isn’t the mark of true manhood. But it has been a sad hallmark of many young men. So the starting place is to focus on others—our family, our friends, other people and, of course, God.

The created plan

Modern political correctness actively and militantly seeks to confuse the identity of the genders. For four-plus decades it has especially hated the very concept of manhood, not to mention loathing the divine sexual morals of male-to-female marriage and biblically defined family.

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). God made men to be male and women to be female. Understand that basic plan and you’re light-years ahead of today’s confused masses.

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WITH SO MANY VARYING IDEAS ABOUT WHAT BEING A WOMAN MEANS, MANY ARE CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT QUALITIES ARE IMPORTANT. WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

by Becky Sweat

Preparing for WOMANHOOD

The primary goal of some women has been to achieve “equality” with men and successfully compete with males in the working world. Many women today adhere to this perspective as they strive for the “superwoman” ideal—to climb the career ladder while still trying to manage family and household responsibilities.

Other women see this as an unattainable goal and believe their talents are best used caring for their children and home full-time.

Still others see womanhood primarily in terms of physical appearance. They may put on pretty dresses, sparkly earrings, red lipstick, high heels and pink bows in their long hair and look very feminine indeed. Yet their words and actions may portray something totally different.

What do you think? Do you have a definition in mind for womanhood? You should. As a young woman in your teens or early 20s, you need to be preparing now for womanhood, and you’ll be better able to do this if you have a clear understanding of what true femininity is all about.

The place to find this understanding is the Bible. God’s Word sets forth definite standards for womanhood. His design for females can be easily summed up. No matter what specific roles you might have someday—whether a wife, mother, single woman, career woman or member of your community or church—God desires that you cultivate a love for the home and family and a concern about the needs of others. That is the essence of true womanhood.

Specifically, the Bible admonishes women to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:4), engage in homemaking (Proverbs 31:15, 27-28; Titus 2:5), help those in need (Proverbs 31:20; 1 Timothy 5:10) and show hospitality (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2). Godly womanhood includes such character strengths as being wise and kind (Proverbs 31:26; 14:1), industrious (Proverbs 31:13-20, 27; 1 Timothy 5:10, 13), encourag-

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Young Manhood

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God made you a man. What are the true values of young manhood that He wants you to strive for?

Value #1: Truth and honor

Truthfulness is integrally related to honor. *Honesty* (derived from the word *honor*) means believing, speaking and living the truth.

Some underestimate the emotional strength of young men because they don't perceive the rather silent male emotions connected to honor. Being considerate of others and protecting rather than exploiting the vulnerable typifies honor.

Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *The War Against Boys*, insightfully observed,



Young men should **do** things! Video games, virtual reality, Facebook updates and watching TV don't count as action!

"History teaches that masculinity constrained by morality [truth and honor] is powerful and constructive; it also teaches that masculinity without ethics is dangerous and destructive" ("Men—It's in Their Nature," *The American Enterprise*, Vol. 14, No. 6).

Jesus Christ, the master of true ethics, taught the highest value of truth when He answered the Roman governor Pontius Pilate: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37).

Do you hear His voice? Jesus lived His human life as a young man—the perfect example of speaking and living the truth.

Never lie, never cheat (sexually or otherwise) and care for those who need help. Believe and honor the truth of God—live for it, and be willing to die for it.

Value #2: Right action

During the first decade of the 1900s, Theodore Roosevelt was the U.S. president. No one ever questioned his dynamic and benevolent masculinity.

He hiked, hunted, fished, loved the outdoors and taught his and other children how to do the same. As president, he was also America's leading ornithologist—literally the country's best expert on birds. He read 300 or more books a year; and had he not been busy leading the

fritter away your time; be somebody; get action."

Value #3: Humble service

One "dissident" feminist scholar offered a surprising insight about manhood's service: "Masculinity is aggressive, unstable, combustible. It is also the most creative cultural force in history. When I cross ... any of America's great bridges, I think—men have done this. Construction is sublime male poetry" (Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 1992).

Building bridges—whether over chasms or between people—serves others. And who was the greatest bridge-building servant and primary role model for young manhood?

"Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28). The great Lord and Savior is *the* humble servant.

What can you do to serve others? Help your parents and family with

cleaning, carrying and other chores. Help friends and classmates with encouragement. Hold doors open for people. Pick up litter—even if it's not yours. Do what you can with what you have to serve where you are.

Do it just because it needs to be done—not for thanks or praise.

Value #4: Love

We all need and want love—and need to love others. Most young men only focus on the first part. But not you, right?

Young manhood starts at home. Loving and honoring your parents is the first step to manhood. You will develop notable masculine maturity by serving and caring for your family—including brothers and sisters. *Notable*, because others will see a depth in you that is missing in so many of today's lost boys.

As a boy at home, Jesus Christ had a spiritual perception of His unique place in history, but He deeply loved, honored and obeyed His mother and stepfather, Mary and Joseph (see Luke 2:39-52).

Outgoing concern for your fellow man—

country, he would have been considered one of its best historians during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

His was an eager mind for learning—by his choice. He had a photographic memory, and many of his contemporaries considered his a mental power of the first rank. But he thought otherwise. "I have only a second-rate brain, but I think I have a capacity for action."

Young men should *do* things! Video games, virtual reality, Facebook updates and watching TV don't count as action!

If at all possible, get out into the creation. Learn the names of the trees in your neighborhood. Identify the birds and animals. Dig in the dirt, collect rocks, learn to fly fish or take up archery. Breathe the air directly—rather than through the air conditioner. Savor the energy of your true manhood!

Remember Roosevelt's constant advice: "Get action; do things; be sane; don't

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Womanhood

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ing (Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 12:18), respectful and self-controlled (Titus 2:3) and careful in communication (Ephesians 4:25; James 1:19).

A godly woman doesn't gossip (1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3). She is not easily provoked (1 Peter 3:4; Proverbs 10:19; 15:1; 17:27), nor is she beligerent, bossy, brash or quarrelsome (Proverbs 21:9, 19).

While dressing femininely can certainly be part of womanhood, you don't have to be the quintessential "girlie girl" to be a godly woman. You could wear women's work or casual clothes and still be very feminine if you have a kind, caring and sensitive nature. On the other hand, even if you are wearing a frilly pink dress, you will not be truly feminine if you are pushy, outspoken or confrontational.

With these biblical standards in mind, here are some steps you can take to prepare for womanhood:

Learn basic homemaking skills

Many in society believe the home is not worthy of our best labors, but God tells us otherwise. Proverbs 14:1 states, "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands."

Ask your mom or grandma to teach you domestic skills like cooking, menu planning, entertaining, mending, gardening, time management and decorating. Then practice what you've learned. When I was a teen, I regularly helped my mom with cooking. I became responsible for one dinner a week and did all the cooking, planning and grocery shopping for those meals. That helped me build a lot of confidence in the kitchen.

Whether you are married or single, you will need homemaking skills. Even if you are living alone, you will have a household to take of. You can also use these skills to serve others—for instance, by hosting dinner parties, cooking for church potlucks and bringing meals to elderly shut-ins. Even when I went off to college, I made my roommates happy with my homemade apple pie and cinnamon rolls. At that time, my dorm was my "home" to care for.

Think through your career options

Chances are, you'll be working a good part of your adult life, so your career choice is important. Even if you become a mother, you might work out of financial necessity or for the fulfillment of it. (Of course, it's best to not work full-time if you have preschoolers so you can avoid daycare and give your children the nur-



Many wise women choose professions that will interfere the least with family life.

turing attention they so badly need at this very formative age.)

Thinking about their family responsibilities, many wise women choose professions that will interfere the least with family life.

Many career fields nowadays require employees to work 50 or 60 hours a week, with frequent business travel. This is true of a lot of the high-level corporate jobs in the business world. Women in these positions can feel emotionally and physically drained, and have little time or energy left for family or friends.

On the other hand, some occupations are more "family-friendly," either because they can be done part-time or remotely from home or because the work hours coincide with when the children are in school. I know moms who work at home doing Web site design, writing, catering, business consulting, computer programming and accounting. I also

have mom friends who are teachers and professors and have the same vacation days and work hours as their kids' school schedules.

How do you know which careers are family-friendly? Ask career counselors at school for guidance. You may also want to talk to mothers you know and respect who work in career fields you're interested in. Ask for their honest opinions as to whether their job works around family life—or detracts from it. Find out this information *before* you spend years in college preparing for a particular career.

Educate the "whole" self

Obviously it's important to get the necessary education required for your chosen career. Additionally, you should cultivate an interest in the arts, humanities, history, geography and current affairs topics. Read classic literature and stimulating nonfiction books. Take opportunities to travel to different parts of the country and the world. Visit historical sites and museums.

All this will broaden your knowledge base and help you become a

more fascinating, well-rounded person. You will also be able to better connect with people with varying interests and backgrounds.

Learn to budget

This is important whether you live alone or become married. Wives are often managers of the household budget. The woman described in Proverbs 31 is a good example. She was obviously a good money manager; otherwise she would not have been able to buy fields or have money to give to the poor.

Start learning basic bookkeeping skills like how to balance a checkbook. If you don't develop these skills now, they'll be much harder to learn as an adult. If you have a part-time job or receive money as gifts, get into a habit of saving some of it and not overspending. Not only will you develop good financial practices, you will

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INFORMATION INUNDATION

Information overload is a common problem for young people today. But it's not due to schoolwork. Rather, it has everything to do with life outside the classroom.

by Becky Sweat

Does this sound like you? You sit at the desk in your bedroom with your biology book open in front of you, trying to study for a test. At the same time, you're plugged into your iPod, listening to music. Your laptop is also on, open to your Facebook page and Skype. And if those weren't enough things vying for your attention, every couple of minutes you're interrupted with a text message, to which you quickly respond.

You might see this as just a normal study session. But while it may very well be common, it's certainly not "normal."

"Our minds are designed to focus on one thing at a time," states David Levy, Ph.D., professor at the School of Information at the University of Washington. "We don't function well when we're trying to attend to multiple things at once."

All of these "technological interruptions," as Levy refers to them, are part of a much larger issue in our society—that

of "information overload." We have more information coming at us than we can realistically process.

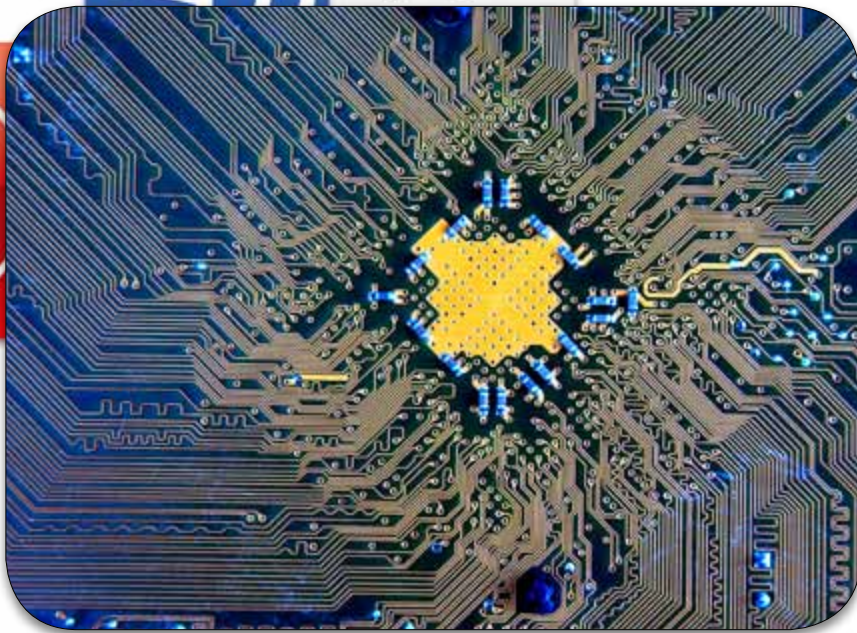
"There are only so many details in anyone's life that can be handled comfortably," says Deborah Barreau, Ph.D., associate professor at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "When that limit is exceeded, circuits begin to shut down. We refuse to process anymore." Too much information can make you feel anxious, overwhelmed, frustrated and confused, Barreau says.

The road to overload

The information we're talking about here includes the "social information" communicated through digital media—instant messaging, social networking sites, text messaging, etc., as well as the facts, data, opinions and reports encountered through television, books and magazines.

In one sense, information overload is not new. Ever since the printing press was invented, people have complained

“Information overload is a far greater problem today than it ever was in the past.” This is directly related to advances in technology.



about having too much to read. However, Levy says, “Information overload is a far greater problem today than it ever was in the past.” This is directly related to advances in technology.

Computers have allowed scientists to produce, analyze and compile data at speeds never dreamed of before. The human race has produced more knowledge in the last 30 years than in all the previous 5,000 years combined.

The development of the Internet, starting in the mid-1990s, allowed information to be easily published and accessed by just about anybody. “The World Wide Web has provided us access to billions of pages of information, increasing the number of people whose thoughts we encounter and exposing us to more ideas than ever before,” notes Lark Birdsong, an information professional and Web search trainer in Denver, Colorado.

Digital technologies have made it possible to be connected to information sources 24/7. Each day you may have hundreds or even thousands of e-mail messages, instant messages, YouTube and Flickr downloads, text messages and posts on social networking sites competing for your attention. There’s also round-the-clock programming to view on TV.

“The sheer volume of information being published today far outstrips our capacity to deal with it,” Levy says.

Too much insignificant information

As a student, you may agree that you’re overloaded with information—too much reading every night for school! But really, the bigger issue is what you’re being exposed to *outside* the classroom.

Trying to keep up with all the information coming at you electronically from the media and your friends can take up a lot of your time—time you might not have to spare. For instance, you can get so caught up surfing the Web or watching TV that it ends up consuming time you should have used for something more important, like homework,

The human race has produced more knowledge in the last 30 years than in all the previous 5,000 years combined.

prayer, Bible study, talking with your family or sleep.

Often the challenge is trying to figure out what information is significant. You might do a Google search on a particular subject and get thousands or even millions of search results. “Now you have to decide: Which of them are you going to read, and which are you going to ignore? The very act of choosing takes time,” says Levy. You might have to sift through a lot of insignificant information before you get to anything useful.

Remember that anyone can start a blog or Web site or share his or her perspectives on online forums and chat rooms. As a result, much of the information on the Internet is just opinion or is outright false. Yet it might be billed as “fact.”

“It can be difficult to know which Web sites are trustworthy and which ones aren’t, discern bias and point of view,

and assess the validity of information being presented,” states Birdsong. You may encounter a lot of conflicting information, which can make you feel frustrated and confused.

Social concerns

There are particular concerns with the social information. Electronic messaging can be distracting, waste a lot of time and destroy productivity. Research has shown that students’ grades suffer when they text a lot or visit social networking sites while studying.

Barreau’s students often text and send “tweets” while she lectures. She says that not only is this behavior disrespectful, but “their attention is divided, and they’re not getting as much out of class. Most people don’t multitask very well. We generally deal with things better sequentially, rather than try to do three or four things at once.”



Set aside a regular “focus time” each day when you disconnect from technology—to do homework, pray, study the Bible and just relax.

Excessive use of electronic communications can also hinder your development of appropriate interpersonal skills, adds Patricia Leavy, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. Her concern is that many young people today are learning how to interact with others, including how to make friends and date, largely by technological means, as opposed to face-to-face interaction.

“There’s a big difference between communicating with a thousand people you don’t really know on Facebook versus what it means to meet people face-to-face, read people’s gestures, learn to get to know each other and communicate verbally,” she says. With the “virtual relationships,” people just exchange bite-sized tidbits of information—not the building blocks of solid relationships.

Another negative lesson teens are learning, Leavy says, is that it’s normal to be at the dinner table texting with your cell phone or listening to your iPod. “This sends the message to others, particularly those who are at least a generation older than you, that you don’t care about them, because, if you did, you’d be paying attention to them rather than using your technology.”

The antidote to information overload

While information overload is a widespread problem in our society, it need not take over your life.

- For starters, take an honest assessment of your priorities. Are you spending so much time on the Internet that your grades are suffering? Are you routinely using your phone or laptop when you’re with friends and family? Do you spend more time IMing your friends than you do talking with them in person?

“I like Facebook,” admits Birdsong, “but it doesn’t replace face-to-face interactions.” Be very clear with your goals in life and manage your information intake around that. If your priorities are misaligned, make the necessary changes. This may mean limiting your Facebook usage or no longer taking your phone to class.

- Decide which information streams and social sites are most valuable to you and focus on those. Don’t try to keep up with them all.

- When you need to do research, ask your reference librarian for help. Most librarians are happy to educate people about efficient Internet search techniques, which will help you get better refined results and waste less time. Your

library will also allow you access to databases of published articles, providing you with information that is generally more accurate compared to what’s available on free-access Web sites.

- Set aside a regular “focus time” each day when you disconnect from technology. This might be for a couple hours every afternoon or before you go to bed. Turn off the computer and TV, and ask friends to *not* call or text you during this time. You can use this time to do homework, pray, study the Bible and just relax without any distractions.

In addition, you should avoid using your iPod and cell phone at the dinner table or whenever you’re in the company of others. Give the people you’re with your full attention. Show an interest in their perspectives and insights. Birdsong concludes, “The truth is, some of the most significant information doesn’t come from things, but from people.”

Becky Sweat is a freelance writer specializing in health and family topics. She lives in the Dallas, Texas, area with her husband and two sons.

Young Manhood

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or, as the Bible says, loving your neighbor as yourself (see Matthew 19:19)—begins with a strong love for one's family.

The Romantic Era began around 1800. The movement considered young men to be “authentic” only if they were full of angst, anger and rebellion. Hello, 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s and 2000s! But that's a far cry from what God intended manhood to be.

A young man who genuinely cares for others and does what he can to help and serve his fellow man represents true manhood in God's eyes.

But when does true young manhood get to love true young womanhood?

Sir Winston Churchill once stated: “Where does the family start? It starts with a young man falling in love with a girl. No superior alternative has yet been found.”

The sexual part of love comes only after you have married that particular sweetheart of young womanhood—and it's to be experienced only with *her*. Sexual purity is summarily defined in the Seventh Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Matthew 19:18). Premarital sex is just another form of adultery. Honor the one you love, or will one day love, by remaining sexually pure for her.

That incredible man-woman bond will produce *your* children. Young manhood holds a deep concern for, cares for and protects children—especially one's own. And again, all this begins with you growing up at home. By loving and honoring your parents today, you will know how to powerfully, wonderfully love your wife and children tomorrow.

Value #5: God

The main reason for the gender confusion and sexual perversion in modern society's young men is that they don't know God—or necessarily even want to admit He exists. But exist He does!

Recapturing these true values of young manhood is not possible without first debunking atheism and, second, knowing the true God of the Bible.

Jesus and His close cadre of disciples—who became the 12 apostles—were all young men. Christ began His ministry at age 30 and died at 33. The Bible and tradition say that nearly all of them, except for John, died as martyrs for the true faith.

That kind of dedication to God required a powerfully formative early young manhood. They rejected the “atheism” of their day, which was a rampantly sexually immoral paganism. They dared to stand apart from others—to follow God's way.

Jesus called for such young men early in His ministry and seeks the same today (John 4:23). So pray daily, study the Bible, seek and prove the truth—then follow the great God whose truth it is.

Randy Stiver is the pastor of United Church of God congregations in Columbus and Cambridge, Ohio.

Womanhood

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also build up savings for “big ticket” items you may want to buy in the future.

Get healthy!

The Proverbs 31 woman had a lot of stamina and physical strength (Proverbs 31:17, 25). To be as active as she was, you need to be in good physical health. Now is the time to start eating a well-balanced diet and exercising regularly (if you aren't doing so already).

You should also avoid smoking and the abuse of alcohol or illegal drugs. This kind of “partying” is very harmful to your body and can be a difficult habit to break as an adult.

Practice serving

One of the best ways to develop an outgoing concern for others is to get into the habit of serving. If you know of a family at church or in your neighborhood with little children, you might offer to babysit for them every now and then. This will not only help you develop child-caring skills, but it's also a wonderful service.

There are many other opportunities to serve. Offer to help out with church potlucks, either with setup, serving food or cleanup. Send cards to people who are sick or facing difficult situations. If you see someone sitting alone at school or church, go up and talk to him or her. If there's a family at church with a lot of little children, offer to sit with them during services so that you can help watch their children. You may also be able to volunteer at a day-care center, nursing home or hospital.

Any of these will help you develop more of a service mind-set and get your focus off yourself.

Draw close to God

Pray daily. Ask God to help you develop traits of biblical femininity and to guide you in your preparation for adulthood. If you see character flaws in yourself, ask God to help you overcome them.

Make time to study God's Word every day and pay special attention to instruction related to womanly roles. Practically every book in the Bible offers insights on this topic, either directly or indirectly.

Study the positive examples of women such as Deborah, Abigail, Ruth, Esther, Mary and the “virtuous woman” described in Proverbs 31. Meditate about how to apply the right principles found in these examples in your own life.

There are certainly a lot of steps that can and should be taken to prepare for womanhood. But ultimately, it's this last one—developing a close relationship with God—that will lead to your becoming a *godly* woman.

Becky Sweat is a freelance writer specializing in health and family topics. She lives in the Dallas, Texas, area with her husband and two sons.

STARTING A Small Business EVEN IN TOUGH TIMES!

by Howard Davis

Pointers for a Successful Start-Up

Plan, plan and then plan some more. Having a good plan helps you determine new opportunities while staying on target to reach the goals of the business. The initial research and planning stages also help you determine if you will be able to make the money needed to stay in business.

Ask yourself: Will the business make enough profit (what's left after your expenses) to pay for the effort and time you put into it?

Develop your customer relationships. This is crucial for keeping current clients and gaining new ones! Word of mouth is the best marketing.

Keep your word. If you say you will be there or deliver a product at a certain time, then make sure to follow through.

Save for a rainy day, and don't go into debt. As your own boss, you're on the hook for any expenses.

—From Luke Crane

Here are the stories of four people who own and operate their own businesses.

Most successful business owners start small and start young. Most of us admire the freedom and prosperity of people who own and operate their own businesses. Many of us either work in a small business or try creating one at some time in our lives.

As you get to know them, you'll find owners of small businesses often have a belief in God's guidance. The ones featured in this article have positive attitudes that allow them to keep going, even when times are really hard. They may not be among the rich upper crust of society, but they are abundant in enthusiasm and live full, activity-filled lives rich in meaning and promise.

The entrepreneurs included below display inspired ideas, initiative, drive and positive attitudes that help them practice visionary, vertical thinking. Their businesses are based on offering service that is profitable for both themselves and their customers.



Clark College student **David Browning**, 19, of Vancouver, Washington, found that getting a job after graduating from high school last year was tough. Competition was intense for low-wage jobs being filled by overqualified workers laid off in his region, hard hit in "the Great Recession."

His parents suggested he start his own business in the summer before college. He had been mowing the next-door

neighbor's lawn. As he put it later, "Little did I know that this was going to be the gateway into starting my own business."

"The neighbor came to me soon after my parents' suggestion and said she had given my name and number to a friend in her Rotary Club who needed landscaping help. A few days later my phone rang"—and David then spoke with the potential customer. The two agreed upon a time for

him to work.

The next day the man showed up in a nice-looking SUV. They had a pleasant conversation as David rode with him up to a big gate in an exclusive residential area. "I was awestruck as I looked at the huge mansion and noticed that the grounds were completely brown."

David knew it was a summer-long job. "This was the first stepping stone in the success of my summer business," he says.

"I never sent out any flyers or posted my number anywhere. My business simply took off by word of mouth between near strangers. I never expected that starting your own business could be so easy and so much fun."



When he was 17, **Cody Kitts** started a tile business in St. Louis, Missouri. A very energetic and adventurous guy, Cody opened a tree service at age 22 and later began repossessing vehicles.

Regarding the latter, Cody explains, “I got bored and made a decision to buy a wrecker tow truck, eventually two, and began to learn lessons of *what I did not want to do* for the rest of my life. I got into auto and property repossessions when I was 23 because the money was so great. I hired another guy for the next three years. The job was based on high pressure, sleuthing and often deception in order to gain possession. I got good at it but learned there and then I only wanted to work in honest labor without any shadows of shadiness.”

Cody had continued to do tree service on the side. So he got out of the repossession business and dedicated himself to building a tree service business. When he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to attend the Ambassador Bible Center, he continued offering tree service in his new location. Because he was so industrious, the business prospered from the start.



Seattle, Washington-area native **Nathan Wetmore**, 34, began working in construction as a child with his grandfather. He particularly liked cabinetry and saw the opportunity to introduce an entirely new product.

Nathan decided to become an independent businessman when he was 24. Since then, he’s been a partner in a small general contracting company.

“Almost 10 years ago now, I set out to develop a countertop made from concrete and a business based on this idea. There were several companies selling competing products, so I intended to set

myself apart from all of them. Most of the existing products on the market had some problems with quality. My product was eventually named Tekstone and has become a very refined product that’s been featured in fine home-building magazines.”

During the boom years of construction, Nathan created a unique place for himself in home remodeling and contracting. Now his reputation and specialized quality have helped him stay employed and profitable even in our “bust” real estate market—the worst for construction since the Great Depression.

Cody says: “It’s all about customer relations first and the trees second. When you get up every day and serve the needs of your customers well, they are your greatest advertisement for the rest of their lives.” Cody has five men working for him now and says there’s a lot to getting and completing each job. “You have to learn to sell yourself to the customer to be able to do the job the way he wants it done.”

Business is booming, and his wife Bobbi works very hard just to keep up with the administration of the business while Cody is on the job. Cody loves the benefits of owning his own company. He says it gives him freedom, a good income and the ability to schedule time for work, for fun, for travel, for adventure and for serving others.

In 2005, 23-year-old **Kristina Crane** decided to start her own business when a client wanted to hire her as a consultant. Though she was newly married and recently graduated from college, her husband Luke had confidence that she could be successful. He had run his own lawn mower repair business in college, so he encouraged her to take the risk with this one client.

Luke wanted to make it a family business and had a background in computers. So the couple decided to offer programming as one of the new company’s services and worked together to build the business. “The decision was the right one, and we are doing well.”

Luke cautions, “Running your own business takes a lot of additional work and fortitude but is definitely worth the effort if done with thoughtful care and planning.” He says it’s important to work out the right legal structure and that “it’s very important to research” all aspects of your business model. For more helpful advice from him, see “Pointers for a Successful Start-Up” on the previous page.

If you would like to operate your own business, consider whether you’re willing to make the sacrifices and commitment necessary to be successful. With hard work, proper principles and steps, and God’s blessing, perhaps you too can have a successful business.

Howard Davis is a minister who works in the media department of the United Church of God.

Honoring Your Parents

Why and How?

*No doubt you have heard of the commandment to “honor your father and your mother.”
But what does that really mean on a day-to-day basis? Why is it so important? How can we honor
our parents in the world today?*

by Zach Smith

Have you ever thought about what a big task it is to truly honor your parents? Surely you’ve at times felt that it’s a hard thing to do! As vertical thinkers in today’s society, how can we stand out from the crowd and be shining examples of how to properly honor our parents? Before contemplating that, let’s first consider the importance of doing so—and of making sure we don’t *dishonor* them. Then we’ll look at some practical applications.

A serious matter with a higher meaning

In the Old Testament, God said, “For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:9). *Put to death?* Yes, death! Seem important? Even though God has not given His Church today the role of enforcing the death penalty for this malicious behavior, we should still recognize it as a grave offense. The apostle Paul lists being even “*disobedient to parents*” among such evils as sexual sin, murder and hating God! (Romans 1:28-32).

The importance of honoring parents makes complete sense when we think about what the parent-child relationship represents—the overall purpose for humanity! God created human beings because He wants a family. He wants children who will become like Him by developing His character. He wants to be a Father to you and me! The way we obey, respect and glorify our

physical parents says a lot about our willingness to honor God as our ultimate Father.

Have you ever thought, when interacting with your parents, about what your relationship with them is intended to portray? How do you speak to them? Would you phrase things differently if God Himself was standing in front of you?

I write this not as a perfect example of a respectful child, but rather as a recovering disrespectful one! I say *recovering* because it takes a lifetime of effort to perfect the work of honoring our parents and our eternal Father. I’ve had my share of disrespectful moments over the years, times when I definitely was not considering what God was thinking about my actions.

Obedience rewarded

God’s commandment to honor our parents comes with a great promise: “Honor your father and your mother,

that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12). Long life is offered as a blessing for obedient children.

This may come in part through God’s direct intervention, but it is also largely the natural result of obedience. Children who obey their parents’ instructions about safety and not getting into trouble tend to have fewer fatal accidents and missteps compared to those who ignore those instructions.

God detests disrespect—to the point of calling for the death of those guilty of the worst examples of such an attitude toward parents. In fact, merely failing to honor parents is, as a violation of God’s spiritual law, sin—and the penalty for all sin is ultimately death (1 John 3:4; Romans 6:23).

The fact is, sin brings harm not only to others but to its perpetrators as well. On the other hand, obedience results in blessing all around. The result of honoring our greatest parent, God the Father, is eternal life in His family. It is the best gift that God can give us, and He wants to give it!

Practical tips

So how can we properly show respect and reverence for our moms and dads in a way that will be pleasing in God’s sight—pleasing enough to make Him want us to live even longer? Here are a few practical tips to get your thoughts turning.



Why honor our parents? Because it shows respect for them and reverence and honor for God, our spiritual Father.

Follow the right lead

First, don't follow the negative examples you see all around you—disrespectful back talk, bad attitudes, sarcasm, lying, selfishness. Too often, this is what we see in child-parent interactions around us. Such things happen so often that they can almost seem normal, even acceptable.

If we can't always look to either side of us for a living model, then where do we turn? How about looking up to a higher example by literally looking down—down into the pages of the Bible? Jesus Christ was the best example of a son, the only man to ever live without fault as a child and throughout His life.

He lived to please His Father in heaven and to bring honor and glory to His Father's name, but He was also very considerate and caring toward His earthly mother. So much so, that even when He was dying He made sure that she would be taken care of (John 19:25-27).

Think golden

The Golden Rule says, "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12, New International Version). What makes *you* feel loved, appreciated, even honored? Chances are, it's not your parents getting angry or sarcastic, raising their voices, slamming doors, cutting deep with words or giving you the silent treatment. Think about how you interact with your parents. Is this how you want to be treated?

Show respect by word and deed

How do we show our respect for God and our desire to

honor Him? Most obviously, it's by what we say and what we do. The same is true with our parents. If we love them and want to honor them, we need to show it by what we say and do. Here are a few examples:

- **Practice respectful communication**—both verbal and nonverbal. *How* we say things is sometimes more important than *what* we're saying. A disrespectful tone will drown out the meaning of your message.
- **Be honest.** Telling less than the truth can seem appealing at times, but in the long run honesty really is the best policy. If you're honest up front, your parents may see this openness as a sign of maturity. Perhaps they would allow you to do something you thought you could only manage to do through lying. If it's past that point, realize that it's never too late for honesty. Somehow, parents always seem to find things out. It's better that they hear it from you than from someone else.
- **Be teachable.** Vital to communication is listening. Knowing it all isn't all it's chalked up to be. A willing ear is a sign of respect, with the added benefit of gaining wisdom.
- **Be thankful.** Verbalize gratitude and display it through deeds. Mow the yard before your dad gets home or give your mom a night off from the dishes. Actions like these can say "thank you" more than words ever could.
- **Use wisdom.** Obedience seems like a great display of honor, and it is! But if you want to raise the bar even higher, try making wise choices *without* first being told. Do what's right because it's right, not just because Mom or Dad said so.

Personalize

Do you want to really throw them for a loop? Try asking a simple question: "What makes you feel honored?" In preparing this article, I tried that with a few parents, including my own. The question is almost paralyzing because they've likely never been asked that before. It may even take them a while to come up with an answer.

Asking your parents this question will show them that you're making an effort, and it will supply you with a personalized list of how-to steps. Of course, be sure to apply what you learn or you'll lose credibility.

In a nutshell, why honor our parents? Because honoring them also shows respect and reverence for our spiritual Father (Colossians 3:20). Indeed, His law requires it—as it is for our good and that of everyone else. How do we show honor? Basically, through everything we do. A big task? Sure it is. But it's worth it. Are you preparing for a long life ahead?

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Do Real Christians **PERSIST** in Sinful Lifestyles?

by Ellen Buchanan

While watching TV with a group of fellow college students, my roommate declared, “I think it’s ridiculous that people think that someone can’t be a homosexual and a Christian!”

“Wait, what just happened?!” was the initial thought that came to my mind when my roomie made her surprising proclamation. I was somewhat blindsided and taken aback by the randomness and, more importantly, the biblical inaccuracy of her statement. Before I could figure out what prompted her comment, she continued with, “Sure, homosexuality is a sin. But we are *all sinners!*”

She was definitely correct in noting that we all are sinners. The apostle Paul stated that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, English Standard Version throughout). But I also knew that this principle didn’t mean that Christians can do as they please—that people would be accepted by God as they lived ongoing lifestyles that blatantly went against His clear instructions. Somewhere I knew there had to be a misunderstanding.

As I further pondered this incident, I found that the heart of the matter lay in a distorted view of what it means to be a Christian. God’s Word tells us that to be a Christian one must not only believe in the existence of the Son of God but he or she must also *follow His commands* (Matthew 7:21). Merely understanding that Jesus Christ exists is not sufficient. James addresses this issue, stating that mere belief is not sufficient because “even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19). Based on this passage, we’d have to conclude that if simply believing in the existence of Jesus Christ was sufficient, then the demons would be Christians too!

So, when it comes to following God’s commands, what does the Bible say about those who continue to lead sinful lives? Paul addressed this issue with the Christians in Corinth, stating, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, *nor men who practice homosexuality*... will inherit the Kingdom of God” (1

Corinthians 6:9-10, emphasis added).

Was this just Paul’s personal opinion? Of course not. He told the Corinthians in the same letter that he was “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:1) and stated that he was appealing to them “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 10). So he spoke with Christ’s authority.

Paul also refers to homosexuality in the same way in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 and Romans 1:24-27 (including female homosexuality, verse 26). These New Testament prohibitions are firmly based on similar statements found in Old Testament law (Acts 24:14; 17:11; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). (To understand more, please see pages 40-41 of our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.) Homosexuality and other forms of sexual immorality, such as adultery and premarital sex, are indeed sins.

Now let’s revisit my roommate’s finishing remark, “But we are all sinners.” Again, while this is clearly true, how can we reconcile this with Paul’s instruction?

The answer is simple. It comes down to one word: *lifestyle*. What is the overall objective in one’s lifestyle? Can a professional hit man be a Christian? Can a priest in a temple of Zeus be a Christian? Can a strip club owner be a Christian?

These issues have easy answers. If one repents of his or her sin and no longer lives or promotes that sinful lifestyle, the answer is yes, one can be a Christian. If one doesn’t repent and change his or her disobedient lifestyle, absolutely not! So, should continuing to embrace and practice homosexuality, a lifestyle that is in clear violation of God’s commands (just as murder, idol worship, and fornication are), be treated differently? No, because all “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

While Christians will at times succumb to temptation and sin, they ask God for forgiveness when they do and then strive to forgo their sinful behavior (1 John 1:8–2:1). Put another way, we can’t *deliberately* continue unrepentant in a lifestyle

of sin and be Christians at the same time. Instead, Christians lead a life of repenting of their sins and striving, with God’s help, to change their ways. Some sinful habits may take time to completely eradicate, but the heart and intent of Christians is that they continually strive to be like Jesus Christ.

Ellen Buchanan is a member of the Houston, Texas, North congregation of the United Church of God. She is currently pursuing a degree in accounting.

Help for Those Who Wish to Overcome

Homosexuality is a very real and powerful influence in the lives of some, and our concern and love are extended to those who wrestle with this difficulty. While the Bible shows that homosexual behavior is not acceptable, there is hope for those who want to escape from this lifestyle. After condemning fornication, adultery and homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul wrote in verse 11: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Some members of the Church of God in Corinth had previously practiced various forms of sexual immorality, including homosexual behavior. But they turned from their sins and were accepted by God. Following this scriptural example, the United Church of God seeks to assist those who are genuinely striving to overcome sinful lifestyles. We welcome into our fellowship all people who repent of their sins.

For more on this subject and a list of organizations helping people leave homosexuality, see “Is Homosexuality Acceptable to God?” from our booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* (VerticleThought.org/booklets/fm/homosexuality.asp).

1,200 Facebook Friends Really?

Some people seem to collect online friends just to see how big they can make their number. **But is that real friendship?**

by Amanda Stiver

For some people, how many Facebook “friends” they have seems to be a status symbol—or a competition! But how many friends do most people really have?

Born for adversity

A recent study conducted by Nivea found that the average Briton has only three true friends through the course of life. It may be a few more or less, but these are friends with whom we are in fairly constant contact throughout a lifetime. There are other people we think of as friends, but we often lose track of one another over time and distance.

The study found that of these three friends, one is typically a best friend from childhood, another a close friend who is related and, finally, a friend made during higher education or at work (“Average Briton ‘Has Only Three True Friends,’” *Telegraph.co.uk*, April 15, 2010). These are the people who stick with us through thick and thin. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity,” goes the proverb (*Proverbs 17:17*).

Some friends are like family, and some family members are dear friends. This kind of friendship sees us through pain and joy. It can be augmented by connecting on social networking sites, but true friendship also needs a dose of face-to-face contact, a helping hand during times of need, frequent phone calls to catch up and chat, and a letter or card now and then.

The best friends

To that list of three close friends should be added two more. These friends are shared by many and are worth more than all other human friends in the world!

Is it too bold to think of God the Father and Jesus Christ as friends? No—because God extended the hand of friendship first.

God has many friends, but perhaps most striking among them is Abraham. Known as the friend of God, he kept God’s commandments and believed God would be true to His Word when He said, in effect, “Move and I will bless you” (see *James 2:23*; *Genesis 12:1-3*). This kind of trust is an important aspect of friendship. Fair-weather friends who abandon you leave a lot of hurt in their wake.

Jesus Christ extends His friendship to His followers. This friendship has a condition attached: obedience. But the generosity that rewards obedience is phenomenal—the regard of the Supreme Being and, eventually, eternal life.

You can pick your friends

Family members are decided from birth, but friends are chosen throughout life. Choosing wisely is important

because some people inspire us to do better and improve, while others drag us down. The book of Proverbs warns against choosing the wrong type of companions: “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (*1:10*).

Being a friend to those in need is a good thing, but trying to reform those who continuously and willingly sin will likely pull us down.



Friendly tips for Facebook

Using Facebook to share news, issue invitations, catch up with friends and post modest photos is a positive way to keep in touch. But sharing too much personal information, spreading gossip and rumors, or venting about other people on such sites is not good. Never say anything online that couldn’t or shouldn’t be said to someone in a face-to-face conversation.

It is vital to treat others only as we would wish to be treated ourselves (*Matthew 7:12*).

Keep in touch

Friendships are a precious gift from God. God the Father and Jesus Christ extend friendship to us. True, close, life-long friends are few and far between, but throughout our lives we can make friends.

Growing friendships is like growing plants. If you don’t feed and water the plants, they die. If we don’t feed a friendship with frequent communication and outgoing concern and water it with some face time once in a while, we can lose a friend.

Wildly adding Facebook contacts isn’t the way to make real friends, but social networking sites, properly used, can help us cultivate healthy friendships.

Amanda Stiver works as a freelance writer in Columbus, Ohio, and serves on the *Vertical Thought* staff.



Life's Choices

by William Ledford

From the time we are small children and throughout our adult lives, we have to make choices that affect the rest of our lives. As we grow older, those choices become more complicated and difficult—and the consequences more serious.

I write this article from prison. My life is now directed by people who don't know me, don't really care about me and, for that matter, don't even care if I change or not. I am told when to eat, when to shower, when I can have visitors. I have many other restrictions—in short, I have very few rights or privileges.

This is an open letter to the young people in God's Church, to show the choices one should *not* make.

A pattern of bad choices

Before I was even a teenager I made bad choices that affected my life negatively. My birth father left my mother before I was born. I had an abusive stepfather; and in order to stay away from him and avoid going home, I would break the law so the authorities would take me out of my home. I was jailed and put in foster homes.

This became a pattern for me. After a while, anytime something didn't go right for me or something came up that I didn't want to do, I would run away and commit some other offense. When I was 15, my stepfather was beating my mother, and I threatened to kill him. That cost me three years in reform school.

Shortly after being released and turning 18, I continued the same pattern. When things didn't go right, I would commit crimes. I allowed peer pressure to affect my decisions and to determine my choices. Eventually, those choices cost me the best years of my life. I ended up spending 28 years in state prison. I lost family members, and I lost the respect of my family and people I grew up with.

After 28 years in prison I was paroled and then struggled to find a job—a search made even harder because I am legally barred from certain jobs, such as work in the criminal justice system, education, security, health care and many other fields. I couldn't find even a simple job like stocking store shelves. I had by this point decided I wanted to find a job that didn't conflict with the Sabbath, and that made the search even harder.

Wherever I looked I had to experience the contempt and condemnation of others every time I had to check that box on the employment application regarding whether I had been convicted of a crime.

I did find a job, a place to live and had wonderful Church members who tried to help me in my new life. Looking back, I see God's blessings in the job I found, the apartment I was able to live in and the Church family who took me under their wing. But looking back doesn't move you forward.

I thought I had learned my lesson, but I quickly fell back into some old habits. I then distanced myself from God and His people who were trying to help me. I started drinking and hanging out with people who were not interested in what was best for me. I lost control and got distracted from what was important because I let go of my prayer and Bible study. I ended up justifying wrong choices again and was put back in prison with additional time added to my origi-

nal sentencing. I never felt so low in my life.

I had again let down the people I cared about the most. I thought for sure God would give up on me, as well as the Church members who had invested so much concern and care in helping me. I very nearly gave up on myself.

God did not give up on me, however, and so He wouldn't let me give up.

Choices and consequences

There is no glory in bad choices. When you are confronted with choices, take the time to stop and think of the consequences. Just *one* bad choice can affect and change your life forever. Do not let others tease or bully you into making bad choices. If in doubt, stop and ask your parents or someone in authority. Remember that God is also a good authority to ask! (Proverbs 3:5).

I write this in the hope that you will stop and consider your own choices—and never become what I have become. Choose to live your life well, and within God's laws.

I didn't have the opportunity to learn God's way in my youth, but I did once I was in prison. I should have remembered that training, but I let myself get caught up in the cares and pleasures of life (Luke 8:14) instead of keeping my eyes on the prize (Philippians 3:14). I have now re-committed myself to being grounded even more fully in God's instruction in order to break the pattern of bad choices.

By the time I am able to be released again, I will have spent 33 years in prison, and I will still be on parole for five

I write this in the hope that you will stop and consider your own choices—and never become what I have become. Choose to live your life well, and within God's laws.

years after that. I know that God has not given up on me and that I still have much to learn.

I encourage you to look in the Bible at the examples of people who made various choices and to follow those who made *right* choices. Hebrews 11 is a great reference regarding choices made by Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Noah, Moses, David, Joshua, Ruth and many other men and women.

I also encourage you to observe those individuals you see making good choices and talk to them about what thought goes into those decisions. Ask God for wisdom in making good choices and for His guidance.

The alternative is demonstrated by my past. Don't let it be you.

William Ledford is a baptized member of the United Church of God, currently serving out the last few years of his prison term. William wrote this article with the assistance of **Dan Dowd**—a husband and father and pastor of the United Church of God congregations in Milwaukee and Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Finding Good Mentors

Is there anyone we, as Christians, can look to as a mentor on a college campus? And if so, what can we expect from the mentoring relationship?

One of my hardest and most rewarding college experiences was building relationships with college faculty and staff members who didn't tear down my faith—and with some who even helped reinforce the values and beliefs that were central to my spiritual identity. I found that developing these mentoring relationships was central to my overall satisfaction and success in college.

But how did I find these mentors? Let me share two examples of individuals who have been instrumental in my own development to help you consider who you can reach out to on your own campus to begin forming strong mentoring relationships.

Out-of-class faculty connections

During my freshman year I learned quickly that in order to better understand my course material, I needed to attend my professors' "office hours"—a scheduled block of time they set aside to meet with students outside of class to answer questions and go over lecture material.

That term I was taking an especially hard course on media literacy as part of my major and needed to make sure I correctly understood what was being taught in class. When I reached my professor's office, I signed my name on the list of appointments and waited for my turn, not sure what to expect.

Ten minutes later I was sitting in a 1970s plaid armchair across from a very energetic old professor who let me know I could just call him "Doc." My uncertainty immediately started to fade away as we talked about the course lectures, the upcoming midterm and the communication studies program I was in.

Over the weeks, I would regularly visit Doc's office to discuss interesting things I observed in mass media that connected back to the class and also to share personal stories about my transition to college and what I wanted to do with my life.

Even though Doc's political and religious background were almost entirely opposite to my own (which he openly shared without flaunting his own views), he never made me feel inferior or wrong for being a woman of faith and conviction. In fact, he even complimented the discipline and diligence he observed in my studies, commenting that my positive work ethic "must be connected to your religious practices."

As the years passed in college, I stayed in touch with Doc,



While everyone finds mentors in slightly different ways, there are a few principles that can help most everyone.

who later agreed to serve as my faculty adviser for my senior honors thesis. The relationship I had built in those first few weeks of college proved to be one of the strongest and most lasting connections I made in my four years on campus, and it all started because I was willing to attend his office hours.

Doc taught me about more than just media literacy. He proved to me that two people could hold opposing viewpoints and still treat each other with personal and professional respect, while forming a strong mentoring relationship.

Learning from a resident director

Going into my sophomore year, I started getting more involved in student leadership in my residential community. That's where I met Dawn (not her real name), a resident director (RD) who was in charge of the building complex I lived in.

Dawn lived on campus not far from my own dorm room, and she would regularly have her student staff over for ice cream socials and movie nights. I began noticing that these events were never scheduled on Friday nights or Saturdays, and I asked her about her religious background one day after our Hall Council meeting. Dawn shared that she was

Mentors in College

Here's what other students and recent college graduates had to say when asked, "Who mentored you in college, and how did you develop a mentoring relationship?"

After taking a summer class with my cognitive neuroscience professor and academic adviser, I joined his lab team where I worked as a research assistant for 2 1/2 years. This experience helped me recognize what I am truly passionate about professionally, which led me to pursue a graduate degree in higher education instead of a career in neuroscience. Despite his passion for the field, his support through this process helped me feel encouraged to pursue my own dreams, while learning from his example.

Female graduate student, Illinois

I did not have a *single* mentor during my time in college; I happened to have *many*. My involvement in student governance put me into direct contact with many individuals—both upperclassmen and staff members—and these relationships opened doors all over campus. From this, I learned that not every mentor-mentee relationship has to be formally structured. Much can be gathered by asking questions of experienced individuals, while keeping an attitude of humility and a willingness to listen.

Male college graduate, Texas

raised Jewish and still attended *Shabbat* services at the local synagogue. She then asked me about my faith.

This conversation was one of the first times I remember being open and comfortable talking about my religious beliefs and practices with someone who was genuinely interested in getting to know me for who I am and not who they wanted me to become.

A few months later, I talked to Dawn about my interest in serving as a resident assistant (RA) the following year and how I was concerned about getting time off for Sabbath observance. Being able to connect with Dawn—a fellow Sabbath-keeper—as an ally and mentor helped me understand the challenges I would face if I were to become an RA.

With Dawn's encouragement, I decided to apply for the RA position and got it! She even helped coach me in how to talk about my Sabbath observance to other professionals and student staff members in the department in a way that showed respect and concern for their needs as well as my own. Learning how to have these conversations has continued to help me know how to properly share my religious convictions and observances with employers and colleagues.

Seeking out mentors on campus

While everyone finds mentors in slightly different ways, there are a few principles that can help most everyone. When seeking out mentors on campus, start by considering what kind of relationship you want to build. Do you want to connect with someone in a field you are interested in pursuing to learn more? Or maybe you don't know what you want to study yet, so you need some guidance discovering what you're passionate about.

By understanding what you are seeking to learn, you are better able to identify people who could possibly coach you in a specific area.

Another important point to remember is to ask God for help. The Bible tells us to *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* (Matthew 7:7). When we do this, we can be confident that God will provide for us in His perfect timing.

Leslie Schwartz, M.Ed., loves working with college students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to foster their leadership development. She attends the Bloomington/Normal United Church of God congregation. Have a question, comment or idea for a future topic for this column? Contact Leslie at VTLifeOnCampus@gmail.com.



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One Thing at a Time

A team of French scientists has found that the human brain can successfully cope with two separate tasks at the same time, but on adding a third, the brain ceases to be efficient and one task gets dropped.

This fact may explain why, when people are given a long list of choices, they are more likely to make illogical decisions. The study analyzed brain activity while participants were engaged in one, two and three different tasks.

The frontal lobe on the left side of the brain would light up with one task, and the right side followed as the second task began. When a third task was initiated, the frontal lobes couldn't keep up and the accuracy of the tasks declined rapidly (Helen Briggs, "Brain 'Splits to Multi-Task,'" News.BBC.co.uk, April 15, 2010).

65%

of social media users didn't even attempt to block out strangers with privacy settings.

—Kathy Kristof, "6 Things Never to Post on Facebook," Shine.Yahoo.com, June 23, 2010

Computer Keeping You Awake?

As laptop computers and now iPads become more mobile and creep into the bedroom, light emitted from these screens may cause sleep disruption, say some sleep researchers. Light from these electronic sources apparently tricks the brain into thinking that the artificial light is daylight, which upsets one's circadian rhythm.

Concerns about electronically induced insomnia were revived with the release of Apple's new iPad computer. Compared to e-book readers, which don't emit light, the iPad does, and

the light shines directly into the eyes at a close distance (John Sutter, "Trouble Sleeping? Maybe It's Your iPad," CNN.com, May 13, 2010).

Although some researchers are skeptical of the link between insomnia and the use of computers before going to sleep, avoiding this is worth trying if you are having trouble sleeping. Experts also say that if a person has to be on the computer not long before going to bed, it's helpful to decrease the emission of blue light and increase amber light, which is easier on the eyes.

TV Trends

The yearly Nielsen data on the American television audience for 2009 shows that 90 percent of Americans subscribe to paid television services either by cable, satellite or other wireless service. This makes cable nearly as ever-present as broadcast networks.

VCRs, which are still in 65 percent of homes, are rapidly disappearing from use, especially with the rise of DVRs. DVD players are in 88 percent of homes, but ownership is not expected to increase as online viewing grows.

On average, a household watches 58 hours and 29 minutes of television every



week, which is more than eight hours each day. Interestingly, the number of viewers aged 18 to 49 shrank last year, while the number of 50-year-old and older viewers increased (Aaron Barnhart, "TV-Viewing Report a Real Eye-Opener," *The Columbus Dispatch*, May 1, 2010).

Gaming Takes a Toll



A study done by the University of Essex in the United Kingdom tested elite online gamers to see how they compared to professional athletes and if gaming qualified as an athletic sport. They found that the gamers had the mental traits of sportsmen, nearly the reaction time of jet fighter pilots and the competitiveness of athletes. However, their physical health and fitness levels were far below actual athletes.

The sedentary lifestyle of these online games competitors leads to very poor health. One study participant had the lungs and aerobic fitness of a 60-year-old chain-smoker, even though he looked fit. Researchers fear that this kind of inactivity could contribute to rising childhood obesity levels ("Computer Gamers 'Have Reactions of Pilots but Bodies of Chain Smokers,'" Telegraph.co.uk, June 7, 2010).



Social Networking Don'ts

As companies like Facebook and Twitter continue to try to figure out who owns all the information and images that people share, there are some things that just don't need to be online.

A recent article by Kathy Kristof gives the following six items that should never appear on your Facebook page or Twitter feed ("6 Things Never to Post on Facebook," Shine.Yahoo.com, June 23, 2010):

1. **Birth date and birthplace**—Day is okay, but year and place too is an I.D. theft freebie.
2. **Vacation plans**—Thieves live for this kind of knowledge.
3. **Home address**—Don't make it too easy for people to find you.
4. **Confessions**—This excess information could get you fired or lose you friends.
5. **Password clues**—mother's maiden name, birth city, etc. Don't make it easy for potential identity thieves to gather this information by posting it in your profile.
6. **Risky behavior**—If you are an intentionally reckless driver and brag about it, you could end up with a higher insurance premium. Insurance companies search for these types of details.

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The "Dark Side" of Texting



A new form of harassment has emerged for the texting generation. "Textual harassment" has become a new element of dating violence. Texts demanding to know where a dating partner is, whom she is with

and ensuing threats if the texter is not answered have become common in abusive relationships.

Excessive, demanding and threatening texts are now admissible in court as evidence of stalking and other crimes, and the electronic trail is helping authorities convict perpetrators ("Text Messages Become a Growing Weapon in Dating Violence," WashingtonPost.com, June 21, 2010).

If you are a victim of this type of abuse or stalking, ask God for protection and the courage to seek help from a trusted individual and the authorities. This is not a normal part of a healthy relationship.



A Seal's Amazing Whiskers

Researchers in Germany have discovered that seals are able to detect prey by following the invisible trails left by fish in the water. Even in low visibility and murky water, seals use their whiskers as a locating device, picking up movement in the wake of prey up to 35 seconds after the fish have passed by.

Experts believe that all seals, and likely sea lions, share this ability. The role whiskers play in hunting is comparable to echolocation used by dolphins and whales. Seals may also use their whiskers to tell the size of the fish and speed at which their prey is traveling (Richard Gray, "Seals Can Detect Underwater Wakes Left Behind by Fish," Telegraph.co.uk, June 20, 2010).

God's creation is vast and varied. The creatures He designed are brilliant in their complexity, and their God-installed instincts are astounding.

Growing Up, Slowly

From age 20 to 22 is still acknowledged as the period by which a person should be finished with school, have a job and live on his or her own, but today many people well into their 30s are still working on these goals.

Changing economic outlooks and social mores have led to the shift in delayed maturity. More than half of college students are women, as well as almost half the workforce. These changing priorities have led to an age shift in childbearing years, from the early 20s to the 30s.

Having children is seen as a lifestyle choice rather than a mandatory part of adulthood, and while the median age for a first marriage in 1980 was 23 years old, it is now 27 for men and 26 for women (Patricia Cohen, "Long Road to Adulthood Is Growing Even Longer," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2010).

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