



# Abundant Living Ministries

*Encouraging Christian Living since 1978*

June 2018

Just before Dad and Mom took our family to Brazil in 1960 (when I was eight years old), I was given 12 lessons on an accordion. Oh, my! I fell in love with music! I played, played, played that instrument. I can remember Dad wanting me to help my brother and sister pull hay bales out in the barn but I wanted to... you guessed it... I just wanted to play the accordion!

After arriving in Brazil, I kept tinkering around, trying to figure out one-finger melodies. And then, one day, things took a giant leap forward. A girl, just a few years older than myself, came to visit bringing along a keyboard. I was mesmerized as I watched her play *Jesus Loves Me*. I didn't understand what she was doing but I memorized every note.

She stepped away from the keyboard and it was my turn. I stumbled through my memorized piece... then again and again. "Well," I thought, "if I can play *Jesus Loves Me* like that, I should also be able to play *Deep and Wide*" (a familiar Sunday School tune).

After *Deep and Wide*, over the next years, it was another tune and another and another. There have been a lot of sour notes but I continue to enjoy playing hymns and worship songs. I have been asked if my musical ability just "came naturally." Yes, God gave me a certain talent for playing BUT I also comment that I spent many hours playing and practicing... almost always trying to duplicate what I had seen or heard *somebody else* play.

So, why the accordion/piano story? Simply, to make the point that we often learn by observing others. And conversely, other people learn by observing US! Our children, neighbors, co-workers, friends, relatives... they take notice!

I remember attending church when our children were small. We would specifically choose seats where we could "spy" on a certain family that we highly respected, whose children were a little older than ours. We learned by watching their Godly example and purposed to raise our children as they were raising theirs. They never knew they were being watched! ☺

***Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business  
and to work with your hands... so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders  
and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)***

***Be very careful, then, how you live -  
not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity,  
because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)***

Others hear how we speak to our spouse; they see how we treat our children; they notice how we respond to disappointments and problems.

***Lord, help me to be a light for YOU this week,  
as I go to work, the grocery store, the gym, the bank, church...  
wherever I go may people see YOU in me!***

Let's live to be watched!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

P.S. Thank you for your prayers and for your continued giving, as we are now in the most-difficult season, financially, of the year (summer). **ALSO - DON'T FORGET to sign up for the *Lay Christian Counselor Training* series, beginning Oct 01.**



# As For Me and My House



## Question:

As my spouse and I talk with other families from our church and school community, sometimes we feel like we are “swimming against the current.” It seems that many families, even those who profess faith in Christ, are entrenched in a worldly lifestyle. From leisure activities to entertainment choices to the way they talk and dress, there is little to distinguish them from non-Christians. Any suggestions for keeping our home Christ-centered, in the midst of strong pulls in the opposite direction?

## Response:

In talking to hundreds of parents over the years, it still amazes me how oblivious many are to the devious strategies Satan uses to ensnare their children. From the time a child is born, Satan is out to destroy that child’s soul. He hates the thought that God might get another family member in His house forever. So he targets that child for eternal destruction. Initially he doesn’t have to do too much work, because children are, after all, born in sin. Their natural inclination is to be self-centered and ungodly. Left unchecked in this mind-set, children do a pretty good job of growing up and destroying themselves. However, if the child happens to be blessed by having Christian parents who teach him about Jesus, take him to church and pray with him, Satan has more to worry about. As this child grows and matures, he hopefully will recognize God’s truth and accept it. So, the father of lies has to work harder at deceiving that child. And you have made an accurate observation... many families are naively falling prey to his influence.

In the Old Testament, Joshua observed a similar situation to the one you described. The Jewish people, in spite of professing to be followers of the one true God, had adopted much of the culture and customs of the ungodly people around them. Their leader, Joshua throws out a very direct challenge to them: *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). When the people responded with sincerity that they were committed to the Lord, Joshua gave two helpful instructions in verse 23:

*\* Throw away the foreign gods that are among you.*

*\* Yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.*

These provide great help for Christian families today. In order to remain committed to Jesus and not be squeezed into the world’s mold, they should focus on two important principles:

## **Throw away the foreign gods that are among you.**

In other words, as much as is possible, **get rid of ungodly influences in your home and family.** Joshua recognized that the Jews were surrounded by people who did not follow God. However, he knew that God’s people had a choice as to whether or not they would worship the gods their neighbors worshipped. This is true for Christian families today. You do not have to do what so many other families are doing. It is okay to stand alone for righteousness. Therefore, from time to time it is a good idea to do a spiritual housecleaning. Take a critical look at influences you allow in your home through TV, movies, computer use, social media, books, magazines, music, toys and even which playmates you encourage your children to spend time with. Be willing to be ruthless in keeping your home environment free from the harmful messages that infiltrate via these avenues. Of course you cannot block out all bad influences, but you can help your children analyze false messages in the light of Scripture.

And don’t just get rid of the bad, without replacing it with good. Be intentional at using some of these same avenues to introduce God’s truth to your children. Saturate your home with loads of good reading material, uplifting music, spiritually-instructive movies, educational toys and beneficial relationships. Truth implanted in your children’s hearts and minds when they





are young can take root and produce strong Godly character as the child grows.

## **Yield your hearts to the Lord.**

In other words, **be firmly and joyfully committed to walking with Jesus.** In Joshua's time, the Jewish people had to exercise their faith to follow the God they could not see with their eyes or hear with their ears. They had witnessed many of His miracles which helped them to believe in His existence and love for them. They also had His laws which gave practical instructions for daily living. So Joshua's challenge to them was definitely an attainable goal. But we have the advantage of having "seen and heard" God... not only through His Old Testament exploits, but even more completely revealed through His Son, Jesus. We have both Old and New Testaments which provide hundreds of wise guidelines for life. And better than all this, we have His Spirit who resides in us 24/7. It makes sense then, for Christian homes to put emphasis on getting to know Jesus personally. This means reading about Him, memorizing His words, talking to Him daily,



planning ways to serve Him. It means fellowshiping with other believers, going on missions trips, attending spiritual retreats. It means putting priority on what is most important... Jesus!

Unfortunately many parents who profess to be Christians have never themselves really experienced a genuine relationship with Jesus. They have prayed a prayer asking for their sins to be forgiven, but have not really fallen in love with their Savior. Consequently, they remain enamored with the things of this world and those values get passed along to their children. It is a good idea to do a heart-check from time to time... Who or what gets the greatest applause in my life? Who or what brings me the greatest delight in life? If the answer isn't Jesus, then it is time to do some soul-searching.

The reality is that walking with Jesus is hands-down the best way to live. He has so much more to offer our children than our culture does. He is able to do *"exceeding abundantly above all*

*we can ask for or imagine"* (Ephesians 3:20). He is able to do the impossible (Matthew 19:26). The best adventures in life come while walking a life of faith and you want to communicate this often and enthusiastically to your children. Let them see you enjoying this life. Let them hear you praying and singing about the Lord and laughing with delight about His amazing ways. Tell them how God has "shown up" in your daily routines. They will still have to make the choice themselves whether or not to follow Christ, but by following Joshua's advice, you are setting the stage for success. In Joshua 24:31 we read that Israel in fact, *"served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel."* In spite of being surrounded by an ungodly culture, they remained committed to God. And if they could serve the Lord, so can we! The choice is ours!

*Written by Sharon Charles*

*You can read more from Sharon  
on our website blog.*



## **We would enjoy meeting you!**

Please encourage your friends to give us a call as they face difficult situations and relationship challenges. God is still working miracles!

To schedule an appointment, call the office at (717) 626-9575. Both daytime and evening appointments can usually be scheduled within a week or two.

Clients are encouraged to make a responsible contribution but no specific amount is required, so finances are never an obstacle.

If you wish, you can read the bios of our six counselors on our website, at ***AbundantLivingMinistries.org***. Then, when you call, you may request the counselor of your choice.

**We look forward to being a help!**



# Coming Soon at Abundant Living

## Open Arms Childbirth Class

Five consecutive Thursdays at 7:00pm  
July 5 - August 2, 2018

Taught by an experienced childbirth educator, this class covers the same information offered in a hospital course, but includes a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will meet and connect with other expectant couples and gain many practical helps as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course. Please register by contacting the ALM office (see contact information below).

**Six Monday evenings**  
**October 1-November 5, 2018**

**7:00 - 9:00 PM**

**\$120 per person or \$150 per couple**  
**(textbooks included)**

Designed for those who wish to be more-effective people helpers within the Christian community.

Please register no later than  
SEPTEMBER 10th by calling the  
ALM office at 717-626-9575

**Lay  
Christian  
Counselor  
Training**

## Contact Information

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