



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

March 2021

THE BASICS AGAIN!

I mentioned in my November letter that I so often say, “Start with the basics!” Well, again yesterday... the internet went down in our home office. Not being tech-savvy, I figured I could at least check the basics: I made sure all cords were plugged in. The modem, router, and network extender? I unplugged them all, waited two minutes and then re-started them. I rebooted my computer. None of this resolved the problem. “It must be more complicated than what I can handle,” I thought, as I contacted our IT computer technician. (I’m now thinking money!)

Guess what... that little low-voltage power supply had failed and there was NO POWER being provided to the router. Duh! The simple fact that the power-supply light was not lit should have been a dead giveaway! How more-basic a solution could there have been? I went to my box of old power supplies and, in four minutes, we were back in operation.

Last week, I had the opportunity to share my VERY-BASIC **Life View**. I asked the small group to nod their head in agreement... for as long as they actually agreed. It’s this simple:

- 1) **God IS.** (I imagine most everybody reading this letter can nod their head on this first point.)
- 2) **God is good and God is love. That means that He loves ME... every day and all day long.** (Perhaps we sometimes wonder about this when life doesn’t seem to be going our way?)
- 3) **God is not a killjoy. He is not a spoilsport.** He doesn’t look to make life miserable for John Charles. No! **Every instruction He provides for me is for my benefit... both here on earth and in preparation for eternity!** (I imagine a few heads have quit nodding... more on this later.)

If I agree with points one through three, then the conclusion is obvious:

- 4) **THEREFORE, I wholeheartedly, without resistance or hesitation, purpose to follow the instructions and guidance which He provides.**

It seems that, too often, we view God as the “rule maker,” putting us to the test with His many commands. Rather, I want to understand that God is my **Life Giver**. It’s not that I **MUST** obey His instructions. It’s that, **because Christ lives within me, I GET TO live in this greatest freedom... freedom from sin... free to enjoy life HIS way!**

Let’s enjoy living HIS way!

John Charles (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

P.S. Year 2020 ended with a financial deficit for ALM. I think it was a difficult year for many who were not able to support ministries at their normal level. Please know that we understand and we remain very grateful for those of you who continue with prayer and financial support. **HE REMAINS OUR PROVIDER... through people like you.** Thank you!

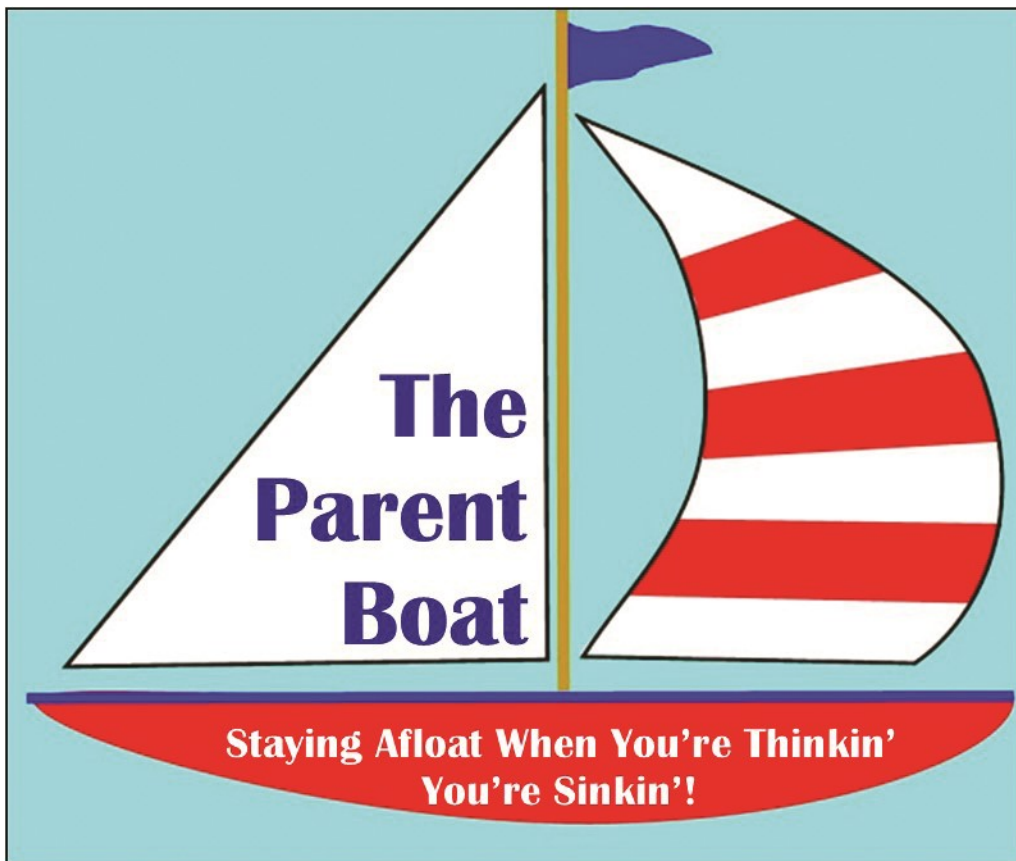


Please notice our new MAILING address: 400 E. 4th Ave, Lititz, PA 17543

Our PHYSICAL LOCATION for ministry remains the same.

This is a transition over the next months. You may continue to use Preprinted Return Envelopes which still show the old address.





Are you a father or mother? Have you at times felt overwhelmed with the task of raising children? Every stage of parenting has its challenges. Which of the following are you trying to navigate right now?

Pregnancy... Expectant moms may deal with morning sickness, weight gain, fatigue. Both parents may worry about their baby's welfare, the demands of labor and delivery and how they will care for an infant. Disagreements can easily arise when Dad and Mom don't see eye-to-eye on some of the many decisions that they must make while preparing for their child's arrival.

Newborns... Lack of sleep, lack of routine, feeling tied down, feeling blue, endless new baby care tasks... these can plunge new parents into what feels like a "black hole" of despair. They can wonder if "normal" life is lost to them forever.

Toddlers... Parents of two and three-year olds may suddenly find themselves needing a lot of extra energy and wis-

dom. Those sweet little babies might now resort to temper tantrums when they don't get their way. Dads and moms often feel they need eyes in the back of their heads in order to watch out for and protect their children from danger. And of course there is the necessity of potty-training which requires time, vigilance and patience.

School Age... When children head off to school, their fathers and mothers embark on a new parenting journey. Now they must learn to let go. They can no longer monitor the majority of their child's day. They must juggle schedules in order to run the kids to extra-curricular activities, friends' houses, church events, etc. Parents observe a powerful new influence on their children... peer pressure. And whether public, private, or home school, education becomes an extremely weighty decision.

Teen Years... If putting a kindergartener on the big yellow bus seemed like a huge step towards "letting go," that is nothing compared to putting a child behind the wheel of a car and watching them drive off on their own. With the arrival of adolescence, parents move to another level of releasing their children. Along with this comes a heavy concern for how their children will handle peer pressure, dating, and the demands of school and part-time work, as well as if they will have the faith and strength of character to resist the temptations that swirl around them daily.

Letting Go ... Launching children to independent living is a huge step for parents, and one that can be very difficult. Whether getting them off to college or post-highschool training, helping them get settled in their own apartment, guiding them through courtship, engagement, wedding plans, etc... all of these can produce significant stress as well as a sense of great loss.

Empty Nest... Once the children have "flown the coop," dads and moms have to get used to *not* parenting but rather serving as counselors, mentors or helpers to their children. Fathers and mothers must readjust to life as a two-some and figure out what the next season of their lives will look like.

Grandparenting... A common challenge for grandparents is learning the proper balance of helping without "hovering."



Their children now want the freedom to raise their own sons and daughters, without Grandpa and Grandma critiquing or interfering.

These stages all bring their own challenges and stresses. **How can parents cope?**

Eliminate as many stressors as possible

Luke 10:38 – 42 ... “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

In every season of parenting, relationship with Jesus should be parents’ number one priority. So, if necessary, take an axe to your schedule. Create time for nurturing spiritual health in your own lives as well as in your children.

Get rid of time-stealing, anxiety-creating stressors. Maybe the children are involved in too many extra-curricular activities. Maybe “screen-use” is stealing valuable family time. Perhaps undisciplined spending has plunged you into financial bondage. Simplifying can help restore calm and a slower pace to households that have been operating at a too-frantic pace.

Plan

Proverbs 14:22 ... those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.

Regardless of which parenting season you are in, a little structure will work wonders. Organize your day... routines help keep things rolling without a lot of unnecessary fuss. Children of all ages actually thrive on routine... regular mealtimes, naptimes, chore times, bedtimes, etc.

A short business meeting with your spouse at the beginning of each week to outline the coming week’s calendar, can help prevent aggravating “surprises” and can help establish a smooth plan for the next 7 days.

Don’t try to be Super Dad or Super Mom!

II Corinthians 12:9-10 ... my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Perfectionism will drive you and others crazy. Relax your expectations if they are unrealistically high. Stop criticizing yourself and others, and instead sincerely ask the Lord for wisdom, courage, strength... or whatever you are needing in this particular season of parenting.



Practice looking at your situation in a new way:

With Humor...

Proverbs 17:22 ... a cheerful heart is good medicine. A sense of humor goes a long way in helping parents sail through tough times with their children. Laugh at yourself, laugh with your children, smile when you say a family member’s name, read a joke a day with the family.

With Gratitude...

Colossians 3:17... and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Even in the hardest seasons of parenting, dads and moms can find reasons for thanking God if they choose to look for those reasons. For example, most negatives have a corresponding positive. A workaholic husband is often a faithful provider. A fretful mother has a sympathetic concern for her child. A strong-willed child has potential to courageously withstand temptation. Regularly expressing thanks to God and to family members, can make any season seem more pleasant.

With Faith -

Matthew 19:26 ... with God all things are possible. Trust God to help you. He created every child and He cares about each one. There is no situation they are facing that is too difficult for Him. Don’t live by your feelings. They are often fickle. Pray every day with and for your children. As God has been faithful in your own life, He can be depended on to faithfully watch over your sons and daughters.

Take care of your body

I Corinthians 6:19 – 20 ... Honor God with your body. It is difficult for parents to cope with the demands of parenting, if they are worn-out physically. Exercise... preferably playing outdoors with the kids when possible. Eat well... keep meals simple but nutritious. Get good rest... not only do children need sufficient sleep, parents do as well. Keep regular bedtime schedules whenever possible. Enjoy God’s outdoors... turn off the computer and go for a walk or bike ride. It will refresh you physically and emotionally and provide special memorable times for the children.

Delight in (don’t despise) this season!

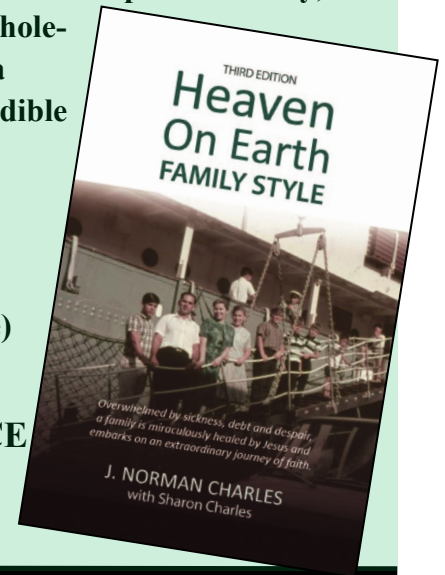
Psalms 37:4 ... Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Rather than bemoaning the challenges of parenting, wise dads and moms make a choice to savor *each* season. Whether dealing with infants or adult children, every day is a new day with no mistakes in it. Don’t allow the failures or frustrations of yesterday to ruin your today or tomorrow. Ask Jesus for help and decide to make today a good day. Before you know it, your good todays will have built a lifetime of precious memories for you and your children.

Heaven on Earth Family Style

The life story of Norman and Betty Charles has been a great encouragement to many! Read how they encountered Jesus in a powerful way, regaining health and wholeness, and beginning a Christ-focused, incredible adventure of faith!

ON AMAZON
\$12.99 Paperback
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\$19.95 Audio Book

AT ALM's OFFICE
\$11.00 Paperback
(plus S&H)



The Parent's Task

Here is your task, dear father and mother...
Here, in the life of your girl or your boy...
To guide them, to lead them, to save from disaster,
To point them to Christ and His love, peace and joy.

This is your task. Why wait 'til they're older
When sin's evil power might pull them away?
Don't put off this job. Point them now to the Savior.
If they need Him at all, they need Him *today!*

The task of a parent... can you measure its worth?
More than gold? More than silver? More than treasure so rare?
You may travel the highways and byways of earth,
And find no other service with which yours can compare.

So rejoice in this gift... *the care of a soul!*
Without you, your dear child could forever be lost.
So eagerly purpose and make it your goal
To share Christ with your children, whatever the cost!

If challenges come (and they will), don't despair.
God will give all you need. Go to Him and just ask.
Entrust every child to His infinite care
And parent *in faith!* Yes... this is your task!



By Sharon Charles
inspired by *The Church's Task*
written by her father, Frank L. Torrey,
in 1937

Open Arms Childbirth Class

Four Consecutive Thursdays
April 8-29, 2021, 7-9pm

Covering the important information
offered in a hospital course,
Open Arms adds a distinctively-Christian perspective.

You will enjoy meeting other expectant couples as you
gain practical help in preparing for a great labor and
delivery. There is no cost for this course.

Register by contacting the ALM office.

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