

# Abundant Living MINISTRIES

Encouraging Christian Living Since 1978



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The mother was a few people ahead of me, checking out at the grocery store. The young child seated in the cart pointed to the huge rack of colorful candies, indicating he wanted one.

“No,” the mother responded calmly. “Not today. You may have a snack when we get home but no candy today.” The little guy wasn’t about to turn his back on that candy rack. “But I want one!” he persisted. The mother responded more firmly, “No son. We’re not going to buy any candy!”

Reaching toward the candy, his request was now a loud whining demand, “But I want one! I want this one!”

The mother seemed painfully aware of those in line behind her. And this is when I felt slightly amused... shame on me! I remembered times when my child needed correction but I felt so embarrassed to “make a scene” in front of other adults. I sometimes wondered if my “very-intelligent” children intentionally used this embarrassment factor as a strategy to gain what they wanted in public!

But back to my story... Mom was now quite frustrated. She hissed through clenched teeth (apparently hoping that no one would hear her), “I told you ‘NO!’ Now quit your fussing!” But Mr. Persistent didn’t give up. Beginning to wail, he boldly grabbed and clenched his prized chocolate. The frazzled mother realized she had lost this round. She snapped at her son, using a tone that suggested that SHE had won the argument, “Well okay! But only one!”

Now I felt sad. I realized I could safely predict what would happen the next time this mother took her son through the check-out lane. Yup! Little children ARE quite intelligent. And they DO develop their own little strategies. In all likelihood, this boy will repeat his clever tactic the next time he’s in the grocery store... and the next time and the next. He had discovered that, if he embarrasses his mother publicly, she will cave in to his demands.

Dads and mothers – Let me try to encourage you. Don’t cave in to “adult peer pressure” in your parenting. Realize that God has given to you the tremendous privilege and responsibility of training and shaping your child’s life. I sure remember times when Sharon and I became weary in parenting. We sometimes felt as though we were in a never-ending assignment, repeating the same instructions over and over. “Lord, when will my child ever learn this?!”

Our children are now adults. They are training their own children. It is now their turn... and perhaps **your** turn to be reminded of Galatians 6:9 – **“Do not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP!”** So, don’t give up! Remember, the Lord is with you. He is your helper. Do not be afraid! (Hebrews 13:6)

- John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



## Open Arms Childbirth Class

Four Consecutive Thursday evenings 7:00 - 9:00pm  
April 4, 11, 28, 25, 2024

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 prepare for a great labor and delivery.

There is no cost for this course.

**Register by contacting the ALM office.**



**Question** My spouse and I are really struggling in our relationship. I suppose we still love each other, but we certainly don't feel very "in love." Sometimes I think it's time to throw in the towel and go our separate ways. **Is there any hope for couples who are stuck in a miserable marriage?**

**Response** When husbands and wives find themselves dealing with serious problems, they have basically three options. Do you remember the old TV game show, Let's Make a Deal? Contestants could choose one of three doors and whatever prize was behind their door, was theirs to keep. So what are the three "doors" available to married couples when problems arise?

**1 Door Number One - Separation or Divorce.** In many relationships, this first option comes to mind pretty immediately when challenges seem insurmountable. Spouses reason... "God wants me to be happy, doesn't He? Well I'm NOT! So I might as well leave and finally enjoy some happiness!"

This reasoning is flawed at the very outset. God has not promised **happiness** as in "the absence of difficulty." He does promise **joy** in the midst of trials. Let's not be fooled by the pretty blue Door #1. As we remember that marriage is not a business contract but, rather, a sacred covenant, we recognize that something much better must be behind another door.

**2 Door Number Two - Resigned Misery.** Sadly, many marriages deteriorate into little more than an endurance test. Rather than enjoying each other, husbands and wives live the life of *married singles*... pursuing their own interests while paying little attention to the other. Their interactions are fraught with arguments, accusation, anger, rejection, and resentment. Not a pleasant way to live, for sure.

Mindful of the covenant they made for life, they conclude, "I guess this is my heavy cross to bear. I have little hope that things will ever change. I guess I need to just settle in for a life of marital heartache."

*In meeting with hundreds of couples, we have observed that most only consider the first two doors of solution. They see TWO choices: leave (hoping to be happy) or stay and be miserable.*

***But thankfully, with God, there is a third and much-better door for us to select!***

**3 Door Number Three - Fix and Enjoy!** God didn't design marriage to be a ball and chain around our ankles... a heavy load to be dragged through life. No! Everything God designs is GOOD and that includes marriage! Marriage is meant to enrich us. Marriage provides the best classroom in which couples can learn the joy that only comes from *unselfish* living and giving.

While it is true that mending a broken marriage will take time and work, it is definitely worth the effort! With God's help and by following His blueprint for living, struggling couples can make remarkable improvement. His instructions for how to act and react in relationships (found in the Bible), are powerfully effective. Spouses will do well to pursue discovering these principles and putting them into practice... in the nitty gritty routines of daily living.

I urge you to remove Door #1 even from your consideration. Unless and until you do, it is highly unlikely that you will invest 110% into fixing your relationship and trusting God to make it great. BUT, after removing Door #1 from the options list, your selection will be easy.

Go with Door #3...

**the hands-down best choice.**

**And, THAT IS QUITE THE JACKPOT!**

*Written by Sharon Charles*



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