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A

ABSTINENCE

NEW COURSE IN SEXUALITY

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-6

Abstinence; Boldness; Children; Child-Rearing; Disease, sexually transmitted; Education; Morality; Parenting; Sex; Sexual Immorality

I held a notice from my 13-year-old daughter's school announcing a meeting to preview the new course in sexuality. Parents could examine the curriculum and take part in a lesson presented exactly as it would be given to the students.

When I arrived at the school, I was surprised to discover only about a dozen parents present. As we waited for the presentation, I thumbed through page after page of instructions on the prevention of pregnancy or disease. I found abstinence mentioned only in passing.

When the teacher arrived with the school nurse, she asked if there were any questions. I asked why abstinence did not play a noticeable part in the material. I was shocked by what happened next. There was a great deal of laughter, and someone suggested that if I thought abstinence had any merit, I should go back to burying my head in the sand. The teacher and the nurse said nothing as I drowned in a sea of embarrassment. My mind went blank, and I could think of nothing to say. The teacher explained that the job of the school was to "teach facts," and the home was responsible for moral training.

I sat in silence for the next 20 minutes as the course was explained. The other parents seemed to give their unqualified support to the materials. "Donuts at the back," announced the teacher during the break. "I'd like you to put on the name tags we have prepared and mingle with the other

parents.” Everyone moved to the back of the room. As I watched them affix their name tags and shake hands, I sat deep in thought. I was ashamed I had not been able to convince them to include a serious discussion of abstinence in the materials. I uttered a silent prayer for guidance.

My thoughts were interrupted by the nurse’s hand on my shoulder. “Won’t you join the others?” The nurse smiled sweetly at me. “The donuts are good.”

“Thank you, no.” I replied.

“Well, then, how about a name tag? I’m sure the others would like to meet you.”

“Somehow I doubt that,” I replied.

“Won’t you please join them?” she coaxed. Then I heard a still, small voice whisper, *Don’t go*. The instruction was unmistakable: *Don’t go!*

“I’ll just wait here,” I said.

When the class was called back to order, the teacher looked around the long table and thanked everyone for putting on name tags. She ignored me. Then she said, “Now we’re going to give you the same lesson we’ll be giving your children. Everyone please peel off your name tags.” I watched in silence as the tags came off. “Now, then, on the back of one of the tags, I drew a tiny flower. Who has it?”

The gentleman across from me held it up. “All right,” she said. “The flower represents disease.” Then she asked the man, “Do you recall with whom you shook hands?” He pointed to a couple of people. “Very good,” she replied. “The handshake in this case represents intimacy. The two people you had contact with now have the disease.”

There was laughter and joking among the parents. The teacher continued, “And whom did the two of you shake hands with?” The point was well taken, and she explained how this lesson would show students how quickly disease spreads. “Since we all shook hands, we all have the disease.”

It was then that I heard the still, small voice again. *Speak now, but be humble*. I rose from my chair. I apologized for any upset I might have caused earlier, congratulated the teacher on an excellent lesson that would impress the youth, and concluded by saying I had only one small point I wished to make. “Not all of us were infected,” I said. “One of us . . . abstained.”

Citation: Source unknown; submitted by Eric Reed, associate editor, Leadership

ABSTINENCE

TEENS TALK ABOUT SEX

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

Abstinence; Passion, sexual; Sex; Teenagers; Youth

Here are some recent statistics on teenage sexuality gathered by Project Reality and The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy:

Percentage of teens who say the main reason they don't engage in sex is because of religion and moral values: 26

Percentage of teens who say it is important for teens to be given a strong message about abstinence: 93

Percentage of teens who received abstinence education and said that sexual urges can be controlled: 51

Citation: "Losing Our Promiscuity," Christianity Today (July 10, 2000), p. 38

ACHIEVEMENT

WORLDLY ACHIEVEMENTS NOT IMPORTANT

1 SAMUEL 16:7; MATTHEW 19:30

Achievement; Grace; Human Worth; Self-Worth; Works

The late Henri Nouwen, a best-selling author and professor, recalls his first days at L'Arche, a community for the mentally and physically disabled, in Toronto:

The first thing that struck me when I came to live in a house with mentally handicapped people was that their liking or disliking me had absolutely nothing to do with any of the many useful things I had done until then. Since nobody could read my books, they could not impress anyone, and since most of them never went to school, my 20 years at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard did not provide a significant introduction. My considerable ecumenical experience proved even less valuable. Not being able to use any of the skills that had proved so practical in the past was a real source of anxiety. In a way it seemed as though I was starting my life all over again.

In the same way, when we enter the kingdom of God, all our achievements won't matter. What God cares about is who we are—do we have faith in Him?

Citation: Kevin A. Miller, editor and author, Wheaton, Illinois; source: Gordon MacDonald, "Atmospheric Influences," Leadership (Winter 1999), p. 32

ADULTERY

CONSEQUENCES OF ADULTERY

HEBREWS 13:4

Adultery; Marriage

Overall percentage of men who have cheated on their wives: 23

Percentage of couples who divorce after an affair (even with counseling): 34

Percentage who later describe the marriage as unhappy or empty: 78

Citation: Men's Health (December 1998)

ADVERSITY

ADVERSITY LEADS TO VICTORY

ROMANS 8:28; PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

Adversity; Hardship; Purpose; Trials; Victory

In July 2000, Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France for the second year in a row. In 1999, the first year Armstrong won, much was made about the fact that he had survived testicular cancer that had spread into his lungs and brain. Armstrong not only recovered from the cancer, but went on to win the most prestigious race in cycling.

But there were those who said his victory was hollow because some of the best competitors had to sit out the race in 1999 due to a doping scandal. Few believed he would win in the year 2000 when the best cyclists would be back and the course more mountainous. This year Lance Armstrong not only won, but won by a whopping six minutes!

In analyzing his victory a commentator pointed out that it was after

Armstrong’s bout with cancer that he became a premier cyclist. After recovering from cancer, Lance was 40 pounds lighter than he had been before. And while he bulked up some in the recovery years, he always remained leaner than he ever had been before. This loss of weight made a difference in Armstrong’s biking and played significantly into his becoming a two-time Tour de France winner.

As Christians, we often ask why bad things happen. However, what we are called to shed through adversity today may help us have victory tomorrow.

Citation: Jeff Hinman, Independence, Oregon



AFFIRMATION
POWER OF POSITIVE WORDS

EPHESIANS 6:4

Affirmation; Children; Education; Encouragement; Expectations; Parenting

He was always in trouble at school, so when the parents of the junior high boy received one more call to come in and meet with his teacher and the principal, they knew what was coming. Or so they thought.

The teacher sat down with the boy’s father and said, “Thanks for coming. I wanted you to hear what I have to say.”

The father crossed his arms and waited, thinking what defense he could use this time. The teacher proceeded to go down a list of ten things—ten positive affirmations of the junior high “troublemaker.” When she finished, the father said, “And what else? Let’s hear the bad things.”

“That’s all I wanted to say,” she said.

That night when the father got home, he repeated the conversation to his son. And not surprisingly, almost overnight, the troublemaker’s attitude and behavior changed dramatically. All because a teacher looked past the negatives.

Citation: Bonne Steffen, editor of Christian Reader; source: Peter Lord, former pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church, Titusville, Florida



AFTERLIFE

SOPHIA LOREN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

ROMANS 3:10-31; 4:1-25; EPHESIANS 2:8-9; TITUS 3:3-8

Afterlife; Conscience; Culture, popular; Faith, justification by; Faith and Works; Grace, salvation by; Heaven; Morality; Salvation by Faith; Self-Righteousness; Works

I'm not a practicant, but I pray. I read the Bible. It's the most beautiful book ever written. I should go to heaven; otherwise it's not nice. I haven't done anything wrong. My conscience is very clean. My soul is as white as those orchids over there, and I should go straight, straight to heaven.

Citation: Sophia Loren, actress, USA Today (February 4, 1999)



AGING

MISSION DELAYED

GENESIS 12:4; EXODUS 7:7; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25

Ageism; Aging; Call; Calling; Ministry; Missions; Service

As a 15-year-old girl in 1927, Lois Secrist promised God she'd go overseas as a missionary, perhaps to Africa or India, helping the needy. But Lois never made that trip of mercy.

At 23 she married Galon Prater, a handsome farmhand who became a heavy drinker.

Many years later, Galon did become a Christian and testify about the peace of Jesus to his drinking buddies. But by then he was almost 80 and nearing death. When he died January 9, 1988, Lois's childhood desire of becoming a missionary returned.

At first she resisted. At age 76, she felt her opportunity to serve overseas as a missionary had slipped away.

"I said, 'Lord, I'm too old to go now. I can't do this,'" Lois admits.

But this great grandmother was determined to fulfill her unforgotten promise. Lois, pricked by the memory of ignoring God's calling as a teenager, would not refuse a second chance at becoming a missionary.

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So at 87, Lois Prater has become the unlikely builder of an orphanage in the Philippines, a lifeline to 35 children whose lives have been rescued from neglect, begging in the streets, and parental abuse.

Today the 35 orphans living in the two-story, 2,000-square-foot, white stucco home call Lois “Lola,” which means “grandmother” in their native Tagalog language.

Lois’s “children,” as she calls them, range in age from eight months to 10 years. Each of their stories is heartbreaking.

Lois has built the orphanage without taking out a loan, relying instead on individual financial support from across the United States. Because of her age, she is not supported by any church denomination and depends solely on private donations.

When asked if that makes her nervous, she says confidently, “I serve a mighty God. He’s in control. I feel I’m not talented enough to do any of this. But God enables me. My responsibility is to do what I can.”

Citation: Gail Wood, “Mission Delayed,” Virtue (June/July 1999)

AGING

OLD AGE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

JOB 12:12; PROVERBS 3:13-16

Aging; Fruitfulness; Perseverance; Service; Work

The world seems to worship youth and is terrified of aging. But there was a time when getting older was associated with wisdom and experience. In fact, some of the greatest accomplishments in history came very late in life. Immanuel Kant wrote one of his best philosophical works at the age of 74. Verdi penned his classic “Ave Maria” at 85. . . . Michelangelo was 87 when he completed The Pietà, his greatest work of art. . . . And Ronald Reagan was the most powerful man in the world at 75. . . . This notion that life should be winding down at 50 or 60 years of age is crazy.

Citation: James Dobson, Coming Home (Tyndale, 1998); submitted by Brad Estep, Kenneth City, Florida



AMBITION

DARK SIDE OF SUCCESS

2 SAMUEL 15; JAMES 3:13-16

Ambition; Emotions; Heart; Power, human; Success

Clare Sheridan, journalist for the *New York World*, once interviewed Mussolini, the Italian dictator:

What [she] remembered particularly was Mussolini's parting advice on what it took to succeed in life. "Above all, keep your heart a desert!" the dictator told her.

Citation: James R. Mellow, Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences (Perseus, 1994), p. 202



ANGER

ANGER EPIDEMIC

PROVERBS 15:1; GALATIANS 5:19-20; EPHESIANS 4:26, 31; JAMES 1:19

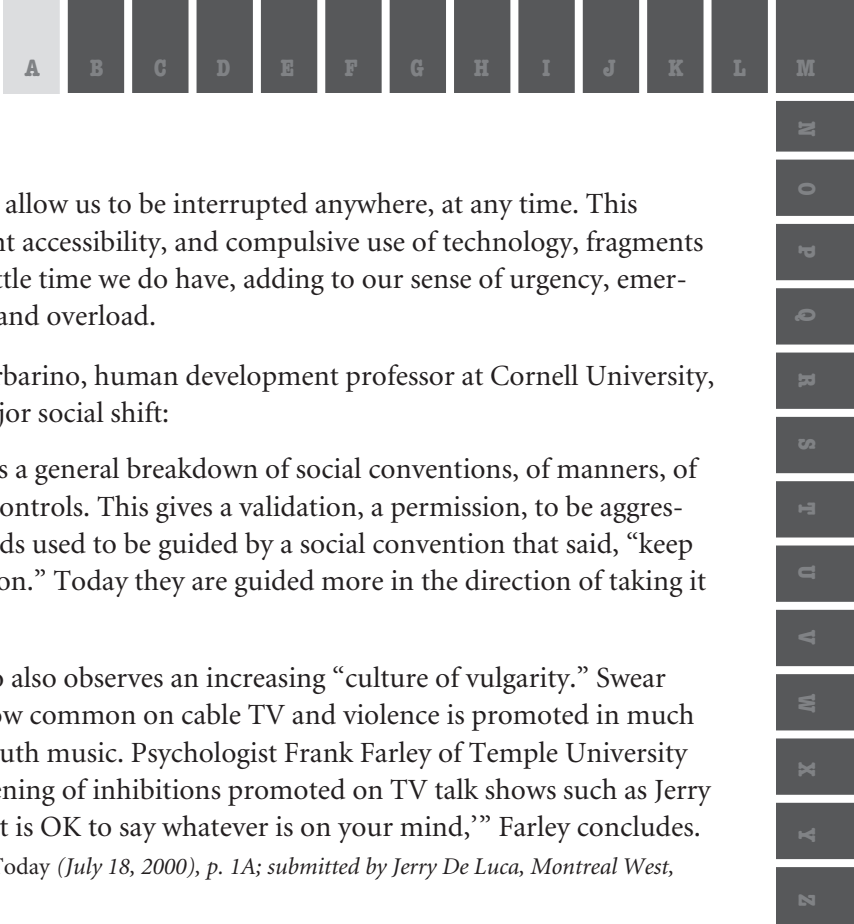
Anger; Impatience; Self-Control; Stress; Swearing; Violence

America is becoming a nation of angry, short-tempered people. From road rage to airplane rage, grocery store rage, and violence at youth sports events, the media has been reporting these emotional outbursts with unprecedented frequency.

More than three-fourths of Americans believe angry behavior has increased in places like airports and highways, according to a recent *USA Today* CNN/Gallup Poll. Flight attendants and pilots report a dramatic increase in problem passengers: 66 incidents in 1997, 534 incidents in 1999.

C. Leslie Charles, author of *Why Is Everyone So Cranky?* writes:

I'm describing a fuming, unrelenting, sense of anger, hostility, and alienation that simmers for months, even years, without relief. Eventually, all it takes is a triggering incident, usually minor, for the hostile person to go ballistic. . . . Cell phones, pagers, and high tech



devices allow us to be interrupted anywhere, at any time. This constant accessibility, and compulsive use of technology, fragments what little time we do have, adding to our sense of urgency, emergency, and overload.

James Garbarino, human development professor at Cornell University, reports a major social shift:

There is a general breakdown of social conventions, of manners, of social controls. This gives a validation, a permission, to be aggressive. Kids used to be guided by a social convention that said, “keep the lid on.” Today they are guided more in the direction of taking it off.

Garbarino also observes an increasing “culture of vulgarity.” Swear words are now common on cable TV and violence is promoted in much of today’s youth music. Psychologist Frank Farley of Temple University cites “a loosening of inhibitions promoted on TV talk shows such as Jerry Springer’s. ‘It is OK to say whatever is on your mind,’” Farley concludes.
Citation: USA Today (July 18, 2000), p. 1A; submitted by Jerry De Luca, Montreal West, Quebec



ANGER

LEVELS OF ANGER

GALATIANS 5:20; EPHESIANS 4:31; COLOSSIANS 3:8

Anger; Forbearance; Frustration; Rage

Two friends, Bill and Tom, were drinking at an all-night café. They got into a discussion about the difference between irritation, anger, and rage. At about 1 A.M., Bill said, “Look, Tom, I’ll show you an example of irritation.”

He went to the pay telephone, put in a coin, and dialed a number at random. The phone rang and rang and rang. Finally when a sleepy voice at the other end answered, Bill said, “I’d like to speak to Jones.”

“There’s no one here named Jones,” the disgruntled man replied as he hung up.

“That,” Bill said to Tom, “is a man who is irritated.”

An hour later, at 2 A.M., Bill said, “Now I’ll show you a man who is angry.” He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. Eventually, the same sleepy voice answered the phone.

Bill asked, “May I please speak with Jones?”

“There’s no one here named Jones,” came the angry reply, this time louder. The man slammed down the receiver.

An hour later, at 3 A.M., Bill said, “Now I’ll show you an example of rage.” He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. When the sleepy man finally answered, Bill said, “Hi, this is Jones. Have there been any calls for me?”

Citation: David Holdaway, Scotland



ARROGANCE

COMPANY PRESIDENT MISSES OPPORTUNITY

GALATIANS 6:9-10; HEBREWS 13:20-21

Arrogance; Change; Complacency; Leadership; Opportunity; Success

After my first year at Stanford Business School, I went to see Jim Levy, then-president of Activision, Inc., which, at the time, was arguably one of the fastest-growing companies in the history of the world. Activision made games for the Atari 2600 game system and was rolling in dough. I wanted to work for Levy for the summer. My bold proposal: “Hey, you’ve got all this cash and all these smart marketers and programmers. Why not go into the computer game business? You can dominate the PC the way you dominate the Atari 2600.” Looking back 25 years that wasn’t such a bold proposal. After all, the PC market was only an inch or two away from the market that Activision was already in. But Levy disagreed with my proposition and almost had me removed from his office by force. He told me, “We’re in the cartridge business—and those machines use floppy disks. Forget it.”

Citation: Seth Godin, “Gear Shops Are No Longer the Engine of Our Economy,” Fast Company (October 2000), p. 326

ASSURANCE

KNOWING HOW IT ALL TURNS OUT GIVES CONFIDENCE

2 CORINTHIANS 4; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18; 5:1-11; HEBREWS 6:19; REVELATION 21:3-5

Assurance; Faith; Heaven; Hope; Resurrection; Trust in God

I am a tremendous sports fan. Since many sporting events take place when I am not at home, I videotape them. When it's time to sit in my easy chair and view the tape, unlike most people, I don't rewind to the beginning to view it. Instead, I rewind to the climax to discover who won and who lost. If my team lost, I'll put the tape away, but if my team won I'll rewind the game back to the beginning, get out some snacks, and watch the whole game.

Some have told me this method can't be much fun. On the contrary, no matter how bad things look for my team, I don't have to worry because I know the end of the story.

That's how we ought to think about what Jesus did for us on the cross—we ought to have a VCR mentality: no matter how bad things look, we don't have to worry because we know the end of the story.

Citation: Charles Ellis, Indianapolis, Indiana

ATHEISM

HOPELESS DEATH OF CARL SAGAN

JOHN 20:29

Apologetics; Atheism; Belief; Death; Despair; Faith; Naturalism; Science; Skepticism

Jerry Adler writes in *Newsweek*:

[Carl] Sagan was fascinated by the phenomenon that educated adults, with the wonders of science manifest all around them, could cling to beliefs based on the unverifiable testimony of observers dead for 2000 years. "You're so smart, why do you believe in God?" he once exclaimed to [cleric Joan Brown] Campbell. She found this a surprising question from someone who had no trouble accepting the

existence of black holes, which no one has ever observed. “You’re so smart, why *don’t* you believe in God?” she answered. . . .

Sagan never wavered in his agnosticism.

“There was no deathbed conversion,” [his wife Ann] Druyan says. “No appeals to God, no hope for an afterlife, no pretending that he and I, who had been inseparable for 20 years, were not saying good-bye forever.”

Didn’t he want to believe? she was asked.

“Carl never wanted to believe,” she replied fiercely. “He wanted to *know*.”

Citation: Jerry Adler, Newsweek (March 31, 1997), pp. 64-65



AUTHENTICITY

FAKING OUT GOD?

PSALM 51:1-12; LUKE 18:9-14; JAMES 5:16; 1 JOHN 5:5-10

Authenticity; Church; Confession; Honesty; Hypocrisy; Sin; Truth; Worship

Research psychologists have found there are at least three situations when we do not act like ourselves. First, the average person puts on airs when he visits the lobby of a fancy hotel. Next, the typical Jane Doe will try to hide her emotions and bamboozle the salesman when she enters the new-car showroom. And finally, as we take our seat in church or synagogue, we try to fake out the Almighty that we’ve really been good all week.

Citation: Dr. Perry Buffington, psychologist and author, “Playing Charades,” Universal Press Syndicate (September 26, 1999)



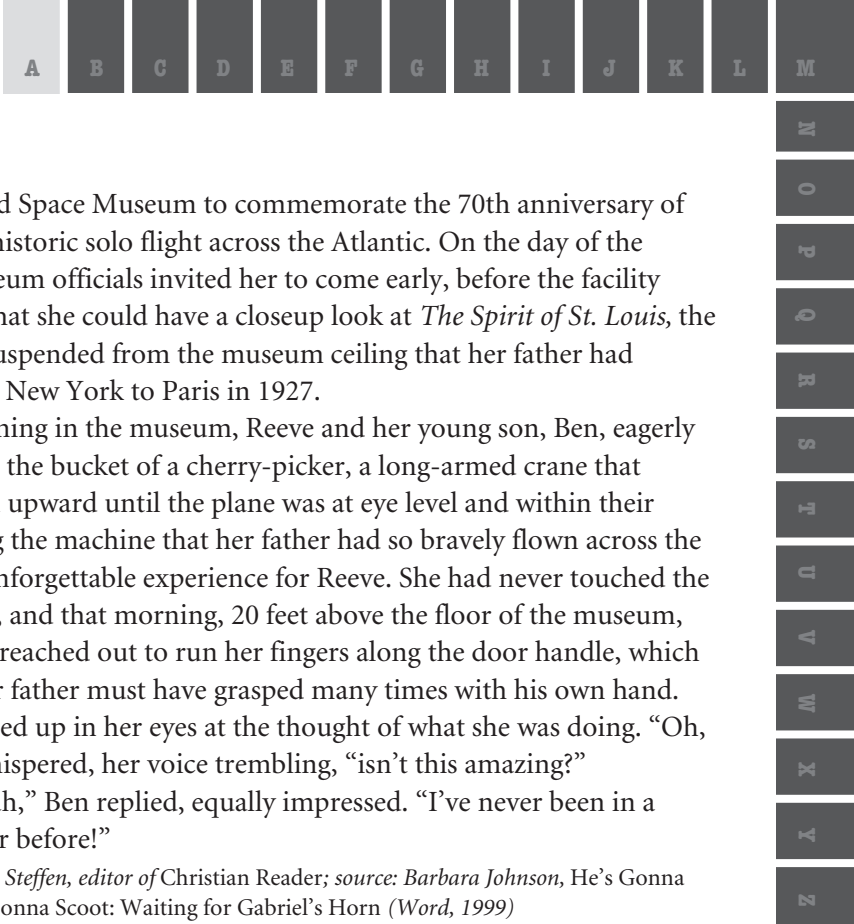
AWE

WHAT KIDS CAN’T APPRECIATE

EPHESIANS 6:4

Awe; Children; Parenting; Perspective; Reverence; Significance; Wonder; Worship

In 1997, Reeve Lindbergh, daughter of aviator Charles Lindbergh, was invited to give the annual Lindbergh Address at the Smithsonian Institu-



tion’s Air and Space Museum to commemorate the 70th anniversary of her father’s historic solo flight across the Atlantic. On the day of the speech, museum officials invited her to come early, before the facility opened, so that she could have a closeup look at *The Spirit of St. Louis*, the little plane suspended from the museum ceiling that her father had piloted from New York to Paris in 1927.

That morning in the museum, Reeve and her young son, Ben, eagerly climbed into the bucket of a cherry-picker, a long-armed crane that carried them upward until the plane was at eye level and within their reach. Seeing the machine that her father had so bravely flown across the sea was an unforgettable experience for Reeve. She had never touched the plane before, and that morning, 20 feet above the floor of the museum, she tenderly reached out to run her fingers along the door handle, which she knew her father must have grasped many times with his own hand.

Tears welled up in her eyes at the thought of what she was doing. “Oh, Ben,” she whispered, her voice trembling, “isn’t this amazing?”

“Yeaaaaaah,” Ben replied, equally impressed. “I’ve never been in a cherry-picker before!”

Citation: Bonne Steffen, editor of Christian Reader; source: Barbara Johnson, He’s Gonna Toot and I’m Gonna Scoot: Waiting for Gabriel’s Horn (Word, 1999)