

Raising Godly Children



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Published by Linda I. Oyanna (April 2022)

Unless otherwise stated, quotations of the Bible are from the King James Version of Bible.

[Amp] refers to the Amplified Bible.

Cover design by Daniel O. Oyanna

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INTRODUCTION

A godly child is one who is born again and is developing a relationship with God as he grows up both by personal experience and by watching people around him as they follow God.

A Godly child is not just one who goes to church with his family and does good, is good to others, and can quote Bible verses from memory. If that is what our picture of who a Godly child is, then we have missed the point all together.

The first thing to be aware of is that it is impossible to be Godly without the spirit of God. Until the Holy Spirit resides in and influences a child, the child might be good and well-behaved but he is not yet godly. Godliness is a product of the work of the Holy Spirit in a person.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

If all we do is focus on just getting our kids to church and getting them to behave like Christians without getting Christ in them by His Spirit, which is like putting the cart before the horse, we will only succeed in raising church going sinners, which I sincerely believe is not our goal. The point is that you can't have a godly person without Christ indwelling that person.

There is nothing wrong in getting your kids to church even if they are not saved because the closer they are to the things of God, the more

the opportunities they have for the word of God to penetrate their hearts but your focus should be getting Christ into them, not just around them.

Godly children cannot be wished for or magically created. You have to roll up your sleeves ready for the work ahead and work at it. Do not think either that your children will naturally just grow into Christians because of the Christian home they are growing up in. Nothing could be further from the truth; many of the people who are parents today, and indeed whole nations, had a Christian foundation and upbringing but are now the very opposite of everything the Bible stands for and are actively working to have less and less of God in their lives and communities. Having a Christian family background does have the advantage of it putting God always before your children but you have to actively labour to get Christ in them.

Galatians 4:19 My little children, for whom I am again suffering birth pangs until Christ is completely and permanently formed (molded) within you. [Amp]

Stop waiting for children's church to do it for you. It is not impossible for the church to do it but you are the biggest influence in the life of your child and therefore possess the greatest opportunity to bring your child into the light of Christ.

God has a major role to play in raising godly children because He bought your salvation and that of your child and made it available to you. What began with God will not progress to the desired end without Him because the power you need to raise your kids is with God. He provides the grace for the work ahead.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

1Timothy 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

The grace we need to raise our kids is abundant and available and you need to do is receive it. This is why you have to raise your kids on your knees first. You need God to help you. And you do not have to wait till you are married and start having kids before you start praying for them. You can start anytime. Remember, God exists outside of time and already knows your children.

Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren. [Amp]

So, praying for unborn children is not a theoretical exercise in futility with God. You can start praying for them now.

There is a lot of things you need to do for your kids and things you need to know about them that you can only do or see by the help of God. Not everything about your child is physical, there is a spiritual aspect of your child's life and you need to know how to nurture it. You have to pray for their lives, their salvation, their career, their calling, their future, their relationships, their personalities etc. There is so much to cover in prayer.

The second aspect of raising Godly children has to do with you – the parent. It starts with you as a father or a mother and what you create for your child.

There are a number of things I will like to share with you in this regard.

1. Christ must be in you.

You cannot give what you do not have. It takes a person who is serious with God to raise a child who is serious with God. It takes Godly parents to raise Godly children. Children are like tender plants in need of watering while you are like a gardener tending these delicate plants.

John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. [KJV]

You will have to pour out from your spirit to your children but if your heart is empty, you won't have anything to impart your children with. A worse situation is that if your heart is full of the wrong things, you will impart the wrong things.

Matthew 7:17-18 Even so, every healthy (sound) tree bears good fruit [worthy of admiration], but the sickly (decaying, worthless) tree bears bad (worthless) fruit. A good (healthy) tree cannot bear bad (worthless) fruit, nor can a bad (diseased) tree bear excellent fruit [worthy of admiration].

Matthew 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by [his] fruit.

You can't give Christ to your child if He is not dwelling in abundance to the point of overflow. The way Christ dwells in you is by His word, and a major way of communicating Christ is also through His word.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

If The Word and The Spirit are not flowing from you, you won't be able to impart your kids the way you should.

Sunday school has a role to play in your kid's life, a Christian school has a role to play however, their roles are limited and they can't take the responsibility of raising your child. If you want a piece of metal to become and behave like a magnet, you have to place it on a magnet. The longer that metal interacts with the magnet, the longer it will retain the magnetic properties it acquires. Your kids most likely spend at most 2 hours every week in Sunday School but spend the remaining days of the week with you. So you are in a better position to reach out to your kids because of the greater interaction time.

Genesis 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

God said here that He knew that Abraham would teach his children to follow God. Abraham would command his household after him which meant that Abraham would teach his household to follow God as he was doing and you will see in the Bible that generations after him followed God, thus proving God right.

So, a very critical question to ask yourself as a parent is this, "Are you a follower of Christ yourself? If your children should follow you the way you lead your life now, will they end up with God or will they end up somewhere else in the world?" It may seem like this is putting a lot of pressure on you but that is part of the responsibility of being a parent, so you have to walk and work with God to get your life together so your kids can be nurtured by the overflow of God in your life.

2. You have to be a Christian parent.

The word Christian means Christ like. You have to model Christ to your children. Your children will copy you no matter what you say. If your lifestyle is not Christ like, your children will not have the example they need to follow in this very critical phase of their lives.

I know that we are not perfect as parents but this is not about being flawless. There is a difference between a Christian living comfortably in the flesh and one working out his salvation with occasional setbacks who understands the need to repent and get restored and does just that as the need arises.

Even your weakness can be a valuable point for your children because when they see God strengthen you where you are weak, they will learn that they too can count on God in their weakness. They need to witness your walk with God. They need to see you climb mountains, go through the valley of the shadow of death all with God and come out victorious so they too can count God as faithful and reliable. They need your experience with God to stand as the template upon which to build their lives.

You can't expect your kids to be Godly when what they see you do is walk in the flesh all the time. They see you gossip, show uncontrolled emotions, lie, cheat, and live a life that does not have regard for God or the things of God. They will copy you and end up like you or they will have a bigger fight on their hands if they want to escape ending up like you, and they will have more issues to deal with in their lives. In other words, you will make the lives of your children easier when you get your life right.

The closest example your kids will see of God is from watching you live your life. If God is important to you, they will see Him as an important person in their lives.

3. Teach your children the word of God.

Talk to them about God. Use everything they see and interact with to show them that God is a living being and is part of their lives and the world around them came out of Him. If you don't teach them who God is, the world will teach them its view of what it believes God is and it is not a pretty picture.

Break down the scriptures to suit their age. Tell them stories from the Bible and teach them lessons from these stories and apply the lessons to their lives. You don't have to be ordained a pastor by your church in order to teach you own children the word of God. They mostly just need to understand the simple things anyway.

Don't be in a hurry to force too much information into them especially when they are young. A lesson a day is enough. Something as simple as "Jesus loves me" is enough lesson for a day if you are dealing with young children. As your kids grow older, tailor it to suit their age.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Put God always before their faces. Read the Bible with them and share the word with them as often as possible. Let the study of the word be a priority in your household. This will teach them to respect the word of God and value it above everything.

One thing you will realize is that those little moments you spend with them sharing God's word will be treasured by your kids. It will show them that God is important and they too are important enough for you to stop whatever you are doing as a family to pay attention to them and God. It also teaches them to pay attention to God. And if you do it right, they will be eager for such times.

4. Get your kids born again.

As a parent, getting your child saved is your number 1 priority.

You have to prepare your child to a point where he understands what Jesus came to do on earth. He should understand that Jesus died for his sin, was raised from the grave on the third day, and is alive today for his justification.

Your child is never too young for you to prepare his heart. As soon as the child can speak and understand conversations, start preparing his heart to receive Jesus. Then when he is able to understand the concept of salvation, lead him to Christ. Some say this happens it is at 5 years, others older. I believe the point in time varies for different kids but the process is the same: cultivate the heart, sow the seed of the gospel, nurture it, and at the right time, bring in the harvest.

Similarly, when they are old enough to understand baptism, get them baptized as a public testimony of their Salvation. When they too can understand the person of the Holy Spirit, get them filled with the spirit.

Your kids do not have to go astray in the world first before finding Jesus. They can find Jesus before they encounter the world and when

they do encounter the world, they will be prepared and not be sucked in by it.

Romans 10:12-15 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (YOUNG OR OLD): for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

You are the evangelist who has been called into the mission field of your home. It is a horrible thing for you to taste the goodness of God and not ensure that your children enjoy the same.

Psalms 34:8 O taste and see that the Lord [is] good: blessed [is] the man [that] trusteth in him.

5. Pray with your children.

When prayers get answered in a tangible way, it helps us realize that there is a real person on the other side of it, listening and responding. Thus, prayer teaches children that God is real, and that he hears and answers prayers. It helps them to understand communicating with God and how to listen and hear God.

Teach them how to pray, teach them the different forms of prayer and how to pray them, and teach them how to hear God for themselves. They need to understand that God has a will and the best way to get results is to pray the will of God.

Get them involved in praying for needs of the family (those family needs that are age appropriate so that they can understand what they are doing), their lives, their future, things that are happening to them, their environment etc. Let them get used to talking to God and listening to him as he answers their prayers. Help them to recognize it when God answers. When they have needs and challenges, teach them to pray about it and expect God to answer them. Teach them how to pray the scriptures, how to declare and confess scriptures over their lives. By doing this, you develop their confidence in God, his word and his ability to save and help them.

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us. [Amp]

1 John 5:15 And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him.

6. Let them see your faith walk with God.

It is essential that you teach them to exercise their faith in God. But it is critical to let them see you walk by faith. Let them see you exercise your faith as situations arise, this teaches them to exercise and build their faith. As I said earlier, your life serves as a template for your children, so as they see you journey with God, they will use your experience as building blocks to build their lives.

Get them involved in believing and trusting God for issues that are age appropriate that they can understand. Let them share in the victories

of your faith. This gives them the opportunity to watch you trust God for the impossible and see God do the impossible. This will help strengthen their faith and teach them to apply faith in their everyday lives.

1 Kings 9:4-5 And if you will walk before Me, as David your father walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, keeping My statutes and My precepts, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, There shall not fail you [to have] a man upon the throne of Israel. [Amp]

God said, “if you walk before me as your father did” ... which shows that David’s walk with God was not hidden but open for Solomon to observe and copy.

7. Create a Godly atmosphere for them.

Deliberately make your home an environment that stimulates spiritual growth. Your kids have to deal with the world when they get out into the world, don't let them come into your home and still struggle with dealing with the world. Mind what you allow on TV, computer systems or phones. The devil is fighting hard to get the attention of your kids; do not give him the chance.

Teach your children how to praise and worship God by both speaking about it and doing it with them. Let them watch or listen to messages or gospel music with you on TV or in the car when you drive them around. This creates a godly atmosphere for them, gives God access to their hearts, and allows God into their subconscious mind.

Model Godly living to your kids and stay away from things that will make them compromise. None of those things is worth your child's life and future.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. [Amp]

8. Love your kids.

Love your kids the same way God loves his church and you. Let the love of God take first place on your home.

Loving does not always mean making them feel good all the time. It will involve you disciplining your kids and allowing them experience the consequences of their actions in a safe environment so they understand that the choices they make have consequences they will have to live with.

Create a culture of love in your home.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness [is] bound in the heart of a child; [but] the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

God does not say that we should damage our kids in the process of correcting them but that we should correct them in love because love builds rather than cause damage.

In an atmosphere of love, it is easier to discipline and correct your kids and steer them in the right direction. People will always respond to love and your kids are no different in this regard.

9. Steer your kids towards righteousness.

The world is sinking deeper every day and the line separating truth from falsehood has been eroded. Your children need to know who is Truth, what is true and what is not, and they need to learn how to stand for righteousness else they will suffer with the world.

So you have to teach them how to walk in love, and the benefits of righteous living. Encourage them to live righteous lives, teach them to stand for the truth and to love righteousness.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

When your kids know what the real standard of their lives is, it will be easier for them not to fall for the traps the devil has set for them in this world because they know better.

Let them understand that righteous living is not outdated and unpopular but that it is what our lives are based on and it protects us from the dangers that are lurking in the world today. God's way of doing things does not prevent them from having fun but protects them from dangers and preserves them to enjoy what real fun is and please, be practical with them so they understand what you are teaching them and can apply it in their lives.

10. Raise your kids for their destinies and not to fulfill your ambition.

Your children are God's and he gave you the awesome privilege to raise His children. We as parents are just caretakers. Our kids are to fulfill

their God given destinies and not to correct our mistakes of the pasts. They are not our second chances at life or the fulfillment of our own desires.

Neither are they tools to fight people we hate or want to get back at. Doing this to your kid is nothing but selfish. Don't have a child and pour all your bitterness, insecurities, fears and desire for fulfillment on them, instead let them discover who God has made them to be and allow them live out their destiny.

Psalm 127:3-5 Lo, children [are] an heritage of the Lord: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward. As arrows [are] in the hand of a mighty man; so [are] children of the youth. Happy [is] the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Your children are arrows. It is your duty to sharpen them and construct the bow (environment) you need to launch them into the world. God won't give you a bow and an arrow, He will give you a log of wood and a knife (sword of the spirit which is the word of God) to carve the arrow and make the bow you need to launch them into their destinies.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

11. Raise your kids by faith.

There are a lot of things to deal with in bringing up kids that are outside your control. Therefore, you have to walk by faith and not by your senses. There are many times your senses will tell you something different from what the word says about your kids and there are times your kids will act differently from what you have tried to instill in them but you have to stay in the word and believe that what God spoke

about them will come to pass irrespective of what your senses can see, hear or feel.

Romans 4:17-21 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, [even] God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Irrespective of what you see, hold on to God's word concerning your children. Be determined to continue working in the face of whatever wants to discourage you.

In summary, you need to believe that raising Godly kids is possible and God is a partner with you in this journey. Get help from God, your church, and other Godly resources which may involve programs that will make you a better parent to your kids.

Remember that the better equipped you are in this quest, the better for you and the greater the outcome of your labor as you trust God to bless the works of your hands.

Someone asked this question which I believe many of us parents can easily identify with. “In the case of having unwilling children to learn the things of God, what would one do? Because our children are like children of first world societies who love computer games or watching cartoon than the things of God. They even feel they are too intelligent for Bible stories, or going to church. What other strategy should a mother adopt please?”

This is the response I gave her.

First, your approach will be determined by the age of your child. Younger children will be treated differently from older ones with the same goal in mind.

Secondly, this does not only apply to things about God but life in general for your children because my guess is a child who behaves like this will only show this same attitude to other aspects of life.

One thing you have to understand is that we are responsible for how our children are. Our children only wanting to play computer games or watch cartoons all the time is because of what we have allowed in our homes. The children thinking that they are too intelligent for the Bible or Bible stories, or too intelligent for church, is either because we have not made God and the things of God first place in our home or in our lives as parents. So, the children grow up seeing God given the back seat of the home. Consequently, they would treat God the same way.

It is also possible that it is because we did not involve them in our walk with God so they grow up not respecting God or the things of God and they are using the world as a template to build their lives because that is what is available to them. When you allow your child in front of computers and TV all the time, the world is raising that child – not you. If we treat God as unimportant, our kids will do same.

One thing about our kids is that they will always do better than us in everything. If we serve God and involve them, they will go deeper with God. If we serve God only on Sundays and live in the world from Monday to Saturday, our kids will also go deeper.

Our children are not children of the “advanced countries”, we only allowed them to copy those children. The funny thing is that these developed countries are suffering the consequences of allowing their kids grow up like this and are looking for solutions but here we are trying to copy what has already failed.

Someone said the biggest mistake is continuing in a mistake because you spent too long making it. You can't just allow your kids continue living wrongly because you believe it is too late to make changes. It is not. You have to take control of your home and your role as a parent.

I just watched a video of a young boy climbing the table of the TV section at a Shoprite plaza and was breaking all the TVs in the store because the parents annoyed him. His parents were begging him to come down. I believe this is not the first time he trashed things for being annoyed. The parents chose a parenting style which has brought shame on them and will cost them a lot of money because their son destroyed more than 10 TVs and if I am right, none will be less than 300k judging from the sizes.

If your child who is refusing to participate in serving God is failing badly in school and not moving academically, what would you do? Would you make changes in the life of this same child in order to produce a different outcome in his life or will you just raise your hands in defeat and say my child doesn't like reading or going to school and there is nothing I can do about it? My guess is you would most likely do something to change the situation.

This child is obviously failing in life so you have to make changes in their lives and in your home to get a different outcome. There is no law stating that you will be thrown in jail if you reduce their TV time or the time they spend on computers. You are the parent and your child is the child; he or she should not be the one parenting by determining how the home should work or how to run their lives. There is a time when as a parent, you will take a step back and allow your child make decisions but that is only when your child has proven beyond doubt that they are responsible (not perfect) and a child out of control and irresponsible is not there yet even if he is 18 years old.

If the games and TV are standing in the way of their destiny which it actually is, you will have to make serious changes in the home.

Things you will have to do.

1. Previously, I spoke about praying for your kids and obtaining grace from God to parent. This is where it starts. Pray for their lives, their destinies and this particular issue you are having and let God give you the wisdom and grace you need.
2. Work on your relationship with them. People always respond to love. Love the kids unconditionally and make them see that you have their best interest at heart.

Loving does not mean spoiling especially with gifts. Let them earn what they get and the currency to do so should be good behavior.

Love means doing what is best for someone. If your child wants you to buy him 'sniper' (that rat poison people were using to commit suicide left and right recently) because he/she heard about it on social media and wants one, will you buy it for the child because you love the child? NO. Love is doing what will help the child grow and become the best God created him to be.

Love is not being an enabler. Don't mistake both. An enabler supports a child's destructive habit and fuels it by providing what the child needs to destroy himself all in the name of love. Enabling is not love.

3. Depending on how old they are, you can get together with them as a family and discuss these issues and discuss the solution you have come up with and the expectations you have of them. Don't kid yourself that your 5 year old does not know anything, they do and you can talk with them. Have family meetings regularly to deal with and pray about issues and the monitor the progress you are making as a family.

4. Set down rules that will govern the house and the use if gadgets. You bought the TV, you bought the computer or whatever gaming device, which means they are yours and under your control, not theirs. The remote control is your property and you can use it at will. When they pay their own rent and buy their own TV and computers they can decide how they should be used.

Don't go to church and leave them at home because they don't like church. Everyone should go together as a family. After the service, engage them. "What did you learn from what Pastor taught? How can you apply it in your life?"

Work out a time table for your family or individual child, depending on how you want to do it and everyone, including you, should stick to it. If changes are to occur to the routine, it should be by your approval.

Set out time for TV daily. Just because stations run 24 hours does not mean that your TV should be on for 24 hours. Same goes for computer games. I didn't say take it away from them but regulate how they are used. This is not just only because of their relationship with God but

also about their lives. If the TV or computer goes off, they will not die, I promise you.

Get a constant prayer / Bible study time for your family. Pick a time of the day when everyone will be available. Get them Bibles of their own. If they can't read, read verses of scriptures and discuss with them (this is a reason why you as a parent have to be sound and grounded in God's word because if there is nothing in you, you won't be able to impart your kids). If they can read, ask them to explain what they read or ask questions on what they read and explain the scriptures to them. If they are young, get Bible story books and read to them. There are animated Bibles for kids, get them. Have story book time with your kids. It is not enough to say, "Go read Bible stories or go watch Bible stories," find time to do it with them. You can even incorporate it to your devotion time.

I worked in Teens church in Katsina back in Nigeria and many teens had phones bought by their parents but didn't have Bibles. How would these kids see that God is first place in their lives when His word is not important? Get other things for them to do which will take their attention from these devices and make them spend more time being creative. For example, get them involved in art. This is particularly useful for kids. There are Bible pictures online you can download that they can paint.

You can also pick days to play worship videos or messages instead of cartoons. They will complain at first and cry but crying will not kill them. After a while, they will adjust and they might even remind you if you forget ... that is if you had explained to them why you need to do it beforehand.

We should stop the habit of once you get home, TV comes on. No.

In my home, my kids including the 6 year old know that TV doesn't come on till 7 pm. They get 2 hours of TV on week days and more on weekends. They don't have phones or tablets for games. How does games add to their lives? If they want to play, they play with each other and bond as siblings. Switch off the TV and you will be surprised how creative your kids can be.

5. Make learning about God fun. They easily choose other things over God because they think God and Christianity is boring. Get recent animations of Bible stories that will appeal to them. I would recommend VeggieTales for young children. For older kids, find time to talk with them about God. It might look awkward at first but with time, they will cherish the time spent together.

It is a big mistake to allow your kids grow up without personal input from you. Being a parent is beyond providing food, clothes and shelter for your kids. You have to nurture them and do so as God expects and commands.

If your kids are giving you a tough time, then it is time to make changes and know that it is never too late to start doing the right thing.

I hope this helps and please, if you have more questions, ask and I believe God will help me as answers are provided.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Linda Oyanna is a public speaker on health, relationship, marriage and family. She is a Pastor, mother figure, mentor and role model for several young ladies who desire the balance she has been able to achieve among her many roles. She is married, with 3 boys, and currently makes her home in Queensland, Australia. She can be reached at lindollar@yahoo.com.