

**SKY Newsletter**

## Parent/Teacher Connection Resources

**Story Time**

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#### Having An Appointment With God

*by Rory Ries*

**Correspondence Course**

Did you know God has set some time aside to meet with you? Our great God has declared certain days where we are to stop what we are doing and devote the whole day to Him. We are not talking about the weekly Sabbath, we are talking about His special days which He has commanded us to observe.

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Think of it as having an appointment to see your doctor. Usually, we write down the date and time on a calendar so we don't forget. We set aside the time so nothing will interfere with our appointment. When the day approaches, we are normally prepared to meet with our doctor. We get cleaned up and wear something decent. We pretty much know what we are going to say, and for the most part we know what is going to take place.

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When we read the Bible, we learn about the appointments we have with God. Beginning with Leviticus 23, starting in verse one we read about those appointments including the weekly Sabbath. God declares that these times He has set aside for us to meet with Him are His appointed feasts (Leviticus 23:2).

We can read about the weekly Sabbath being an appointed time along with seven other appointed times. God tells us to observe and keep the Days of Unleavened Bread which include Passover. God says another appointed feast is the Feast of the First Fruits or Pentecost. We then are told to keep and observe the Feast of Trumpets, which is approaching, along with the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

These are specific times when God wants us to set aside the day and do no labor so we can meet with Him. God wants us to be free from any outside interference where we can spend the whole day with Him. We can praise Him and sing to Him and share the whole day with Him through prayer and meditation. We are also commanded to meet with others for a sacred assembly so we can come before our great God in worship.

Why do we have these appointments? These days picture God's great plan for us and for all of mankind. These appointed times are for all of those, every

man, every woman and every son and daughter who want to obey God and for those who want to follow Christ. By keeping these appointed times we come to understand what God is doing and what lies ahead.

We are told in Deuteronomy chapter 4 to be careful not to forget these things and not let what we have learned slip from our heart. God commands us to teach these things to our children and to their children. These appointed times are to be set-aside on a yearly basis forever from one generation to the next. This great and awesome plan of God is to be passed on to our children and to our children's children.

God is very specific in telling us to be joyful at the Feast of Tabernacles and not just us but our sons and daughters (Deut. 16:13-15). God commands us to rejoice because of what the time pictures. There is a time coming when there will be lasting peace and joy. No more sorrow. No more pain and suffering.

Do our children understand this? Can they see this marvelous vision? There are some children who do not want Christ to return because they are afraid they will miss out on being married, having children, or having a future in this world. How do we get them to see beyond this life? How do we get them to see this life has nothing to offer compared to what God has waiting for us when Christ returns?

Keeping these Holy Days is a beginning. Reaffirming God's great plan will help them. Our children need to see the desire and yearning for Christ's return in us. We, the parents have to keep that vision clear. One way is to show them this world is not perfect and will not be perfect until Christ returns. We can share with them what is going to take place and what lies ahead in the world tomorrow.

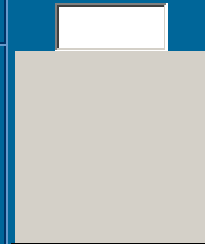
Helping them build and develop a relationship with Christ and with their heavenly Father is the key. It's the key to success in any walk in this life and the life to come. The Holy Days, or appointed feasts are a tool we can use in teaching our children God's plan for us and for all of mankind. God wants our children to meet with Him at the appointed times and He wants to share with them a time that will last for an eternity.

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#### What Does Committed Mean to You?

*by Rory Ries*

Correspondence Course

There are different meanings to the word committed. An individual can be committed to a place where he may not want to be and it can be done legally without his consent in some cases. A more fitting definition is making a promise or pledge to doing something. It can also mean entrusting someone.

More Lessons!

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What do you think of when you hear the word commit? We live in a world where this word commit has taken on a negative aura. It almost brings fear into how some people think of the word. Why would anyone be afraid of the word commit or committed? Does the thought of committing oneself to something or someone threaten the freedom of that individual, like having to give something up?

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Lately, there have been several books written on why men are fearful of commitments with the opposite sex. Women have asked the question, what are men afraid of when it comes down to having a serious relationship or a commitment to an individual of the opposite gender? We see many today choosing not to become married due to the commitment that comes from being married.

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What about having a relationship with Jesus Christ? Yes, it does mean committing oneself when an individual decides to repent and become baptized into the Body of Christ. Is it a frightening thought when you think of the commitment to Christ? It is a major step in a person's life and there is a sacrifice to be made. We do give up something when we commit ourselves to walk with Christ.

What we give up and what we sacrifice when we do commit our lives to Christ cannot be compared with what lies ahead. Our Father desires to have a relationship with each one of us and that is one of the reasons we were

created. Christ is there for us and is so willing to lead us, but again, it takes a real commitment on our part.

God tells us in Psalms 37:5, "commit your way to the Lord." If we follow His instruction God makes us this promise, "He will make our righteousness shine like the dawn and the justice of our cause like the noonday sun" (Psalms. 37:6).

Let's go to Proverbs 16:3 God says, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed." Here is another promise we can claim if we commit to God. That commitment is entrusting God with everything we do and acknowledging Him as we go through each day. God and Jesus Christ want to be involved in our lives and all we have to do is ask them and they will be there for us.

We can read in Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." God promises us, once again, we can be truly blessed by looking to Him in everything we do. God will come through when we rely on Him and when we allow Christ to lead us in everything we do. We will succeed!

This negative world in which we live can have a terrible influence on us if we are not careful. Divorce is one of the causes for the younger generation to question marriage and to question commitments. The attitude of not committing to anything has had a negative impact on the youth of today. These attitudes and negative actions are very apparent and can be destructive.

This world has nothing to offer that can even come close to what God has lying in store for you. Yes, it does take a commitment. We do not have to be afraid of losing something or be afraid of giving something up when we do make that commitment to God.

God will never let us down nor will He ever forsake us. His promises are for sure and they are true. A commitment to Him is just the beginning of a lifelong journey that will bring joy, peace and a love that cannot be matched. What we will reap and be given from our Great God is far above and beyond anything we could ever receive from this world in which we live.

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### Responsibility to Others

*by Rory Ries*

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"Am I my brother's keeper?" Does this line sound familiar? Can you find this statement in the Bible? What does it mean to you? It's easy to understand what was going on when this statement was made. It's also easy to see that this statement was made with a very sarcastic and rude tone of voice.

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We can see Cain was not very happy with his brother and chances are there were probably some problems within their family. Another family that seemed to have the same problem was Jacob and Esau. It seems these two didn't get along very well either. Nowadays we call this type of turmoil, "sibling rivalry."

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Jacob set his brother up and was willing to take his brother's birthright. On the other hand, Esau was willing to give up his birthright for a bowl of soup. Their parents choosing one boy over the other brought some of their problems about. Another point that needs to be made is neither boy looked out for the other.

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There are several other stories in the Bible about how families were torn apart because the attitude of "every man for himself" prevailed. There are many explanations why this does occur in families and there are many different situations that do arise that can easily turn one family member against the other.

This not only happens in families but we can see rivalries occur on the streets, in schools, at the workplace and even in the church we attend. Brother is pitted against brother, or friend against friend. Backbiting, slander, gossip and rumors can be an everyday occurrence for some. These things are not to be.

We are to be responsible to one another whether in our immediate family or whatever our environment may be.

Do you remember a book written a few years ago called, "Looking Out For Number One?" There have been others just like that one expressing a concern that individuals need to become more individual. This thought or attitude is still alive today. We now have sayings like, "road rage", "he's gone postal" and "don't get mad, get even." This attitude of self-first and "who cares about anyone else" is not good.

Are we held accountable in how we treat one another or how we even think about one another? Thankfully Jesus Christ did not get caught up with the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He gave up everything and emptied himself to become the sacrifice for all of mankind. Those who spat on him and beat him will have the opportunity to get to know him because he cared for them even as they tortured him.

We are to walk as Christ walked. He taught there are two great commandments, "love God with all of your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor." Is it difficult to look at another individual and see they are a creation of God? Do you know that God loves that individual regardless of how they act? He may not approve of what they are doing but He still loves them.

Whether we are having difficulties within our family, at church, or at another place where we happen to spend time we have to remind ourselves that we have been chosen to preach the gospel that Christ preached. Allowing our love for God and for our brother to be seen by others is a great vehicle for the gospel to be preached. Taking the responsibility in doing good for others regardless of the situation is Godly love.

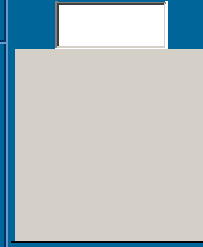
Taking self out of the equation is the first step. Self-gain and selfish desires have to be kept in check. Removing the idea of "what's in it for me" is another step in the right direction. Focusing in on doing something for someone will lead us to becoming responsible for others. We cannot make anyone do anything but we can sure let others see the love of God in us.

Jesus Christ took on the responsibility of laying down his life so we can have the opportunity to develop a relationship with Him and with God the Eternal. If God were to ask you, "Where is your brother?" how would you answer Him?

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#### How Do We Help Children Make Right Choices

*by Rory Ries*

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In the Old Testament, there are four chapters devoted to the individual, Samson (Judges 13 - 16) and there are four chapters devoted to Ruth in the book of Ruth. It is believed that Samson was a contemporary of Ruth or perhaps her son Obed. When studying the story of Ruth and Samson, we have a unique opportunity to view two entirely different families. It is from their stories we learn to be the kind of family God wants us to be.

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It is obvious through this family comparison that environment alone does not make a person good or evil. A person can live in a corruptible, sinful society, a pagan family or a godly family and the outcome of their life is all up to choices they make. None of these situations will determine the future of the individual. Choices made early in life determine ones future.

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Ruth was born into a pagan household. Naomi, even in her sadness influenced Ruth by her example. Ruth left her family, friends and her homeland in order to embrace the God of Israel. This was Ruth's choice. In heartfelt words to Naomi Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16,17).

Samson, on the other hand, was born into a godly family and was to do a great work for God (Judges 13:24-25). In spite of this, Samson's parents were not successful in shaping Samson with godly values. With all the advantages of a

perfect environment, Samson grew up to be a selfish and self-centered individual. He did not care about his family, the people of God or his special calling. Even in death Samson was selfish "O Lord, remember **me**, I pray, just this once, O God, that **I** may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for **my** two eyes!"(Judges 16:28). Samson made the choice to defile his life before the Lord. In the end, he paid the consequences and suffered.

Everyone, no matter what the circumstances, must determine to be responsible for their actions. Have you ever heard someone say, "that's just the way I am and you will have to accept me for me."? This statement is nonsense! There is no excuse for rude, inconsiderate behavior. Each of us is held accountable for the character we have become. While it is true that God has created us as free moral agents with the freedom to make choices, it is still our responsibility to accept the consequences of our actions. We cannot blame our parents, friends or this sinful society for our lack of character.

It is not the responsibility of teachers at school or weekly Bible class to teach your children good virtues. It is solely the duty of the parent to teach and train his child. God holds parents accountable. As parents, how do we teach our children values and self-confidence so they are able to make good choices? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Kids want discipline and values. They want the tools needed to make right choices. Don't allow society to dictate it's sinful values on you and your family.
2. It is important to talk to your children about values, but it is even more important to set a proper example. Your words are meaningless unless you act on your words. There are many opportunities during the week that allow you to do what Deuteronomy 11:19 says, "You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." In our home, dinner is the occasion where our children tell the events of their day and as parents we have the opportunity to guide and teach. Praising them for handling a situation well, and reprimanding them if an occurrence was not handled properly.
3. Up hold a high standard. There is nothing wrong with striving for excellence. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might;" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Teach your children that even the most medial job (mopping a floor, cleaning the kitchen, sweeping, raking) should be done with excellence. They should do this for themselves and for the benefit of the family. Make it a habit to pursue excellence.
4. Don't allow your children to make excuses for their actions. Teach them to take responsibility for the good as well as the bad that they do.
5. Teach them how to make good judgments. They should not base their judgment on who someone is or what they look like, but judge them by their actions.
6. Teach your children to commit themselves to the way of God. Regardless of how difficult it may be at times, the way we live our lives shows the strength of our commitment to God. Children are suspicious of talk that is not backed up by actions.

An unhealthy environment definitely makes it more difficult for a child to do



what is right. However, living in a Christian environment is no guarantee that a child will make right choices. Samson did not follow his parent's example of faith and he made some serious mistakes. He was not committed to God's way. The hope found in his story is that no matter how many failures he had, he did come to depend on God, albeit in a selfish way. Ruth did not have the perfect environment, but she made the choice to commit her life in obedience to God. Ruth lived during a time of great violence and idolatry and in spite of the times, she was a woman with a cause. She believed in honor, courage and commitment. In this sinful society our goal should be that our children make healthy choices and live with a cause. Teach your children Godly virtues. They are powerful alternatives to drugs, sex, violence and distrust that are widespread among our youth today.

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**Teenagers and Sex**

*by Rory Ries*

## Correspondence Course

According to a recent survey and study, virtually most of the teens surveyed, said they are influenced-at least a little-by what other teens think when they are deciding to have sex. However, many teens did say they are more influenced by what their parents think and their parent's influence is more important to them.

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The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, who conducted the survey and study, concluded, "When it comes to sex, many parents feel they have lost their children to the influence of their peers and popular culture. Our survey offers a different picture."

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Thirty-eight percent of the teens surveyed said their parents were more influential in their sexual decision making while thirty-two percent said their peers were more influential. The pressure to have sex before marriage is still in existence amongst our young people. This pressure and influence is still a strong force in the American culture.

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Girls say that the pressure comes from their would-be sexual partner while boys say the pressure comes from their friends. Another finding was, 94% said they are influenced at least a little by what their peers think and 58% said they were influenced a lot. Over half said they were pressured a lot into having sex.

The other factor that is somewhat alarming is, only 15% of the adults surveyed said teens should abstain from having sex and only 18% of the teens surveyed said they should abstain from having sex. We have come a long way and the Sexual Revolution has not died down. Sex before marriage is still a way of life and even though teen pregnancies have lowered, the act of fornication is still prevalent in this country.

What does God say? We can read in Hebrews 13 and verse 4, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." The word pure means to be free from all taint of that which is lewd. It suggests refraining from all acts and thoughts that incite desire not in accordance with one's virginity or one's marriage vows.

Sexual intimacy is reserved for the marriage relationship and is approved and blessed by God only in that state. Man and woman become one flesh and the pleasures that come from the approved sexual relationship is beyond anything that can be compared. The sexual relationship between a man and woman who have waited until their marriage to one another is blessed and ordained by God.

Unfortunately, Satan wants to destroy any relationship that is God-oriented. He wants men and women and young adults to follow their sexual desires and commit fornication so they will be separated from God. Any sexual act outside of marriage can have an impact on an individual for the rest of his or her life. This does not mean God will not forgive, He will if we repent. However, our sins can leave scars that last a lifetime or may take a long time to heal.

For anyone that is being pressured or influenced into having sex before marriage, look to God's truth and allow Christ to guide you in your decision-making. Seek your parent's influence and listen to what they have to say. A

moment of sexual pleasure can lead to a life of misery and it can even become disastrous. Looking to a safe mechanism is not the way either. Abstinence is the only way until marriage.

For those whom have already experienced sex before marriage, it is never too late to repent and ask God for forgiveness. Jesus Christ died for all of us and we can have a relationship with him and the Father. There is no sin so great that God cannot forgive if we are willing to seek Him out and bow down before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God created sex for man and woman to partake of in holy matrimony. Our great God will bless and ordain the marriage bed that is kept pure in His eyes. What a marvelous gift we have been given from our true and loving Father, the Creator of the heavens and all of the universe.