



May 2009



Gary Cloyd  
Pastor to Families  
937-678-9945

## Rely on God During Uncertainties

Family life has its fair share of challenges, and unexpected crises can knock us flat. Sometimes, these things can threaten the unity of our family itself. Illness, a broken marriage, job loss, and financial problems all bring uncertainty and anxiety. Even positive changes such as a new baby or a planned move can disrupt schedules and affect our relationships with each other and with God.

Although you can't control everything that comes your family's way, you can minimize the impact of stress and change. During uncertain times, children have three primary needs:

**Consistent Relationships**—When life gets tough, your children need reassurance and familiarity. Model the positive qualities of God, who's consistently present, unconditionally accepting, attentive, affirming, and reliable.

**Lots of Boundaries and Structure**—Keeping the same rules and schedules, as much as possible, helps children feel safe. When new or different situations arise, let kids know ahead of time what to expect. Then provide extra attention during transitions.

**A Safe Place**—Children need an accepting place where they can talk about what's happening in their lives. Be real and encourage kids to open up about their thoughts and emotions.

This issue of "The Parent Link" offers ideas for surviving and growing through life's challenges. For another helpful resource, read *Group's Emergency Response Handbook for Parents*. It's available at [www.GroupPublishing.com](http://www.GroupPublishing.com) and in bookstores.



## Challenges Children Face

- In America, a divorce occurs every 30 seconds.
- Every day, 1,300 stepfamilies are formed.
- 31% of children ages 9 to 12 say they "worry a lot."
- 47% of children ages 9 to 12 suffer from insomnia.



PowerSource

### Ask God:

1. To protect your family members and their faith during challenging times.
2. To make his love real to you during life's difficulties.
3. To help you trust him and cast all your cares on him (see 1 Peter 5:7).

## Parenting Insights

In *Children's Ministry Magazine*, Greg Baird, founder of Kids in Focus ministries, offers five simple principles to give stressed-out children a **B.R.E.A.K.**

**Be an example.** Minimize any unnecessary stresses and learn to handle stress in a God-pleasing manner (see Philippians 4:6).

**Relate.** Spend time with children, share an interest, listen, and cheer them on.

**Educate yourself.** Learn what stressors your children face each day. What goes on at school and with their friends?

**Ask questions.** Concerned questions help you understand what children need and show that you really care.

**Keep praying.** Jesus works in children's lives. Pray fervently and without ceasing for your kids as they face life's challenges.

## OpenTheBook

**"For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble.... The Lord says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.'"**

**Psalm 32:7-8**

Troubles come to everyone, even Christians. But God promises shelter during all of life's storms.

### Teachable Moments

**1. Play Hide and Seek**—With younger children, unwind by playing a fun game of Hide and Seek as a family. Then talk about how God always comes looking for us and always watches over us.



**2. Lick Life's Problems**—When life gets messy, it's more important than ever to spend one-on-one time with your children. If possible, take each child on a simple outing (for example, to an ice cream shop). Let your child air what's on his or her mind. Then share ways you can stick together and work out problems.

**3. Create a Smile File**—Stress is exhausting and removes our focus from life's many joys. Make a file, box, or journal where family members can put pictures or notes about God's blessings. Then look through it together when your family gets overwhelmed or discouraged.



**"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

**God calls on us to bear one another's burdens and lift each other up. Have a heart-to-heart chat with your children so they can hand over their worries to God. Start with these questions:**

1. What is your biggest worry, and how does it make you feel?
2. Why does God let us all face tough times? What are some positive things that have come out of your struggles?
3. What are some ways God helps us when we're hurting?
4. How can we know and trust that God will always take care of us?

## Family Experience: God Protects and Saves

**Use this excerpt from Group's "Crocodile Dock" vacation Bible school to remind your family of God's power amid life's struggles.**

Say, "The Israelites, God's special people, were slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, had been working God's people so hard, and they were so tired. God told Moses to go tell Pharaoh, 'Let my people go!' Moses went 10 times! Each time Pharaoh wouldn't let God's people go, God sent a plague on Egypt. A plague is a horrible thing that happens to a whole land. But God kept the Israelites safe from all these plagues."



Re-enact the first nine plagues, using these simple props and actions:

1. Blood to water—Drop red food coloring into water.
2. Frogs—Hop around the room.
3. Gnats—Make high-pitched buzzing sounds.
4. Flies—Make a lower-pitched sound and zoom around the room.
5. Diseased livestock—Moo and moan, then lie on the floor with your arms and legs sticking up in the air.
6. Boils—Use a washable red marker to put dots on your skin.
7. Hail—Throw paper wads at each other.
8. Locusts—Nibble on some snacks, pretending to be hungry insects.
9. Darkness—Turn off the lights or wear blindfolds.

After each plague, have everyone shout, "Let my people go!" Close by saying, "God is powerful. Only God could send those plagues and protect his people like that." Have family members each share a time they saw God's power in action. End in prayer, thanking God for using his power to protect and save your family.



## Now Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Night at the Museum: Battle at the Smithsonian*

**Release Date:** May 22

**Genre:** Action, Comedy

**Rating:** PG for mild action and brief language

**Cast:** Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Amy Adams, Dick Van Dyke, Owen Wilson, Hank Azaria

**Synopsis:** Security guard Larry Daley returns to the big screen to rescue an exhibit sent to the Smithsonian by mistake. The famed Institute comes alive, as presidents and historical figures (such as Amelia Earhart) help battle an evil pharaoh.

**Discussion Questions:** Which historical figures do you admire most, and why? What does it take to become famous or memorable? Read Hebrews 11. What stands out about your life and your faith? Even though you're young, what impact do you have on other people?



## New Christian Music Release

**Artist:** Phillip LaRue

**Album:** *Let the Road Pave Itself*

**Artist Info:** At age 16, Phillip LaRue picked up a guitar during a bout with mono. In 2000, he and his sister, Natalie, formed a Christian-music duo known as LaRue. The group, which had several hits, disbanded when Natalie got married.

**Summary:** Phillip LaRue's debut solo album has an honest, personal feel. Several songs are real-life musical stories. "Erase and Rewind" was inspired by a friend's admission of suicidal thoughts. The hope-filled "Mountains High and Valleys Low" explores doubt and faith. "Chasing the Daylight" addresses faith and resilience during dark times. "It's in the unraveling of life that we find God even more," LaRue says.

**Discussion Questions:** What type of doubts do you struggle with? What makes you feel hopeful, and why? Read Romans 8:38-39. How does it feel to hear that nothing can separate you from God's love?



## What Games Are Out

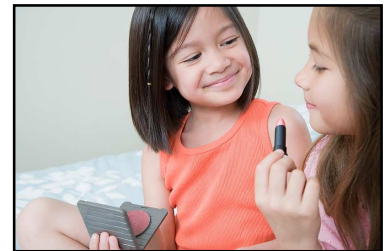
Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Flock</i>	Players are "aliens" who control a UFO, abduct livestock, and solve puzzles. The game contains some coarse wordplay.	E; Xbox 360, PS3, PC
<i>Disney Pure</i>	In this offroad-racing game, players race ATVs through high-speed courses. It's filled with action, mud, and energetic music.	E; PS3, Xbox 360
<i>Pet Pals: Animal Doctor</i>	Future veterinarians can diagnose and "treat" a variety of 3-D animals. Realistic-looking surgeries contain mild blood.	E10+; Wii

**GAME RATINGS KEY:** EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



## Culture & Trends

**What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:**



- Girls are buying and using beauty products earlier than ever. Among girls ages 6 to 9, 43% use lipstick or lipgloss and 38% use hairstyling products. Each month, girls 8 to 12 spend \$40 million on beauty products.
- While families are discovering the benefits of libraries, public-library budgets across America are shrinking.

## Quick Stats

- As of 2007, 40% of U.S. births were to single mothers. That's up 25% from 2002. *(Nat'l Center for Health Statistics)*
- A whopping 99% of moms give themselves a parenting grade of excellent or good. *(Good Housekeeping)*
- Four in 10 moms talk with their own mothers at least once a day. *(Good Housekeeping)*

## ***Twilight - A Prelude to Darkness***

You have heard the expression “It is always darkest before the dawn” which is used to encourage people in difficult times. That saying is often true. While not a saying, it is a fact that twilight comes before nightfall or dark. I am appealing to parents to think twice about allowing their youngsters to get involved with the book series or the movie *Twilight*. The books, four of them, and the movie have been wildly popular with middle and high school girls in particular. The subject matter involves a young girl, Bella, who meets and falls in love with a vampire Edward. The first book and the movie contain no violence, swearing, or blatant sexual content – criteria that causes even many well-meaning Christian parents and normally reliable Christian-leaning websites like *Focus on the Family’s* “*Plugged In*” to give the movie/book somewhat favorable reviews.

Do you remember the analogy of the frog in the kettle? If you throw a live frog in a pot of hot water, it will jump out. Take that same frog and put it in a pan of cool water and warm it up slowly and before you know it, you have frog legs for supper because it won’t jump out of a pan of water that heats up gradually.

“Okay Pastor” you say, “I sense that you are taking a stand against *Twilight*, what’s your bottom line?” Thank you for asking. Let me share what others are saying before I share my thoughts.

- “On a side note, I believe it is important for parents to talk to their young women regarding Bella's and Edward's relationship. The story promotes the idea that a man will swoop in and save you in any situation, and this may set up young women for failure in future relationships. Edward's character in “Twilight” creates the idea that men are saviors, rather than partners, and future husbands should be viewed as partners rather than saviors.” —Sarah, age 24 (USA)
- “Yet another issue: *Twilight* is part of the recent trend, especially in adolescent lit, toward portraying darkness as light. It's all about glorifying the darkness. I found it extremely interesting, but also unsettling, that the vampires were purposely portrayed as wearing unusual amounts of white in the movie. It reminded me very much of the verse in which Paul says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:4). When I see the extreme fascination with these dark, tormented characters, it makes me uncomfortable. I want to grab girls by the collar and tell them that the most powerful, perfect man who ever lived has already died for them. They don't have to have their longings fed by a diet of twisted obsession and codependent pain. The bottom line is this: I don't think *Twilight* is healthy. Christian issues aside, it glorifies love that is painful, narcissistic, and dangerous, and it blurs the line between lust and love. On the basic written and visual level, it presents a picture of the world that is highly sensual and sexualized and that mixes pain and eroticism in very disturbing ways.” *Taken from REVELIFE*
- “The scenes describing Edward and Bella’s fixation on each another are masterfully written to depict the kind of relationship many a young girl desires to have—a ridiculously handsome guy worships the ground she walks on and devotes his every waking moment to romancing her. And while this fantasy (and that is what it is) appeals to some legitimate desires hardwired into every female, the result is a twisted picture of love, romance, and worship. The problem is not that Edward and Bella are made for each other; the problem is that they *idolize* one another. The sense of idolatry is hard to miss. Edward is Bella’s whole world; there *is* nothing else. There is no balance, no sense of reality to this love; yet it is portrayed as ideal. This singular focus on Edward, sure to captivate the already vulnerable hearts of adolescent girls, can easily lead to a view of love that is singularly unbiblical.” – *Mark Farnham – Professor Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary*
- “One review I read called *Twilight* pornographic. Before your knee jerks upward, consider the context. The kind of pornography that appeals to men creates a fantasy world in which women are made objects because of their beauty. The allure is the fantasy that the women in the pictures are so attracted to the male viewer that they are willing to do whatever he desires. Pornography then is primarily fantasy—the idolizing of what is forbidden and the imagining that one is receiving submissive worship from the desired person. It is

common knowledge that the fantasy men and women desire is symptomatically different (images for men, words for women) but essentially the same. There is no fundamental difference between a man who fantasizes about sex outside the bonds of marriage while viewing Internet porn and a woman who fantasizes about romance outside the bonds of reality while reading a romance novel. Both are pornographic. In either case, Scripture commands us to let our minds dwell on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8). While *Twilight's* appeal may not be pornographic for every woman, I daresay that for many it evokes fantasies for someone who worships them and is unrealistically perfect in every way. In addition, pornography creates and feeds growing desires the recipient must intensify to continue bringing the same level of satisfaction.” – *Mark Farnham – Professor Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary*

- “But there's enough negative undercurrent even in this first outing (the books get darker as they progress, so presumably the movies will follow) to justify some pretty serious conversations afterwards for those families that decide to defer their better judgment—which would normally push vampire flicks out of bounds—and go ahead and go with the flow and see the show.” – *From Plugged In May 13, 2009*

What are **my** thoughts on a book series and movie that I have neither seen nor read? I will list them for you.

- Just seeing the movie trailer/ads as well as the first book cover created a gut reaction that both appeared to be very dark spiritually. My wife concurred. Those concerns are borne out by the occult theme. What should the Christian have to do with the occult? According to Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God labels the occult as an abomination that we should avoid.
- My greatest concern about *Twilight* is that it preys on the desires of every young girl and woman for a man to be their savior, to idolize them, romance them perfectly, and to sweep them off of their feet. There was and is only one Savior in this world and his name is Jesus. Men are not saviors who sweep women off of their feet and make them happy, rather we are designed to be partners who share life's sad and glad times together.
- While the first book and movie may seem benign, they are not. They are steamy and dripping with sensuality. What parent wants their daughter's boyfriend spending time, and lots of it, in their teen or preteen's bedroom? Don't mistake a lack of sexual scenes (which appeal to males) in the first book and movie for a lack of romance and sensuality (which appeals to females)
- Each book gets progressively darker in content as well as more sexual. Satan appears as an “angel of light” and lures us progressively deeper into darkness. That truth is on full display in this book series.

As parents we have discussed *Twilight* with Hannah. She has been pressured by well-meaning friends to read the first book and has been called “weird” for not doing so. I hope she holds her ground as I see very little content that is spiritually uplifting in *Twilight* and I believe that it presents a horribly distorted view of God's design life in general and for romantic love in particular.

Thank you,

Pastor Gary