

Bulletin

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Share God's Love!

SOLD DOWN THE RIVER

BY JIM DALY

THE EXPRESSION “SOLD DOWN THE RIVER” FIRST ORIGINATED IN THE 1800s when slave owners in the North sold rebellious slaves to owners in the Deep South. Because Southern states were much harsher, being “sold down the river” was often a death sentence.

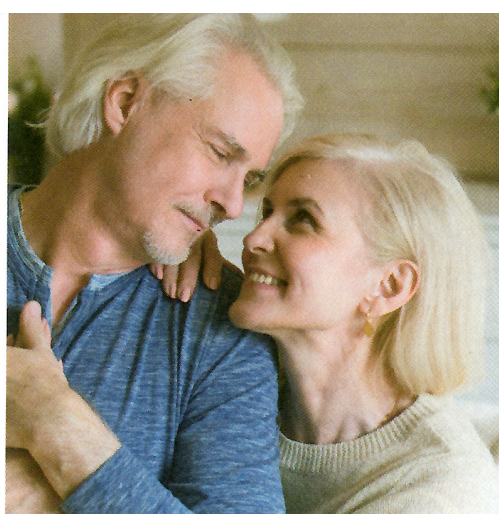
Despite the danger, one man risked everything to pursue freedom for himself and for others: Frederick Douglass. He was born into slavery and suffered terrible abuse. He escaped twice and was recaptured. Certain to be “sold down the river” for a third attempt, he still tried again. He succeeded and went on to build a life as an abolitionist writer and speaker.

Douglass became such a renowned proponent of abolition that he served as one of President Lincoln’s advisors. He was even nominated for vice president in 1872. A dedicated Christian, Douglass risked *everything*—to create a better life not only for himself, but for future generations.

The apostle Paul encouraged believers to boldly uphold truth: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Standing for what’s right in a world that seeks to destroy truth takes courage and faith. Your obedience to God will not only bless you, your family and your community, it will reverberate forward and bless generations to come.

Want to know more? Visit www.focusonthefamily.com.



YOUR WIFE NEEDS YOUR BLESSING

There are all kinds of things you can do in “guessing” what your wife wants or needs for Valentine’s Day. It’s a safe bet that another “chia pet” probably won’t be at the top of her list. But as someone who has counseled hundreds of couples over the last 40 years, I can tell you something she longs for.

That’s for you to give her your blessing.

You might say, “But I thought a blessing is something you give your kids, not your spouse.”

Our calling to bless goes beyond just giving it to our children. I love how Eugene Peterson’s interpretive paraphrase, *The Message*, captures what I think is at the heart of 1 Peter 3:8-9. Peter sums things up there by saying we’re not to use our words to hurt, to tear down or to be sharp-tongued with anyone—including our spouse.

Rather, he says, “Instead, bless—that’s your job, to bless. You’ll be a blessing and also get a blessing.”

There’s so much great theology in 1 Peter 3, where it talks about our inheritance and the blessing God has stored up for us. It’s precisely because we have His blessing and love always that we’re able and called to *be* a blessing today.

Your wife’s desire and heart are linked with that attitude and action wrapped up in your choice to bless—to add to her life—or curse—to subtract from it (read Deuteronomy 30:19). She longs for every element of the blessing from *you*. That includes meaningful, appropriate touch. Spoken words of affirmation. Words that attach high value to her. Picturing for her a special future in Christ, and for the two of you as a couple. She wants all these elements of the blessing wrapped in a genuine commitment to be there for her. When she reaches out, she wants to know you’ll be there to reach back.

—John Trent

THE HIDDEN PURPOSE OF VALENTINE'S DAY



It's no secret that Valentine's Day strongly emphasizes the power of love. Whether it's the cultural messages of dating and relationships or peers planning the best Valentine's Day surprise, our kids feel the pressure to outdo one another in demonstrating their affection and love.

However, from the Christian point of view, love and relationships are both summed up in a single biblical principle—the permanence of marriage.

From the very first creation of human relationships, God emphasized the importance of marriage. Genesis 2:24 says,

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." A desire for connection and value exists at the core of a holiday like Valentine's Day.

It's important to teach our kids that even though Valentine's Day provides healthy ways to express affection for others, there is a deeper meaning behind those feelings and gifts. God's perspective and design for love promises a lasting relationship built on commitment, trust and respect.

—*Jackson Greer*

ARE YOUR KIDS COURAGEOUS?

As Christian parents, we often over-emphasize certain aspects of integrity at the expense of other important character traits. We teach our kids to be kind, loving and compliant—yet marginalize the more rugged virtues of boldness and courage.

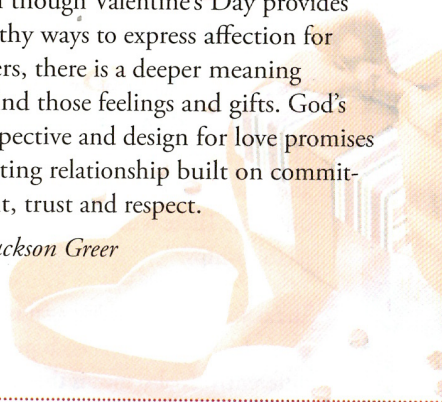
We need to help our kids understand a more complete picture of Jesus. Read the Gospels and you see that Jesus is the Lamb who was offered as a sacrifice for us. But read Revelation, too. Do we know that He's also the Lion, God's ultimate warrior?

Yes, Jesus is meek. Meekness can mean being submissive. But we cannot

read the Gospels and conclude that Christ was submissive to the will of man, which is tainted with self-interest and is sometimes wicked. Jesus is submissive to His Father's will. This is what we should be teaching our children. And being submissive to our Father's will sometimes brings us into conflict with this world.

Meekness isn't false humility or timidity or fear of conflict. Meekness is knowing who we are, believing that what God says is true and then submitting to Him because we love Him in response to His love for us.

—*Paul Coughlin*



LIVE IT CHALLENGE

KNOW YOUR CONFLICT STYLE

Conflict is inevitable in loving relationships. In fact, researchers have discovered that there are approximately five to six sibling conflicts per hour in the average household. That translates to one every ten minutes. Marriages also have ongoing conflicts, with almost one in every two to three marriages ending in divorce. Human relationships are complex, and conflict can either destroy or strengthen relationships.

The books of Proverbs and James offer great insight into conflict, and Jesus provided an incredible model of response to conflict. James 4:1 identifies selfishness and internal desires as culprits to conflict. Proverbs and Jesus' teachings refer to or imply that pride leads to selfishness and division. There is an emphasis on humility and wisdom when it comes to relationships.

The complexity working against families is that each person is different, which means that each person interprets situations and moments differently. It also means that each person has their own unique way of handling emotions, thoughts and stress, which influence the way they manage moments of conflict.

For this month's Live It Challenge, take our quiz and look at the categories of conflict styles that most people live in on a day-to-day basis.

Sign up for the February Live It Challenge today and learn more about conflict styles. Be sure to encourage your friends and church youth or children's ministries to join you! To sign up or for more information, just use this QR code.



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