

FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions...

FOCUS
ON THE FAMILY

My husband doesn't want to talk—ever. What's your advice on improving communication between a husband and wife?

ANSWER:

Many couples need help to discuss their needs in a productive way. It's not a technique we're born with. It's like a muscle that needs to be developed. The following suggestions may help.

1. *Read about differences in communication styles.* This may provide clues to why your spouse tends to be the silent type, or why you tend to talk things out.
2. *Learn not to take things personally.* Sometimes our expectations, set in child-

hood, need to be seen with adult perspective.

3. *Don't overanalyze your partner.* You may think you know what's going on, but you can't read his or her mind.
4. *Talk about your feelings in a non-accusatory way.* Otherwise a reluctant talker can be driven further away, especially when discussing emotions.
5. *Ask your spouse what would make him feel less overwhelmed regarding communication.* Would it help if you set aside a regular time for talking?
6. *Ask your spouse for a specific, short commitment of time.* Most reluctant talkers can handle a conversation if they know

it won't last forever. Let your mate set the limit.

7. *Learn how each other's personality type shapes communication style.* Make the process fun—a discovery of your uniqueness, not an opportunity to stereotype each other.

One of the hardest things for couples to learn is to lay down their lives for each other in daily life. This involves sacrifice—not demanding your rights but loving another as you love yourself. God promises to help us by His Holy Spirit if we ask.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to the First Five Years of Marriage*, general editors Phillip J. Swihart and Wilford Wooten)

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

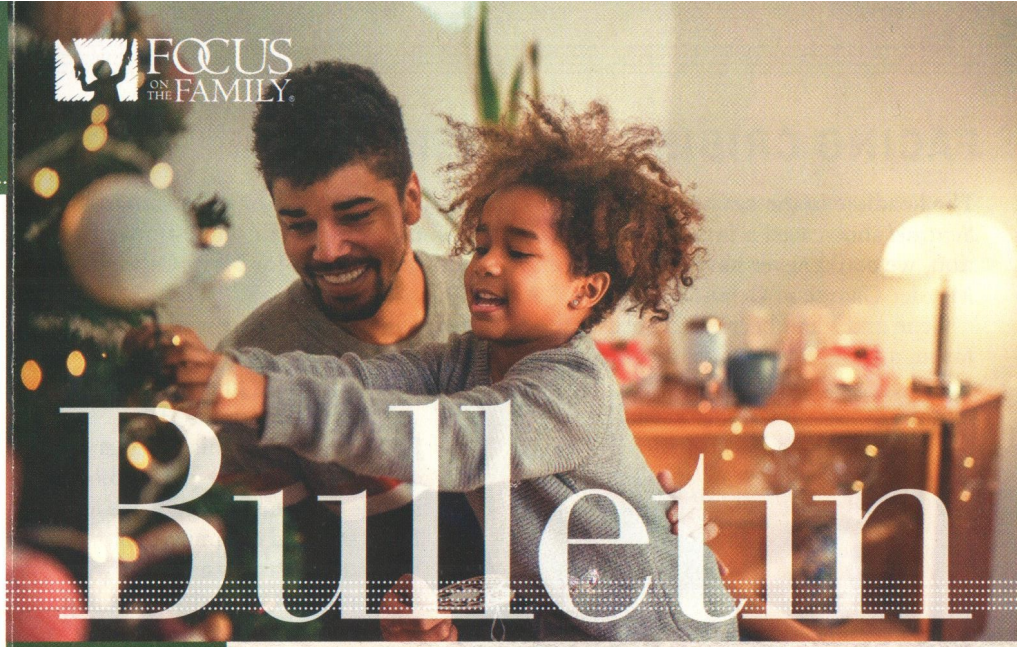
ANSWER:

Evil is another word for what is bad or sinful. It's anything that goes against God and displeases Him. This includes a selfish attitude, bad actions and ignoring God. The devil tries to get people to turn against God and disobey Him. But we can overcome evil in ourself and in the world by giving our life to Jesus. God is far greater than Satan.

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Celebrating Jesus' Birth

GREATNESS COMES QUIETLY

BY JIM DALY

EVERY STORY HAS A HERO. IN THE BELOVED CHRISTMAS CLASSIC *It's a Wonderful Life*, some say it's George Bailey. Others say the hero is Clarence, Angel Second Class, who saved George's life. Clarence and George play important roles in the story, but Mary Bailey gets my vote. As George's wife and the mother of their four children, she anchors the family for years as George struggles with his identity crisis.

Consider Mary's patience and strength. As newlyweds, she and George were so poor they could only afford a drafty old house. Instead of complaining, Mary did what she could to turn their rickety house into a home.

Later, she supported George when he used all of their money to save the Bailey Building and Loan . . . and much of Bedford Falls. And when George needed help, Mary rallied the community to save him. It appears Mary's strength came from her prayers. When George stormed away in anger, Mary urged her children to pray for their dad.

We overlook heroism when it's understated. Christmas is a wonderful time to remember that greatness often comes quietly, as it did in the form of a helpless baby to another quiet woman named Mary.



Tough
Questions
from Kids

What
is evil?



DECEMBER 20 Bulletin

FACING CRISIS TOGETHER

The headline in the newspaper was unthinkable! The front page of the *Orlando Sentinel* showcased a familiar face—that of our son, Jason. In our wildest imagination, we could never have conceived of the headline: “Blemish for Navy Officer—Murder Charge in Orlando Shooting.” A family crisis.

Gene and I had been awakened in the middle of the night with the news that Jason, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate with an impeccable record, had shot and

killed his wife’s first husband.

For several months after Jason’s arrest for this heinous crime, I had trouble going about simple daily tasks, and Gene and I had strained communication. We were a Christian couple who had raised an only child. He had been a good kid with a heart to serve God and his country. How could this horrific crime have happened?

Our marriage faced new challenges. Our distress over Jason left us short-tempered, and sometimes little disagreements escalated into full-blown arguments. Money became an ever-present source of tension: Where would the funds for a good attorney come from? Should we

continue to minister in light of our son’s actions? (We were in full-time Christian ministry; speaking and writing provided our only income.)

Following such devastating news and with a strain on our relationship, we didn’t know how we could make good decisions, let alone talk to each other. We discovered that when we regularly spent time with the Lord—alone and together—Scripture passages we were reading helped to confirm our decisions. We discussed the options, shared what we believed God was nudging us to do, and then made the next important choice without looking back.

One day Gene looked at me tenderly and said, “I couldn’t do this without you. The journey is too hard.” We were learning step by step and day by day that we could survive, and maybe even learn how to thrive by staying committed to being “in this together.”

—Carol Kent



KIDS NEED GOOD FRIENDS

I don’t know about you, but I can still vividly remember playing sports with friends, laughing, playing video games, dreaming, going to camp and sharing painful moments with friends as I grew up. And now as a dad, I’ve gotten to listen to my son and daughter try to decipher and process dynamics and moments with their friends.

The reality is that friendships can quickly shift and can take a child on a wild emotional ride. So as our kids head back to school and re-establish their friendships, it is critical that we, as parents, guide them to make wise choices when choosing friends.

Friendships have a fascinating impact on our lives—some positive and some negative. Friendships can motivate and can distract. My daughter has said, “Dad, I can’t help laughing in class when my friends start laughing.” There is something contagious about friends. As a dad and as a counselor, I have seen the incredible impact friendships can have on children.

—Danny Huerta

CREATE A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

A few years ago, I had the honor of teaching graduate students at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Summers in the Windy City can be scorching hot and the winters can be brutally cold. Imagine if, in mid-February, I had walked to the back of that classroom and opened all the windows. I could stand at the front of the room and expound on anything I wanted. My teaching should be the students’ primary focus while in class. But the reality of the arctic air blasting into the classroom would dominate the experience of those students.

Just like the weather, culture beats words any time. One way to describe culture could be as a climate used to build a healthy sense of responsibility into a child’s life. That climate will impact the focus of our children.

There are several great articles out there that outline the specifics of how to teach a child responsibility. For example, chore charts or age-specific tasks are great tools. But in addition to the specifics, we need to be aware of the culture of healthy responsibility that is either present or absent in our home. Our children need to know the reasons why being responsible—even when it’s hard—is a gift to them, their family and others.

—John Trent