

MAR 2004 EMAIL TEXT

From: "GFI" <admin@gfi-singapore.org>
Subject: March Mailer
Date: Monday, March 01, 2004 11:52 AM

Hi Everyone

We have such a treat this time round because two other families contributed the articles this time! Rather than save them for 2 months, might as well just give them all to you and trust that the Lord will give more contributors next month!

Would also like to take this opportunity to highlight 2 things:

Leadership Conference:

Dates : 30 Apr (Friday)

Venue : TBA

Time : 9 to 5 pm (Probably public session evening so that you can also invite friends, topic to be decided)

Audience : For Christians active in churches who like to conduct classes using our materials and to touch lives for Jesus. You don't need to be capable or have a 'perfect' family, you just need a humble and willing heart to fall down and stand up again, you will qualify. Basically, if you don't qualify, you are not humble, how's that?! Kidding, kidding, relax lah....

"Picnic"

Date: 20 March (Saturday)

Time: any time after 5 pm

Venue : Marina South (Near the MRT)

A group of us who have been conducting classes are organising an outing (potluck) and basically is to just let our own families relax and mingle. We invite you to do the same and gather at least one other family to form 'your community' and just come along side us. If we bump into each other fine, if we don't, enjoy the time with your family and friends! See you there. No you don't have to reply nor register, just form your own group, arrange your own potluck and show up! Those who have the GFI T-shirts, you are welcome to wear them! It will be FUN!

Jeremy and Suan Ai
for Andj and Dorcas



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VALUE OF MONEY AND TEENS Q & A

The value of money

Contributed by Paul Samuel and Margaret (Priscilla 14, Michael 11, Malcolm 9)

We noticed that our children were not good stewards with the things we gave them: sun-glasses would go missing or game cartridges would find their way into the washing machine - the list goes on.

After a while, we realised that it was simply a case of easy come, easy go. So we decided to start teaching them about the value of money. First of all, we did a quick survey among their friends to find out how much pocket money they get. We realised ours had quite a bit more than they needed. We then did a quick check on the prices of food items in the school canteen and



decided to fix the pocket money at a point where they could still get a decent meal and if they saved up over a day or so, they could have a real feast or a more expensive dish. The initial reaction was protests as you can imagine, but we stood firm. After a week or so, they got used to the 'new budget' and there were no more complaints.

We also started this 'game', once a week. We would go to a hawker centre for dinner and we would give every family member only \$5 for the meal and a drink. They could spend on whatever they wanted but the maximum was \$5. This applied to the parents and soon all three of them realised what it was like to have to spend within their means. They thought that it was fun initially, but after a few weeks, they realised that there were things that they wanted but could not afford.

At the same time, we stopped buying toys or sweets for them whenever they asked - even if it were only a dollar or so. Instead, every time they asked for something, we asked them if they had the money to pay for it. We would only buy it if they would and could pay for it themselves. After a few days, they got the message - if they wanted a toy or something to play, they had to find the money themselves. It would have to come from either saving their pocket money or working extra chores to earn extra money. We had to resist the temptation to extend credit to them, i.e., pay for the item first and let them earn the money later. We felt that they needed to learn to spend what they had and not to use credit (which is spending what they do not have).

We had a hard time deciding what chores would be eligible for payment and what constituted activities that they just had to do as a contributing family member in the home. We also had to assign values to the chores so that the children would realize that earning money was not necessarily an easy thing to do.

After a month or so, with some gentle reminders and occasional rebukes, we started to see a change - they started taking better care of their things, especially those items that they had bought with their own money. They were also more conscious of what to spend on. All of them would spend time evaluating their choice of items - they were starting to learn how to extend their dollar



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We are still encouraging our children in this area. Through this we realised that there are no short cuts to changing behaviour and training values in our children. We just have to take the time to plan and stick to it.

Q & A for teens

Contributed by David and Oi Har (Jeremy 20 and Josiah 16)

Q1. Nowadays how much do you think we should give to our teens (Sec. 3 & 4 age 14~16) for daily allowance? Note that at this age there are many school activities. They usually have to stay in school for other activities till late afternoon or evening and they may have breakfast and lunch out.

A1. The allowance can vary, but it should be enough for them to go for occasional outings during weekends/holidays but probably not enough for them to go Starbucks every weekend! Perhaps a monthly allowance of S\$60 to S\$80 would be sufficient. Some continue to give during the holidays – that 12 month amount of about S\$720 includes their 'savings', tithe and spending money! Handphones, if allowed, can be separate with some basic rules.

Q2. Is it a good idea to restrict them and keep reminding them to refrain from getting into BGR at this age? What will be the implications? Will it back fire?

Q3. At what age would you then encourage or allow your teens to go for BGR?

A2/3. The above is addressed in teenage materials in the parenting classes. Basically there is not supposed to be any 'dating'. They basically let friendship be the basis and when time comes, marriage – after fasting and prayer! Main reason is dating encourages experimentation - try this person or that person and that's why it is not as appropriate. The "covenant" between the parents and teens can go as far as saving the first kiss for marriage - an even taller order! Question is - how can we distract our teens from all the less ideal influences? Well, if the family has things that occupy the teens life, some form of family activities that all enjoy and make a good family identity BGR will take a less significant role. Teens who are Christians of course would be active serving the community, serving God and that becomes enough to pre-occupy them. As to whether it will back fire – if it is allowed, what would be the consequences? The answer probably speaks for itself.

Q4. What can the parents do to teach or stop their child from going further into such relationship when they realised that BGR has already happen?

A4. Parents can't stop them completely but can influence them. If it has happened, well, good time to explore their thoughts and feelings (like this opening: "Noticed you have been dreaming lately, love-lorn?"). Maintain 'friendship' with your teens (unless it is already overboard) and set limits - like no visits from the opposite sex singly at home. Each family needs to establish the ground rules. The rules should honour the most conservative thoughts because God would likely want that too!

Q5. Both me and my wife are working so hard to meet the ends need. Hence during the day only the maid and our three kids are at home (Age 10 Girl, 15 Girl & 18 Boy). My younger daughter just told me last week that couple of months back, my elder boy brought his girlfriend (sometimes different girls) home very often and stayed in the room until late afternoon just before the parents get back from work. Making the whole thing worse, just



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few weeks back, my elder daughter does likewise. What can the parents do to stop or prevent it from going too far?

A5. Before addressing that, one thought – if you are above S\$3,000 per family, you are above making ends meet because Singapore's average household income is that amount. Perhaps some adjustments need to be made to the lifestyle. Maybe the wife can start considering part time work. The child could be looking for someone to talk to. With parents both working, we have less patience with our children especially with the older ones who start to reason with you. So they will turn to whoever can agree with them and can talk to. Of course it does not mean with a mother at home, it will not happen but at least parents have tried to do their bit and the relationship can improve. More importantly, they must have JESUS in their life! Reason being even if anyone has failed them, JESUS will always be there. That's why some always tell their children, even daddy and mummy have no time for you, JESUS will. If parents cannot understand their frustrations, they can pray to God, asking God to help their parents to understand them better – that's the difference between good parenting and Godly parenting, between better parenting and the BEST parenting! Back to the question – remember that we are parents, not peers. It is perfectly fine to set boundaries. Of course it will also depend on the relationship of the parents with the teens but some rules must be set. Sounds like the parents are NOT comfortable making a stand. They have to establish house rules. Parents may argue that they would rather the teens do anything in their own house then elsewhere but may by consenting or being silent (no rules), it is approving of it in their eyes. Time must be spent understanding the reasons behind first before setting the rules. Usually, it is because the teens do not find enough love at home – maybe a tough statement to swallow but give it a thought.

Q6. How to determine at what age you can release your child for BGR?

A6. See question 2/3 – basically there is no such thing. Having a crush can be accepted – the tough part is do parents know about the crush? If parents know, that means the relationship is good enough to influence, so probably less concern. In the earlier years (lower sec), group outings are fine. That's one of the reason some advocate attending a all boys or all girls school in secondary level - less temptation but we realise in Singapore it's not so easy - limited supply of such schools. If the inevitable has to happen – having BGR, let it be later than Sec 4! Over this entire period, parents' relationship with the teens is extremely important – now, whoever says you spend less time when your kids become teens need a slight re-think.

Q7. On what basis you say that young children rebel against authority and teenagers rebel against relationships?

A7. Children do not know what relationship is yet. They rebel when they do not like being boss over and thus rebelling against authority. Teenage is similar but if we have a good relationship, the bossing over turns to influence because we talk, discuss and set rules. If that foundation is not good, they will think 'we don't understand' and go away.