Presence Family MAGAZINE

September 2015 • Issue 7

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SEASONS OF MEN'S LIVES

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Presence

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Editor's Words

Lily Ma

I went to college in Toronto, Canada, and truly love the four distinct seasons there. While one season can be longer than the others, each season has its own beauty and uniqueness. Springtime is when we can see tulips blooming everywhere in Downtown Toronto. Summer days are usually sunny and nice, and it's a perfect time for outings. Colorful maple leaves create a truly amazing picture in the fall. The snowy white winters bring a sense of tranquility. Likewise, there are also different seasons in our lives. Each season can be exciting and special in its own way. Yet transitioning from one season to another takes adjustment and sometimes brings challenges. We will be discussing different seasons of men's and women's lives in two issues. In this issue, we will be focusing mainly on the growth of men through different seasons. We have invited professionals to share their insights about common challenges that men encounter and the possible solutions. We have also included life stories of men with different journeys and at different life stages. Through this reflection, hopefully not only men but also their spouses will develop deeper wisdom about how to journey through the different seasons of life.

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COMMON CHALLENGES
Faced by Young Adults Today

(Part I) **Dr. Agnes Ip**

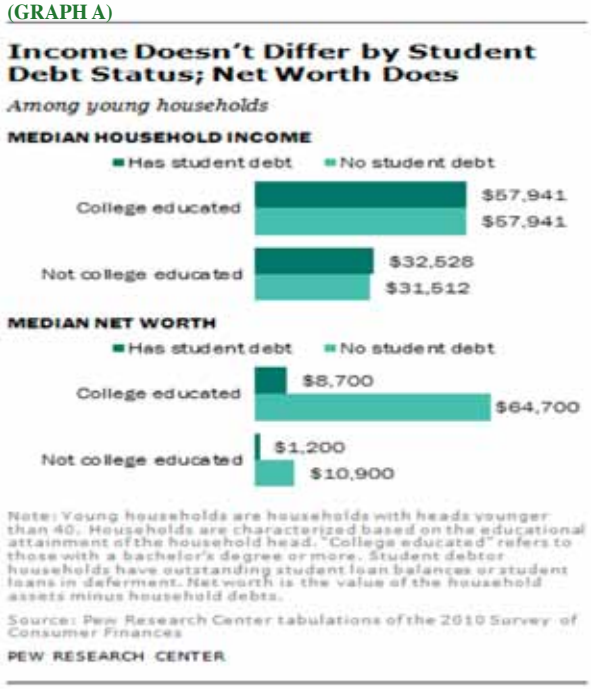
Many psychologists agree that today's young men and women experience an early adulthood phase that is longer in duration by 10 years or more compared to past generations. Due to economic, societal and cultural changes, today's young adults face unique challenges during this prolonged stage of their lives. They bear much heavier financial burdens due to student loans after graduating from college. Because of this financial instability, many choose to marry later in life or not at all. Many women, equipped with higher education, plan to stay in the workforce after having children, meaning that husbands are increasingly sharing responsibilities related to childrearing and running the household. In spite of advances in gender equality, social expectations of how men should act have been slow to change. Men face tremendous stress when grappling with these everyday challenges and trying to live up to social expectations. This has put men at a higher risk for emotional distress. We will discuss this topic in this issue of Presence Family Magazine, focusing more on the challenges faced by men. In the next issue, we will focus more on the challenges faced by women.

1. The Financial Burden of Student Loan Debt

Student loan debt, commonly incurred to pay for college, has become a major financial burden for the current young adult generation. The typical annual debt-to-income ratio for someone with an undergraduate degree has risen from 191% in 2007 to 205% in 2010. In comparison, the same ratio for those without a college education has actually dropped from 127% in 2007 to 108% in 2010. Individuals with student loan debt tend to have higher debt in other areas too. The bottom line is that young men and women with higher education typically have much heavier financial burdens when graduating from school nowadays than in decades past (Fry, 2014).

According to the Pew study in 2013, there is a link between student debt and financial well-being. Those who took out student loans to pay for college tended to be less satisfied with their financial status. For instance, of individuals between 18 and 39 years old who hold either an associate's or bachelor's degree and have student debt, 70% indicated that they were satisfied with their financial status and 29% indicated that they were dissatisfied. Of young adults in the same age bracket and same education levels who did not have any student debt, 84% indicated that they were satisfied with their financial status and only 14% were not satisfied. As another example, a poll of young adults with student debt revealed that only 63% believed their investment in education paid off, but that figure jumped to 81% for persons without student debt. These statistics are interesting in view of the fact that the median household income of college graduates with student debt and the median household income of college graduates without student debt are identical (see graph A; Fry, 2004). If student debt seems to create so much dissatisfaction, why are young people still pursuing college or even post-graduate education? The reason lies in their pessimistic view of the economy. As one young adult shared, "Nobody in my generation believes they're going to get a meaningful retirement. We have a third or a quarter of the wealth previous generations had, and everyone's fleeing to higher education to stave off unemployment and poverty because there are no jobs." (Yiannopoulos, 2014)

(GRAPH A)



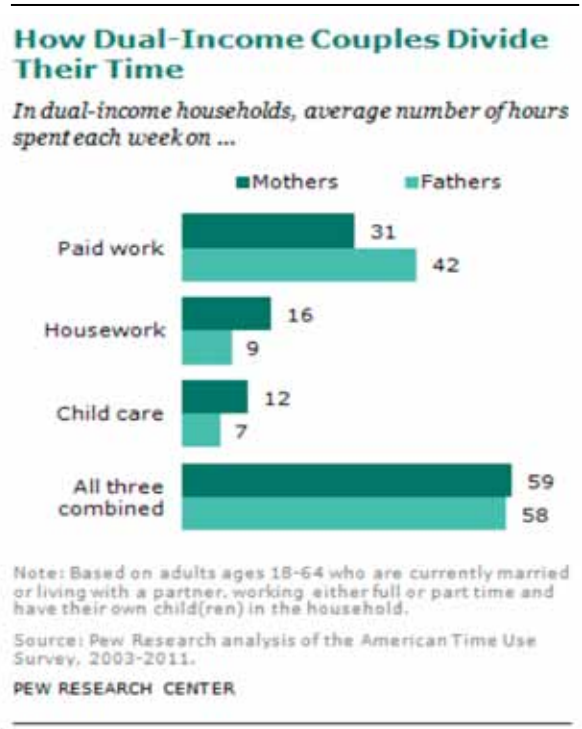
***RE:NEW**, the youth division of Presence, holds a workshop called "Money Matters" to help young men and women deal with today's common financial challenges. We have also produced educational video clips on this topic that can be viewed at **www.renewtheresponse.org**. Presence also provides professional assessment for college major and career counseling in order to assist the emerging generation in planning for their futures. Visit **www.PPossibilities.org**, for more information.*

2. Marriage Rate Reaches Historical Low

The current generation of young adults seems to have difficulty building intimate relationships based on mutual trust. This emotional phenomenon, in conjunction with the heavy financial burdens discussed above, has resulted in marriage rates hitting record lows (Wang & Parker, 2014). According to U.S. census data, in the 1960s, only 9% of the population never married. In 2012, 20% (42 million people) of persons ages 25 or older were single—a historical high. The figure for males was 23%, and for females, 17%. The main reason behind this phenomenon is the increasing trend towards marriage later in life and cohabitation. In the 1960s, the median age at which people married was 23 for males and 20 for females, and only 24% of persons between the ages of 25 to 34 expressed that they would choose to cohabitate without getting married. Nowadays, in contrast, the median age at which people are marrying is 29 for males and 27 for females, and 34% of people between the ages of 25 to 34 would choose to cohabitate without marrying. For people older than 35 years old, that percentage dips to 20%. While the variables behind declining marriage rates are admittedly complex, these figures tend to confirm that marriage is dropping on the priority list for young people today.

RE:NEW and Presence Hong Kong offer dating and relationship seminars for different age groups. We are also planning to publish educational materials on intimate relationships, hoping to provide resources for young adults looking to build healthy intimate relationships.

(GRAPH B)



3. Men Do More Childrearing and Share House Chores

Today, men ages 30 and older must strike a delicate balance between family and career. According to a Pew study conducted from 2003 to 2011, men of this generation participate more in childcare and house chores than ever before. For dual income families (see Graph B), in 2009, 54% of fathers expressed a desire that their wives be stay-at-home mothers, but today only 37% feel that way. Today, 50% of fathers and 54% of mothers stated that balancing career and family is difficult, and 15% of fathers and 16% of mothers said it is extremely difficult (Parker, 2014). In first-generation young immigrant families, who lack the support of parents in the U.S., this type of stress and tension is imminent. In some cases, when wives have an easier time finding jobs with steady income, husbands choose to become stay-at-home fathers. In other cases, because both parents are occupied by work, their children are brought overseas to be taken care of by grandparents, which presents its own set of concerns.

Presence provides trainings for parenting and marriage building to help promote healthy family growth and bridge the gap of different cultures between the two generations.

4. Manhood Stereotyping Creates Relational and Emotional Challenges

Many psychologists agree that during the process of transitioning from boyhood to manhood, the absence of a father figure is an increasingly common problem (Parker, 2014). The emotional health of a boy is definitely affected when a father figure is not present to guide him through that transition and the task is left to society and the media instead. Bastow (2013) has pointed out that boys are typically socialized such that

they feel unable to cry, show emotions or ask for help, which becomes an overwhelmingly stressful state of existence. Despite progress in achieving gender equality, expectations of how men should behave remain largely unchanged. This is a common struggle for boys and young men today, even those with fathers, but it can be especially difficult for those without.

Bastow goes so far as to quote the words of Jennifer Siebel Newsom (also a famous feminist), the director of the film "The Mask you live in", suggesting that men in the United States are living in a crisis today, "At a young age, boys learn that to express compassion or empathy is to show weakness. They hear confusing messages that force them to repress their emotions, establish hierarchies, and constantly prove their masculinity. They often feel compelled to abide by a rigid code of conduct that affects their relationships, narrows their definition of success and, in some cases, leads to acts of violence resulting in what many researchers call a 'boy crisis'. Our society's failure to recognize and care for the social and emotional well-being of our boys contributes to a nation of young men who navigate adversity and conflict with an incomplete emotional skill set. Whether boys and later men have chosen to resist or conform to this masculine norm, there is loneliness, anxiety, and pain." Newsom also identified the violence in video games and the negative images of females presented by the media as major factors hampering the emotional and relational skills of young men today.

Bastow (2013) also cited data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, showing that the mortality rate from suicide is three times as high for males between the ages of 15 to 44 as for females of the same age. It is hypothesized that the main reason for this difference is that men are unwilling to seek help. Similarly, data also show that only 27% of males said they would seek professional counseling in a crisis, whereas 40% of females would do so. In many cases, men (especially those younger than 25) tend to use drugs and alcohol to deal with pain, not getting the true help that they need. As a psychologist, I personally believe that the higher mortality rate for males is also due in part to men's tendency to use more extreme methods of suicide. In my own practice, I have found that there are more and more young men suffering from major depression.

Men face many challenges today. Nevertheless, when met with conflicts or difficult circumstances, if they refuse to measure success and value by academic success or advances in their career, and instead focus more on personal growth, building relationships, and opening up to others and learning how to communicate, men will be able to lead confident, fulfilling lives, and enjoy meaningful relationships with their loved ones.

In the past 12 years, Presence has been providing trainings and seminars to address the issues of gaming addiction and emotional disorders like depression. We have also produced educational materials like articles in our magazine and audio/visual materials such as CDs and DVDs. If you would like to learn more, please visit www.presencequotient.org.

Dr. Agnes Ip, PhD, LMFT (MFC #41365)

Dr. Agnes Ip is the Founder and President of Presence and Presence Hong Kong, and a California licensed marriage and family therapist. She received a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from Alliant International University (AIU) with an emphasis in multicultural community clinical psychology. She also has a bachelor of theology degree from Alliance Bible Seminary and ministered to married couples and youth in her church during her early years. For the past many years, she served as a mental health therapist for government subsidized outpatient clinics and has provided clinical guidance for marriage & family therapist trainees and interns from various universities. Dr. Ip also served as an intern psychologist at local public schools, domestic violence shelters, drug addiction rehabilitation centers, and also performed psychological assessments for abused children at a government hospital. Over the past ten years, she has developed assertive communication training for parents and children and has also published three training books on this topic.

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1 Physical Fitness

It all begins with a healthy diet and enough sleep and exercise.

2 Financial Soundness

It has nothing to do with whether you are wealthy or not. Instead, what matters is that beginning at a young age, you should live within your means, balance your income and expenditures, pursue simplicity, be content, and plan for the future. Then retirement will not become a burden to you.

3 Healthy Self-image

Learn to love and appreciate yourself (you are God's creation). When you do not link your value to your work, retirement will grant you the freedom to enjoy your hobbies and better use your talents.

SEVEN ESSENTIALS FOR RETIREMENT

Whether you are middle-aged or older, life change is expected and inevitable. However, for a lot of people, dealing with such change is a struggle when retirement comes into the picture. To a man who has spent most of his life working hard, this phase of life can present novel challenges. Based on observations, interviews and research, our editors have come up with seven essentials for retirement. Hopefully these will help our readers turn retirement into a colorful and memorable phase of their lives.

4 Broadened Social Circle

Make more friends and do not limit your social circle to your family and your colleagues. Otherwise, when you retire, you will find yourself in a community with few or no common interests to talk about and a small personal network. For those who have retired already, it's never too late to broaden your social circle by opening up yourself, making new friends and trying something different.

5 A Loving Family

Relationships at home need to be nurtured. You will get out of these relationships what you put into them. Home sweet home is the anchor of a man's life, especially in times of turmoil. Retirement is the time to slow down and enjoy the fruit of your labor.

6 Creative Living

Asian culture tends to puts pragmatism above creativity. Retirement gives you the opportunity to break through and be more free spirited. You may choose to get out of your comfort zone and do something that you have been longing to try, like rock climbing or accomplishing other dreams, but without the pressure.

7 Retirement is not quitting

You need to understand your life goals and calling. You can stop working, but never, ever stop pursuing life.

Obviously these essentials are like treasures that need to be accumulated. Regardless of which life stage you are in, we hope that you will learn to build up, value and enjoy these treasures in life.

Interview with Dr. Melvin Wong:

Difficulties Men Face Today
in Personal Growth and Relationship Building

Interviewed by Geoffrey Hughes

Men of past generations suffered much hardship as a result of wars and social and economic instability. These hardships, in conjunction with individual personalities and social and family cultures, caused many men to be emotionally absent from their families. The men of the current generation, lacking role models and at the same time facing rapid changes in society, ideology and gender roles, may feel lost and have difficulty facing today's challenges. We are honored to have interviewed Dr. Melvin Wong, who shared with us his insights about the challenges men face today and their underlying issues. He also discussed the importance and the secrets of relationship building. We have also invited Dr. Phillip Lowe to share his responses to the questions, providing us with some positive and creative solutions to the issues.

Dr. Melvin, based on the cases that you have seen, how would you describe the issues that men generally face today? Of these, are some more difficult to address than others?

The common problems that men normally face today are complicated, but I believe that what it all stems from is a man's relationships with his father and mother.

When a boy is growing up, he encounters various challenges in dealing with the world around him. The obvious struggle is sexual temptation, and the root of that problem is a lack of intimacy—that is, healthy and secure attachment—a lack that most men experience starting from a young age. I use the phrase "male emotional orphaning" to describe the phenomenon of a boy who seeks, yearns for and longs for his father's love and approval but whose needs are unmet. This results in the boy having a relationship with only his mother, which is good but often not sufficient.

Later on in a man's life, behaviors emerge such as a fear of conflicts, the use of aggression to get his way, and a lack of knowledge about how to mediate or arbitrate instead of resorting to threats and power. In other situations, men may assume a position of passivity and dependence in an obvious effort to avoid responsibility.

Dr. Phillip – Gender equality and social changes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have presented many challenges for men. However, I think men can adapt using their unique instincts of strength, courage and creativity to live responsibly and honorably. For men, living with a sense of purpose or mission is essential to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Some examples include thinking about issues of global concern, such as environmental crises, peace over violence, etc.

How would you compare the struggles of men from this generation to those faced by older generations? How might men today be at an advantage in terms of career and family?

Past generations dealt with challenges such as war and the Great Depression. This current generation of millennials grew up learning ideas that truth is relative, while father and mother figures are not that important. As a result, fathering may be more of a challenge. Generally speaking, among millennials, relationships are very touch and go. They are candid about their belief that love is defined in many different ways—often by sexual pleasure only, or in providing satisfaction only for oneself. This is an egocentric viewpoint. Basically, the younger generation is often characterized by selfishness, insecurity, and an inability to give, so the achievement of mutual intimacy—emotional, physical or even spiritual—is very difficult because people are not accustomed to sharing and sacrifice. Thanks to technology, we can now communicate over long distances, but does that mean our relationships are more intimate? Not necessarily.

Men today are at an advantage compared to older generations when it comes to career and family. The male's role is less rigid today, so the idea of a "house husband" is accepted. I don't see any limitations men face in this regard, except that a father cannot breastfeed. Alternatively, in this high-tech environment, there's more flexibility with time, so some men can be available for both work and family. If willing, they could tend to their children's needs as a father and still be able to juggle their careers.

Dr. Phillip – Gender equality has liberated many men from the stereotypical expectation of being the breadwinner. Why not channel this newfound freedom in a positive way and prioritize relationships over financial prowess? I think a cognitive breakthrough to this effect is the key for men.

How do men today view intimacy? What are their expectations in intimate relationship? Would there be any fears or barriers?

Men's understanding of intimacy has been almost entirely skewed. Men tend to use the term as a synonym for a sexual relationship. However, two people can have a relationship marked by intimacy without necessarily involving sexual attraction, as is common in many same-sex friendships. Our view of intimacy has to be recalibrated such that the focus is brought back to mutual vulnerability and trust, apart from sex. Intimacy can be, for example, simply caring and giving because there's underlying trust.

There are fears and other psychological barriers to developing this kind of intimacy. For example, I don't think men make their expectations known very well. They probably don't know what they want or can't verbalize it. They generally have a hard time making friends. Evolutionary psychology says males have a pecking order, and men have been bound by that stereotypical framework, resulting in fear of being authentic. That fear is often masked by blaming others and burying shame, and forces them to put on a happy face.

Dr. Phillip – Men have a tendency to prefer physical intimacy over emotional intimacy. I think men need to be willing and better at rebalancing this tendency—that is, to learn to embrace more emotional intimacy. Men are usually activity-based and thus achieving intimacy through activities, such as participating in sports together, comes more readily for men.

Gender equality has liberated many men from the stereotypical expectation of being the breadwinner.

Of all the different seasons of growth in a man's life, is there a stage that makes men feel the most vulnerable?

Yes, the so-called midlife phase, meaning late forties or early fifties. During this time, men may have accomplished everything society wants of them, but they start asking bigger questions about life, such as, "I have a career and all that, but am I happy? What is there left to do? What else can I do?" They are searching for significance. This line of questioning can go two ways: a man works harder, or he gives up.

The second most difficult season follows this midlife phase, and that is the aging season. Aging leaves one feeling very helpless, and growing old is not something most men think about, much less think about fondly. Some men refuse to retire because there's nothing important to them outside of their employment, thinking it will keep them young.

Dr. Phillip – Piaget talks about an adult developmental stage characterized by a tension between generativity and stagnancy, which are most men's dream and fear, respectively: living a productive life versus being stuck. I think anytime a man feels stuck, it can be quite threatening. It's always better when a man's life is diverse and socially active or dynamic. Developing meaningful hobbies and friendships is important to help a man journey through different seasons of life.

As a man and a counselor to other men, in what ways do you think a wife or female can support a man in his growth?

My informal observation is that men need the support of women to grow. Even at a young age, before he is in a romantic relationship, a boy benefits from having females in his life to affirm him and teach him how to relate healthily to women. This can provide self-esteem and affirmation as a boy enters manhood.

Dr. Phillip – A woman can help her significant other grow by fostering a secured ego through affirmation and respect, while encouraging (or gently demanding) an affective response from him in exchange. This growth must be reciprocal and mutual in nature, with respect and a sense of autonomy and personal space.

As a young man grows up, what traits or qualities might he value and what might he find difficult to accept? Can you identify any good ways to improve a man's security and self-image?

Boys generally don't think much about themselves until adolescence. At that point, they may value, for example, height or intelligence, as the latter is traditionally prized in Asian culture. There is also a possibility that adolescents become concerned with sexual vitality because maleness may be measured in that way. On this point, during the midlife phase, sexual activity often diminishes, and this alarms a lot of men and can be difficult to accept.

To improve security and self-image, men can focus on the Biblical truth that men and women are created in God's image. We must reconcile with our Creator first, and then other traits about us will not be overly important to us. Self-image is how we feel about ourselves, so we need to be concerned about our relationship with our Maker. If that is solid, then whatever else happens, we will know and understand that we are God's children, and we can remain content.

Dr. Phillip – In addition to a healthy belief that we are made in God's image, men can benefit by seeking trustworthy encouragement through a spouse, family members, friends, and peers in order to develop a better self-image.

It's always better when a man's life is diverse and socially active or dynamic. Developing meaningful hobbies and friendships is important to help a man journey through different seasons of life.

How do men view success? What kind of successes or accomplishments are they proud of?

Ideas of success change depending on a man's season of life. Traditionally, Asians measure success by what kind of job you have and how much money you make. That's commonly how men quantify their success, but this is all temporary. These accomplishments are tenuous. We need to use a different standard: the health of our relationships. It could be called emotional intelligence. This has to do with how we make friends, keep friendships, and deepen our relationships through expressed trust and vulnerability.

Dr. Phillip – In general, a productive life, encompassing societal contribution and a rewarding feeling, is important for all men. A productive life can be expanded to include a healthy family, physical health and hobbies.

How do men today view their relationships with their father or their parents in general? How does this affect their relationships with God and their role in their own families?

How we view our fathers has a lot to do with how we view God because God is our Heavenly Father. Today men often feel distanced from their fathers, like we can't be too vulnerable or trusting because our fathers may be critical. Because of this, men often struggle spiritually to connect to God and to be the leader of family. We don't want our men to fall into this position.

Dr. Phillip – In general, Asian men have more distant relationships with their biological fathers, which affects them emotionally and spiritually. However, building relationships with father figures such as respected elders or mentors (uncles, pastors, bosses and relatives) can be beneficial.

Societal views of women have evolved significantly in recent decades. How should a man respond if his spouse is more accomplished in terms of education, career, and even leadership qualities?

In my humble opinion, the healthy approach is that we need to empower women to reach their full God-given potential. If your spouse wants to achieve, then more power to her for having a better job, higher degree, etc. A man should rejoice and be a cheerleader instead of feeling threatened. Because of love, if your wife is smarter, it's a blessing but you can't stop pulling your own weight in the family. It doesn't mean you need to be second fiddle. You still need to take responsibility. It's like a co-pilot. The wife might be the pilot, but when the plane is at cruising altitude, the other pilot can fly the plane.

Women can use their social status and achievements for the benefit of the family, and husbands can complement this instead of competing. We men need to be partners instead of feeling inferior or insecure. Adjustment to this dynamic is important. The relationship must be one of cohesion and adaptability. For the partnership to be effective, a couple has to be well bonded. The more secure you are as a couple, the more you're able to adapt.

Even if their relationship isn't well bonded, a man can adapt by remembering that at the end of the day, they are equal. At home, they are equal. With regard to work, the wife may be the boss or the breadwinner, but the couple can love and treat each other equally so there's no doubt or pressure in their relationship.

Dr. Phillip – I believe men need to frequently consult their spouses to seek feedback. When we become part of a family, we can no longer have one-way relationships; there must be bidirectional growth instead. I believe men can still treasure intimacy while maintaining a sense of personal independence

Dr. Melvin Wong *was born and raised in Hong Kong, and was educated and has stayed in the U.S. since 1970. He was an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at UCSF School of Medicine and Attending Psychologist at SF General Hospital. Dr. Wong also has over 20 years of clinical experience in his private practice. Other than conducting psychotherapy, he is also doing clinical training as well as cross-cultural psychological studies.*

Being a devoted Christian leader, he actively participates in different Christian organizations. Recently, he is also involved in earthquake relief work in Sichuan, China, and the prevention and aftercare of human trafficked victims in Cambodia. He has also served as an adjunct professor in China.

Dr. Phillip Lowe *completed his MA in Theology, MA in Psychology, studied MFT (Marital and Family Therapy) and Doctor of Clinical Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He graduated from UCLA and worked as an electrical engineer in Silicon Valley for fourteen years. He was called into full-time ministry in 2007. He has been involved in family ministry at church and working at a geriatric mental health clinic in the past few years. He currently ministers part-time at Chinese Christian Church of Thousand Oaks (CCCTO).*

The Masterpiece of Colors
Antelope Canyon

Lily Ma

Lake Powell is a popular scenic spot along the Arizona-Utah border. Every year it attracts a large number of local and foreign visitors. At the lake, one can travel by boat and enjoy spectacular scenic views of rocks and the Rainbow Bridge. It's relaxing and a great choice for vacation and sightseeing.

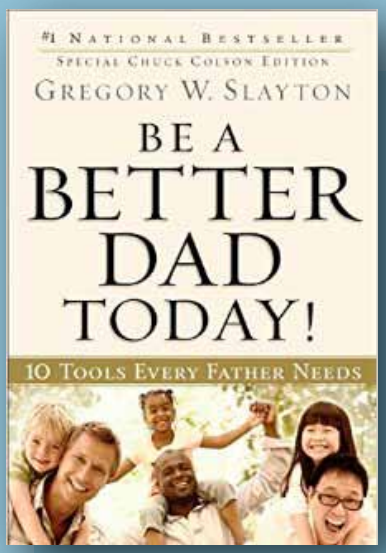
Near Page, Arizona, where Lake Powell is located, there is a little-known sandstone canyon with beautiful shapes and dazzling colors. It's called Antelope Canyon because herds of antelope once roamed there. The sandstone rocks inside the canyon, like sculptures set in stone, were shaped by the water from flash floods coursing through the rocks over the years. The water erosion formed a wavy pattern on the rocks, giving the canyon a romantic feel. It is no wonder the guide told me that there are people who choose to get married there.

Antelope Canyon is divided into two separate sections: Upper Antelope Canyon and Lower Antelope Canyon. Each section has its own groups of colorful and varied rock formations. The colors are stunning and cover a wide spectrum of hues, from red to orange and purple to pink. Both canyon sections are accessible only through tours guided by the Navajo natives. The guides not only lead the way so you won't get lost, but they also tell stories about the canyon and even provide advice on photographic opportunities and tricks. The cost of the tour is worth every penny. In the Upper Canyon, since no outside vehicles are allowed to get close to the entrance, one has to make tour reservations ahead of time, and transportation to access the canyon is then provided. The entrance passageway is wide and no climbing is required. It's suitable for all age groups. During summer, around noon at a certain spot inside the canyon, direct sunlight streams into the canyon and forms unique and gorgeous light beams. During the height of travel season, there are lots of tourists in the Upper Canyon, and it can be crowded.

I myself love Lower Antelope Canyon. One can drive to the entrance and then join the scheduled tours. No reservation is needed. Though the space inside the canyon is not as wide as the Upper Canyon, it is a lot less crowded and one can leisurely enjoy the tour. Also, the lighting inside is better, making it easier to photograph and simply enjoy the beauty of the rocks. The rocks differ

in shape and each has a name such as “Lady in the Wind” and “Rose in the Rock.” Of all the amazing rock sculptures, the one called “Couch in the Canyon” is a great spot to take family pictures. However, one needs to climb in and out of the canyon, requiring a certain amount of strength.

If you plan to visit Antelope Canyon, it’s important to pay attention to the season and the weather. Summer is the popular travel season and is also when the phenomenal light show happens in the Upper Canyon. It is no surprise that there are a lot of visitors during this time. Also, you need to avoid visiting on rainy days, as rain during the monsoon season can quickly flood the canyon. The canyon is closed on those days for safety reasons. In addition to checking the weather forecast, you will need to be flexible with your schedule so that if you have a rainy day, you can still explore and enjoy the numerous scenic spots in the vicinity of Page.



Editor’s Picked

Be a Better Dad Today!

By Gregory W. Slayton

Reviewed by Cindy Eng

“Being a father is the most important job a man will ever have. You are irreplaceable.”

Do you agree with these statements?

If you do, as a father you need to reflect on this idea and truly believe in your heart that being a father is the most important job you will ever have. Rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best, and ask yourself if your wife or children would agree with your rating.

Good fathers are not born, but made. With the right tools, you can build a loving family, be the best father you can be, and be a gentle and wise husband. This book provides ten key tools for fatherhood. Some readers refer to it as a manual or handbook.

Once you have the toolset, you can put it to work. Set aside time to reflect on how you are doing in becoming a better father. If you need help, get help from your heavenly Father. I love Slayton’s challenge to a man of faith: Are you growing in faith, hope and love, or are you stalled? It is that Father-son relationship with God that matters more than anything else. How are your relationships with your wife and children? Wanting to improve those relationships but not knowing how to begin, 8 million fathers reported they need help. This book is for them, and maybe for you too.

For more information, visit www.beabetterdadtoday.com.

Four Seasons of Life

Four Wonderful Stories

Spring

Cold, unforgiving winter ends and gives way to life.
Spring gives us a new beginning and hope.

For Better Or For Worse

Michael Lee

Real estate was booming in the 1980s, and I was ready to join the action. I left a comfortable management position at Kaiser, eager for the challenge of going into business. As soon as I opened my new real estate office, the crash of 1990 devastated the housing market. With my wife staying home to care for our three children, I struggled alone to stay afloat financially.

Despite a horrible economy, I was proud that my hard work paid off. The business expanded, opening more offices and related businesses. I was able to achieve the "American dream" through my determination. I was a devoted Christian but took God for granted. I figured all was well since God was blessing me.

In 2008, the economy went south again and so did my businesses. Having built a thriving business during the last recession, I thought I would once more beat the odds. But hard work was not enough. I felt like a big failure, falling from success. Finally, after losing hundreds of thousands of dollars, I made the heart-wrenching decision to close my businesses.

In the midst of my financial troubles, I saw God work in my life. He sustained me and reset my priorities. Success had become too important to me. Through failure, I was reminded that the loss was only monetary. There are more important things in life. No matter how bad my circumstances, God is with me in the midst of my troubles, and that is enough.

My days are now no longer stressful, and I have time to enjoy life. What was once a side business in property management has grown enough to support us along with sales from past clientele trusting me to take care of them. God demonstrated His mercy through my failure.

Going through "better" and "worse" seasons has been a maturing process. I may not be where I want to be, but this is where I need to be. Material wealth is less of a concern; it comes and goes. But our relationships with God and with our loved ones are lasting and of the greatest priority. My worth does not lie in business success or wealth. It is because I know Jesus that I am secure. I am so grateful that my wife stood by me through my darkest hours with reassurance of her love and support. We stood together, united in Christ, and grew even stronger through this trial.

My advice for you young men: put your trust in God and give your heart to a worthy God-fearing woman. She will encourage you in your walk with God and be by your side through better or worse.

Summer

Full of the warmth of sunshine and enthusiasm for life.
Summer sees no limit to potential and energy.

Tied to Jesus | Interviewed by Natalie Kwan

Warren Hino knows a thing or two about being busy. The husband and father of four is the president of his own IT consulting business, Numa Networks. Additionally, Warren attends church regularly and has been a college ministry volunteer with Asian American Christian Fellowship (AACF) at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) for the past 12 years.

Being flexible through different seasons of life and being realistic about how much he has time for, help Warren juggle family, work and ministry. “We all experience different seasons in life,” he shared, “Some are busy and some not. For example, sometimes I have to work 50-hour weeks, but the key is that it can only be that way for a season. It’s not permanent or regular, or else it takes a toll at home.” He continued, “It’s important to ask God, ‘If I add this to my plate, where am I going to give up something else?’ As we balance the different areas of our lives, we need to have slack. If something is added, we need to take something else out.”

How do we decide what to add and what to subtract? Prioritization of our relationships can guide us. Warren explained, “Having your priorities right is very important. Family comes first. Within family, your spouse comes first, then your kids. There needs to be that separation because if mom and dad aren’t doing well, it’s not going to be good for the kids. My company team comes second. I’m constantly making sure that the team is healthy and communicating well. Third are my clients. When a business owner or manager puts serving clients above serving his team, there can be problems. After clients come relationships with vendors, which help me improve my relationships with my clients and company team.”

And while Warren certainly values hard work, he cautions against letting career be an idol. “I believe in what I like to call ‘holy idols,’” he said. “Holy idols are things that are good and that we should aspire to but can become idols. For example, Asian Americans have certain tendencies: we are hardworking and want to do our best at our jobs. But that can easily become an idol or huge distraction away from God’s plan. There’s a stereotype that Asians have to be accountants, doctors, lawyers or engineers. But what if that’s not God’s calling? We have to be careful that we don’t let these idols come in and lead us to believe that we must have a certain career in order to succeed.”

Ultimately, **walking closely with God — relying on Him and being filled with the Holy Spirit — is the key to finding and maintaining balance for Warren.** “The number one most important thing is being tied to Jesus,” he emphasized. “The more responsibility you have, whether in the form of family members, other people or material resources, the more you need to be connected with God and seek him. You’ll need to pray and trust him more.”

Fall

A marked change in seasons.

Some see it as a prelude to the winter in one's life.

But to those who know how to enjoy life, fall is refreshing; it's a time to enjoy the beauty of a mountain full of red leaves and embrace the freedom found in nature.

An Exciting Retirement

Interviewed by Monica Chan

There's a Confucian proverb that says, "A man should be established by 30, discerning by 40, have identity and true understanding of himself by 50, and be amicable by 60." So is it really true that when a man reaches the retirement phase at 60 years old, he will be mature enough to see life clearly and be free and unfettered? **Is 60 a man's second golden age, or just the beginning of aging and deterioration? Is retirement a man's curse or blessing? It all depends on a person's state of mind, experience and faith.**

Mr. Leung is 63 years old and married with a grown daughter. Before retirement, he taught at a college for 20 years. When I asked him about his initial feelings toward retirement when he turned 60 three years ago, his answer--"Great!"--surprised me. Here's the conversation we exchanged.

Why is it great? **"Because at last I have time to do things that I was not able to do before."**

Like what? "Like simply serving the Lord! I used to be so busy that I did not have time to read the Bible. Now I can dig deeper and learn a lot."

At first I assumed that Mr. Leung hadn't experienced any adjustment pains that commonly affect men upon retiring. However, when we talked about it more, I realized that in the beginning he was actually challenged by his then-new season of life.

"The hardest part was learning to work harmoniously with my wife. Before, she was fully in charge of everything at home, so when I tried to help out, we had conflicts because of different expectations about handling things. Also, there were times when she complained that I was wasting my time doing nothing, and that hurt. I realized that since I retired, we spent time together almost 24/7. So as personal space decreased, the fights consequently increased."

Mr. Leung explained that communication was crucial to resolve the issue of getting along with each other.

"When we talked and learned how to accommodate each other, things got better. Now my wife is used to having me at home and I am used to listening to her nagging." He smiled.

Besides the adjustment to reconnecting with his spouse, Mr. Leung felt that another big challenge was his deteriorating health. After retirement, he found out that he had kidney stones. Though he has been doing fine since having surgery, he does have to be careful with his diet and cannot eat as freely as before.

"In the beginning, I had a hard time accepting my deteriorating health and experienced some ups and downs emotionally. The diet limitations just made things worse."

How did you cope with this? **"The best way is to learn how to let go and accept. When I accept the unavoidable changes to my body, emotionally I do better too."**

However, this is not always easy. In addition to the encouragement of his wife, Mr. Leung's faith also played an important role in helping him reach a point of acceptance.

"My wife encouraged me to attend the men's Bible Study Fellowship class. At the fellowship, not only do I study God's Word, but I also have a group of brothers who care for and look out for one another with encouraging words. Their walks with the Lord always inspire me and enrich my life. I have to thank God for allowing my life after retirement to be more exciting, meaningful and purposeful!"

Mr. Leung seizes opportunities to speak from his experience, encouraging all the men who are considering retirement to prepare for the unavoidable emotional and physiological adjustments, as well as the way family interactions may change. He believes that if a man can face reality with a positive attitude and maintain or even enlarge his social circle, retirement is the beginning of an exciting new chapter in life!

In the past, people said that a man bloomed at 40. Thanks to modern advancements, nowadays a man can still bloom at 60 and live an exciting life. Retirement gives men a boost and renewed energy! We hope the story of Mr. Leung encourages you if you are planning for retirement.

The Fun of Growing Big | Editors

In our rapidly developing society, people are increasingly busy and seeking to improve their quality of life. As a result, many people prefer to have a smaller family or choose to not have any children at all. David, however, has five children and also lives with his parents, which makes them a very special family in today's world. We have invited David to share with us about the fun of having a large family and the secret to maintaining harmony with three different generations under one roof.

Winter

The coldness outside accentuates the coziness at home.
Winter reminds us to treasure our family.
In a season when change is the only constant and challenges are everywhere, home remains the anchor in our lives.

David shared that having this big family was not necessarily planned, but instead, just happened to turn out that way. Both he and his wife are from large families with a lot of siblings, so they are quite used to having a big family. David believes that the key to a successful marriage and a harmonious family lies in sharing similar values. For example, views of money and how to handle in-law relationships are issues of utmost importance. David and his wife are both simple people who do not care much for material things, and they share the same understanding about how to relate to their parents. As a result, even though their two separate original families have different dynamics, they both enjoy these in-law relationships.

Big families are uniquely fun and challenging. Naturally, to raise a big family requires a lot of financial resources. In their family, David's wife became a stay-at-home mom, and David is the sole breadwinner. David and his wife are very blessed to be able to live and raise their family in his parents' home. Without the burden of a mortgage, David feels less financial pressure. However, living with parents can also be a challenge. They may not have much to do during the week and might expect to be kept company by their children and grandchildren during the weekend. Balancing the activities of five children and the grandparents' needs and expectations takes a lot of planning and effort. But in the end, having the grandparents nearby to provide love, care and valuable life advice is a blessing for their growing family.

Caring for a big family helps David grasp the beauty of partnering with his wife. It also keeps him young at heart. While his peers are experiencing midlife crises and empty nest syndrome, he's still busy taking care of his young ones just like other young parents. Aging is a very distant concern for him. Time management is not always easy, as he must meet the demands of work and the needs of children of varying ages. He does feel inadequate and lost from time to time, but it's a worthwhile endeavor. In particular, David likes to use the time spent in the car when driving his children to school in the morning to chat and pray with them. Watching the kids interact with one another, whether it involves laughter or tears, still brings warmth and joy to David's heart.

When searching for a healthier way to feed my family, to avoid refined sugar and to minimize the use of butter, I came up with these two breakfast recipes. My picky eaters at home like them, and I hope you will too.

Cindy Eng

Healthy Breakfast

Banana Chocolate Chip Cookies (yields 18 cookies)

1 large banana, mashed
1 cup old fashioned oatmeal
½ cup dark chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper
2. Add the oatmeal to the mashed banana and mix well
3. Add in the chocolate chips
4. Let the dough sit at room temperature for 20-30 minutes
5. Spoon the dough onto the baking sheet
6. Flatten the cookies and spray lightly with cooking spray (optional, to help cookies brown better)
7. Bake for 12-15 minutes

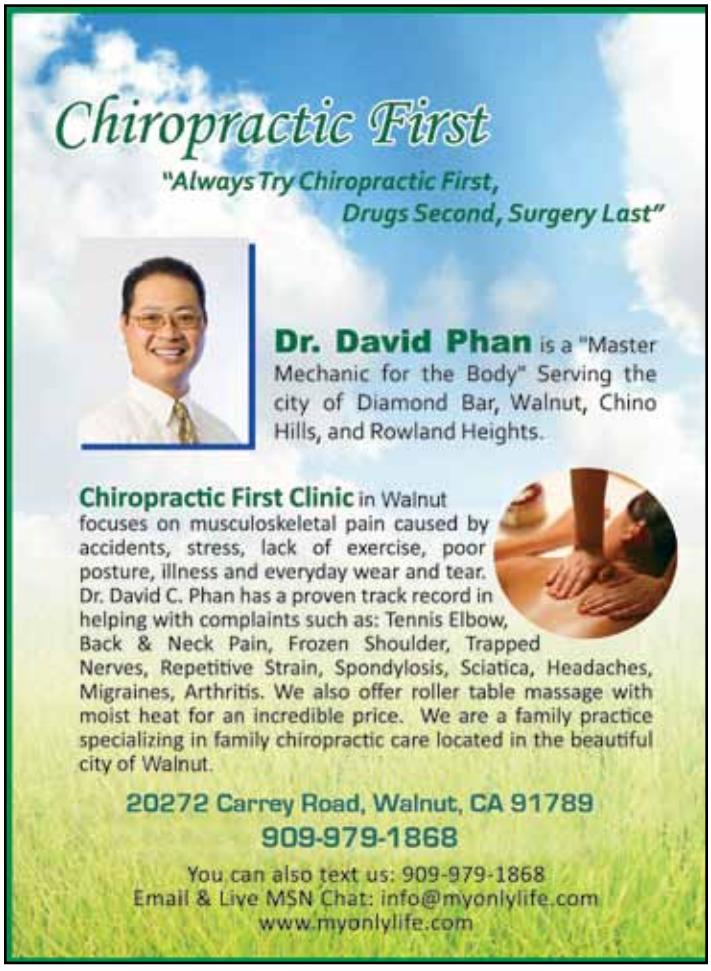
If desired, add in nuts, raisins, cranberries or other additives of your choice.
The cookies will have a cakelike texture. Dark chocolate chips satisfy the sweet tooth, along with the aroma of the banana. You will not miss sugar or butter.

Banana Oatmeal Waffles (yields four 8-inch waffles)

1 cup old fashioned oatmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 large banana, mashed
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon sea salt
3 large eggs, beaten
4 tablespoons light olive oil
1 cup buttermilk (can substitute almond milk or soy milk)

1. Mix all dry ingredients together (optional: the oatmeal can be grounded into a flour to give a different texture to the waffles)
2. Whisk milk with olive oil, add eggs and banana, and mix well
3. Combine dry and wet mixtures
4. Let the batter rest at room temperature for 5-10 minutes or longer
5. Cook batter with you waffle machine or as a pancake

If you'd like, you can double the recipe and toast the leftover waffles for breakfast the next morning. Enjoy the aroma of banana and the crunchiness of the oats.



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