

People Are Born To Shine!

A newsletter rooted in the Christian faith created to inspire and support all people, irrespective of nationality, race, and religion.



ACTS OF KINDNESS

Give a Song Today, Change a Life Forever!

John Beltzer is a singer and songwriter who found himself at a professional crossroad in 1996 when he had lost a record deal. He felt devastated and wanted to make a significant change in his career. He decided it was time to make a difference, and turned his attention toward a very young audience — children with chronic and terminal illnesses. Beltzer contacted St. Jude's Children's Hospital in Memphis, TN, and began writing songs for each child, one at a time!

"The very first 'Song of Love' I ever wrote was for five-year-old Brittany who had cancer. I mailed out the song, and two weeks later I got the call that would change my life. Brittany's mom was on the other end of the line and she told me that someone wanted to talk to me. I then heard the cutest little voice say, "Thank you for my song." After that defining moment, there was no turning back! I hung up and cried for half an hour. I knew that call was all the Grammy award I was ever going to need."

Children typically tend to play the CD's over and over again: they cannot believe they hear their own names and all the things they like mentioned in the songs. The enthusiasm, beauty, and spirit reflected in each song also



*Then, I heard the cutest little voice say, "Thank you for my song."
After that defining moment, there was no turning back!*

touches the lives of family members, friends, and hospital staff, who all soon find themselves singing along with the music. And, the ongoing therapeutic value of each composition deeply affects not only the child, but also everyone involved with the patient's struggle.

"The Songs of Love Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing personalized songs for children and teens currently facing tough medical, physical or emotional challenges free of charge".

Beltzer founded "The Songs Of Love Foundation" 10 years ago. Today, the Songs of Love Foundation has enlisted more than 500 professional songwriters to write and record customized songs for 8,000 seriously ill children across the nation. Beltzer has written about 1,000 songs himself. Celebrities, including Michael Bolton, Billy Joel, Ronnie Spector, David Lee Roth and the Broadway cast of Titanic, also have volunteered their talents.

IN THIS ISSUE

21 Discipline Ideas that Really Work:

All parents struggle with discipline at one point or another. Here are some ideas that any parent will find useful!

Six Ways to Fight Negative Thoughts:

Your words, like thoughts and emotions, have the power to change your experience and the world we live in.

GREEK D.RIVING A.TTITUDE:

If our whole world was an endless highway, then Greece would be the left lane.

Are Artificial Sweeteners Safe?:

Concern that they cause cancer, for instance, may be misguided.

SONG continued on page 6

FAMILY AND PARENTING

21 Discipline Ideas That Really Work!

Drawing limits and establishing boundaries come automatically with the parenting package! All parents struggle with discipline at one time or another. Unfortunately, many resort to spanking and hitting to gain respect and have children do whatever is asked of them. In our previous issue of *People Are Born To Shine* we highlighted *Ten Reasons Why Hitting While Disciplining Children Is Wrong*. Below are alternatives that any parent will find useful!

Be firm. Set reasonable limits that are appropriate to your child's age. Explain those limits in verbal ways, and enforce them in a firm manner.

Be consistent. If you allow jumping on the bed one day and prohibit it the next, you'll only confuse your child and undermine your attempts to get him to listen when you ask him to do something.

Compromise. Kids can't always tell the difference between big and little issues. So give in on a few small things once in a while (an extra piece of birthday cake at the end of a long day might avoid a tantrum). That will give the child a feeling of control and will make it easier for him to go along with the program on the bigger issues (holding hands while crossing the street, for example).

Be assertive and specific. "Stop throwing your food now." is much more effective than "Stop that!"

Give choices. Kathryn Kvols, author of *Redirecting Children's Behavior*, suggests that if your child is yanking all of the books off a shelf in the living room, you could say, "Would you like to stop knocking the books off the shelf or would you like to go to your

room?" If he ignores you, gently but firmly lead the child to his room and tell him he can come back into the living room when he's ready to listen to you.

Cut down on the warnings. If the child knows the rules, impose the promised consequences immediately. If you make a habit of giving six

No banking. If you're imposing consequences, do it immediately. You can't punish a child at the end of the day for something (or a bunch of things) he did earlier—he won't associate the undesirable action and its consequence.

Keep it short. Once the punishment is over get back to your life. There's



preliminary warnings and three "last" warnings before doing anything, your child will learn to start responding only the eighth or ninth time you ask.

Link consequences directly to the problem behavior. Don't forget to clearly and simply explain what you're doing and why: "I'm taking away your hammer because you hit me," or "I asked you not to take that egg out of the fridge and you didn't listen to me. Now you'll have to help me clean it up."

no need to review, summarize, or make sure the child got the point.

Stay calm. Screaming, ranting, or raving can easily cross the line into verbal abuse that can do long-term damage to your child's self-esteem.

Get down to your child's level. When your talking to your child—especially to criticize—kneel or sit. You'll still be big enough that he'll know who the boss is.

DISCIPLINE continued on page 3

A TOUCH OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MARTHA WILLIAMSON

How Much Should We Give?



Have you ever heard someone say “don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing”? I never understood that expression and I didn’t even know it was from the bible! Then I heard a sermon on charity about giving from the heart. The pastor told us that 2000 years ago, long before charitable

foundations allowed us to charge donations to our credit cards, people gave to the poor and those in need by simply sharing with the people they passed on the street. Giving to the poor usually meant reaching into one’s pocket and dropping coins into a cup or into somebody’s hands. The question is, do you reach in and freely give whatever you find there, or do you count out the pennies and decide how much you’re comfortable giving before you give it away? In other words, does your right hand know what your left hand is doing?

I admit I don’t always give money to poor people on

the street, but occasionally I will. I was at a park not long ago and I could see a man that I was approaching. He was most probably homeless. He was sitting on the ground, and from a distance, I could see people walking by him, some not bothering to notice him, some shrugging and indicating that they would help if they could but not today. A few dropped in money into the can, but only after pulling a handful of coins from their pockets and counting out one or two to toss into the can before walking on.

I made up my mind that I would put my hand into my pocket and no matter what I found there I would not let my right hand know what my left hand was doing; I’d give freely and without judging the man or assuming that I knew better what he needed or how much he needed and what he ought to do with it. So I pulled out some coins and bills and I prepared to hand them to the gentleman on the sidewalk without even looking at what I was giving. There was a remarkable feeling that came from just giving without thinking. I felt joy and a great sense of peace and freedom, and as I approached him, that joy became a powerful lesson. I realized that as I had been walking, deciding to not let my right hand know what my left hand was doing, the man on the sidewalk who was smiling and nodding with tears in his eyes had no hands at all.

Source: Martha Williamson, touchofencouragement.com, beliefnet.com

DISCIPLINE continued from page 2

Don’t lecture. Instead, ask questions to engage the child in a discussion of the problematic behavior: “Is smoking cigars okay for kids or not?” “Do you like it when someone pushes you down in the park?”

Criticize the behavior, not the child. Even such seemingly harmless comments as “I’ve told you a thousand times...” or “Every single time you...” gives the child the message that he’s doomed to disappointing you no matter what.

Reinforce positive behavior. We spend so much time criticizing negatives and not enough time complimenting the positives. Heartfelt comments like “I’m so proud of you when I see you cleaning up your toys,” go a long way.

Play games. “Let’s see who can put the most toys away” and “I bet I can put my shoes on before you can” are big favorites. But be sure not to put away more toys or to put your shoes on first—kids under five have a tough time losing.

Avoid tantrums. Learn to recognize the things that trigger your child’s tantrums. The most common include exhaustion, overstimulation, hunger, and illness. Keeping those factors to a minimum will go a long way toward reducing tantrums.

No shaking. It may seem like a less violent way of expressing your frustrations than spanking, but it really isn’t. Shaking your baby can make his little brain rattle around inside his skull, possibly resulting in brain damage.

No bribes. It’s tempting to pay a child off to get him to do or not do some-

thing. But the risk—and it’s a big one—is that he will demand some kind of payment before complying with just about anything.

Be a grown-up. Biting your child or pulling his hair to demonstrate that biting or hitting is wrong or doesn’t feel good will backfire. Guaranteed.

Offer cheese with that whine. Tell your child that you simply don’t respond to whining and that you won’t give him what he wants until he asks in a nice way—and stick with it.

Set a good example. If your child sees you and your partner arguing without violence, he’ll learn to do the same. If he sees you flouting authority by running red lights, he’ll do the same.

Source: Armin Brott, Author of *The New Father: A Dad’s Guide to the Toddler Years*, 100bestcompaniesfordads.com

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Are Artificial Sweeteners Safe?



While I don't think these sweeteners are "unsafe" in the ways that many people worry about (concern that they cause cancer, for instance, is misplaced), I still don't recommend using them. Most are hundreds of times sweeter than sugar, and habitual use can turn your sweet tooth into a sweet fang. So while you may cut calories by eliminating sugar in one area of your diet (for instance, by replacing regular soda with artificially sweetened diet soda), you'll likely end up consuming more calories elsewhere—because you'll crave sweeter dressings, sauces, breads, and so on. In fact, a 2008 animal study showed that eating artificially sweetened foods can actually lead to weight gain. For now, my advice is to consume fewer sweet foods and beverages overall—including those that use artificial sweeteners.

Source: David L. Katz, MD, oprah.com, photo: Mackenzie Stroh

What can I do to reduce my risk of developing Alzheimer's?

The same healthy habits that boost your overall brain function can also help ward off Alzheimer's disease. That means engaging in regular physical and mental exercise, and making sure your diet includes lots of leafy greens and foods rich in omega-3s (like nuts and fish). I'd also suggest eating more curry, because it contains the spice turmeric. Research shows that turmeric may help prevent the accumulation of plaques that build up in the brains of Alzheimer's patients and that can interfere with communication between neurons.



Source: Mehmet Oz, MD, oprah.com

CHECKING IN WITH THE BIBLE

Texting God

READ: Colossians 1:3-12

We do not cease to pray for you. —Colossians 1:9



An article in *The Washington Post* told about a 15-year-old girl who sent and received 6,473 cell phone text messages in a single month. She says about her constant communication with friends, "I would die without it." And she is not alone. Researchers say that U.S. teens with cell phones average more than 2,200 text messages a month.

To me, this ongoing digital conversation offers a remarkable illustration of what prayer could and should be like for every follower of Christ. Paul seemed to be constantly in an attitude of prayer for others: "[We] do not cease to pray for you" (Col. 1:9). "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). But how can we possibly do that?

Missionary Frank Laubach described his habit of "shooting" prayers at people as he encountered them during the course of each day. In a sense, he was "texting" God on their behalf, staying in constant communication with the Father. Laubach believed that prayer is the mightiest force in the world, and said: "My part is to live in this hour in continuous inner conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to His will."

Pray without ceasing. Perhaps what Paul urged us to do *can* be done. Prayer should become as natural as breathing.

Source: David C. McCasland, www.rbc.org

Give me a spirit of prayer, dear Lord, that I may commune with Thee as I travel along life's rugged road, in Thy company always to be. — Dawe

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Fight Negative Thoughts



Watch Your Words

Your words, like thoughts and emotions, have the power to change your experience and the world we live in. This applies to both the words we say out loud to others as well as self-talk. If you tell yourself that you're not a good person, you begin to manifest this reality. Fill your mind with positive words and this is how your life will unfold.

Recognize the Divinity in Others

Every person holds a light that can be passed and unseen if you categorize him/her as poor, not educated, slow minded, selfish...etc. When you see people in their divine light and perfection you help give them the strength they need to deal with their troubles. Remember that your perception creates your reality.

Connect With Nature

We are a part of nature. It nurtures us and energizes us with its elements

such as earth, air, water, and fire (sun). When in distress we disconnect from those nurturing elements and we fall sick. Nature is a true healer, take the time to connect with the natural world around you.

Connect With The Water Element

Water plays a big role in washing away your pain and the most simple water activity can have a healing effect such as showering, swimming, washing your face, standing in the rain. Imagine the negative energy flowing away from you and being transformed into light as you make your contact with the healing element of water.

Surround Yourself With a Protective Light

If you feel someone is psychically or emotionally attacking you, imagine a protective light surrounding you. Some people think of a white energy field. Find a color that works for you. This will protect you from any harmful energy being sent your way.

Respond with Love

You do not have to be the receiver of negative and toxic energy from others. You can return the energy you don't wish to receive with love. Responding with love will prevent you from moving into attack position and creating more negative energy. It is only love that heals.

Source: Text by Sandra Ingerman, adapted from her book, "How to Heal Toxic Thoughts: Simple Tools for Personal Transformation", beliefnet.com

PRAYER CORNER

Dear Jesus, help us spread Your fragrance everywhere we go.

Flood our souls with Your Spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of Yours.

Shine through us, and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel Your presence in our soul.

Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.

Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as You shine, so shine as to be a light to others.

The light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be ours.

It will be You, shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise You in the way You love best -- by shining on those around us.

Let us preach You without preaching; not by words but by our example; by catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to You.

Amen

Missionary of Charity's Prayer after Communion based on a prayer of Cardinal John Henry Newman

Share your story with us!

Do you have a story that lifts spirits, motivates and inspires people to hold on to their dreams, to change their lives and surpass obstacles? Share your story with us today! Your story can help others!

NCF@najicherfanfoundation.org

Quoteable!

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.

— John Wesley

ROAD SAFETY

G.GREEK D.RIVING A.TTITUDE

If our world were an endless highway, Greece would be the left lane. Not because Greeks have the fastest cars or they are the best drivers, but because they cannot even think about driving anywhere other than the left lane.

'To-be-the-first-in-the-row' is every Greek's middle name. Speed is not the issue. Greeks have to be in front of anyone else. At red lights, they stop their car right up to the white line, not an inch away, awaiting anxiously, counting to 12 and gunning the engine, prepared to start.

Sitting next to a Greek driver is a thrilling experience. You watch him sing, smoke, shout and talk on his mobile (without using a hands-free device). The radio is blaring, the cigarette is hanging from the left hand that is hanging out the window, and he's shouting at his friend/wife/son/girlfriend/other drivers (never to his daughter or mother) or she's shouting to her friend/son/daughter/mother/other drivers (never to her husband), they're driving as if they are the only drivers on the road and, of course, they are talking on their mobile with the person they're about to meet within the next few minutes.

Greeks have names for the traffic lights. The red one is called Stamatis (a real Christian name, his nameday falls on February 3), meaning "stop the car right now". The green light's name is Grigoris (another Christian name, nameday on January 25) meaning go as fast as you can". For the Road Traffic Act, the orange light represents a step behind the red one, and means "Slow down." or "Slowly stop your car." or "I'll become red in a minute. Stop your car". For Greeks the orange light could be a shade of red, has nothing to do with the green light, but still is not exactly red. So they just have to speed, speed, speed and try to pass along this light while it is still orange – as they really do not want to break the law!

Source: Naji Cherfan



The green light's name is Grigoris, which means "go as fast as you can".

SONG continued from page 1

Nancy Harrison, 56, of Oklahoma City, Okla., recently requested a song for her 5-year-old grandson Mikey, who's battling lymphoma. "He had just started a really tough treatment," Harrison says. "School was starting and he didn't want to go because he didn't have any hair. We surprised him with the song and he lit up like a candle. We were all crying. It really gave him some kind of power."

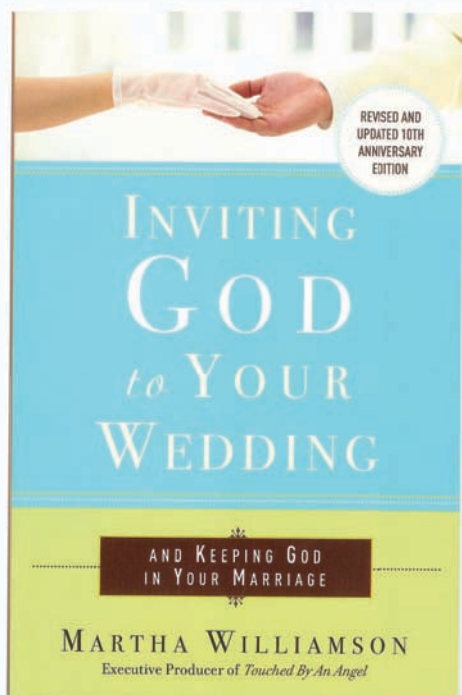
Currently the foundation produces about 160 songs a month. The process starts when a family mem-

ber or caregiver fills out and submits a *Songs of Love* profile form downloaded from the foundation's website www.songsoflove.org, or provided by the hospital. The child's name, interests and hobbies, as well as names of friends, pets and family members, are then integrated into a song written just for him or her, professionally recorded and delivered on cassette or CD to the child's bedside. Turnaround for a customized song is typically four to eight weeks, but can be as little as 24 to 48 hours in dire circumstances. Costs and overhead average

about \$250 per song, but there's no charge to families.

Five-year-old Betsi Kennedy of Madison, WI, received her *Song of Love* while undergoing chemotherapy for a brain tumor. "We can't get it out of her CD player," says Betsi's mom, Debi Kennedy, 35. Months later, it remains a source of strength. "Receiving this song," Kennedy says, "has been like a ray of sunshine at just the right time."

Source: songsoflove.org



"If you invite God to the wedding, he'll want to stay for the marriage"

your new beloved. She says: "You're not just planning for a wedding, you're preparing for a miracle. That means doing some spiritual and emotional and psychological work beforehand. If you lose 20 pounds of emotional baggage, you'll have a much better time at your wedding, and a much better marriage, than if you spent your time worrying about losing 20 pounds of fat before the big day".

"The habits and the commitment to follow God's direction in problem solving begin as you prepare for your wedding. In the book, I describe it as being like when you were little and tried to braid your hair with only two strands. The braids would fall apart at the first touch. But once you learned how to braid with three strands, it was strong and hard to pull apart. When my husband and I have a challenge or a problem, we never think of it as just the two of us arguing it out. It's three of us. And God always wins".

Source: beliefnet.org, amazon.com

ENTERTAINMENT

Book of the Month!

Inviting God To Your Wedding

Martha Williamson, the executive producer of the hit television series *Touched by an Angel*, found herself in a spiritual dilemma when she began planning her wedding. Although she saw numerous books that told her how much money to spend and how many guests to invite and offered mind-boggling check lists, she could not find a book that talked about how to create a wedding that celebrated the union before God. What soon became clear to Williamson is that she wasn't interested in an elaborate "stage" wedding; she wanted to create a wedding that invited God's presence. "Because when God is there, suddenly all your priorities are in order," she writes.

In one chapter, "The Myth of the Dream Wedding", Martha writes about weddings turning into compensation for things that didn't happen in someone's life, like never winning a beauty pageant or wanting the blowout party Dad didn't let us have for high school graduation.

In "Dousing Old Flames and Severing Soul Ties," Williamson discusses letting go of those deep ties to old lovers in order to be fully present with

NEWS FLASH

The NCF has been running a **Prayer Project** since its establishment, and so far more than 15,000 prayers have been distributed and shared, especially with grieving families. The **Prayer Project** was established with the aim of spreading hope among grieving families with the promise of a shining afterlife next to Jesus Christ. The prayers are being distributed within NCF activities and various project, but mainly through partner churches and faith based organizations.

"I found these beautiful prayers on the entrance of the church, and they brought such pleasure to my heart. I decided to give as much as possible so I could distribute them during the 40th memorial day of my late father," a religious sister claimed. One priest said, "I had to celebrate a memorial mass, but I had only found these prayers the night before, so I went knocking on priests' doors that night in an attempt to locate more prayers to share with the grieving family the next morning. I managed to gather 10 packs and they made a big difference."

The Naji Cherfan Foundation Web Site

The Naji Cherfan Foundation website is finally live! We sincerely hope that you will enjoy our news and inspirational messages. You can download all issues of *People Are Born To Shine* through the site, as well as to follow our activities, news and updates! Please visit us at www.najicherfanfoundation.org and share your thoughts and comments with us in the Visitors Comments area! We would love to hear from you!!

HOW I REMEMBER NAJI...

“A True Giver”

My first contact with Naji was seven years ago when I was employed by CCM. He was readily available to offer help and assistance at every possible moment. It was my experience that the kindness he shared with me was also shared with everyone with whom he came in contact at work and his private life. He was—how can I describe it—one of those rare individuals who's face and attitude invited everyone to feel at ease. He was one of the most caring and loving souls I have ever been blessed to meet.

One early event that sticks out in my mind occurred when he learned of my love of music. Being a guru of the iMac, he had the ability to access his website and all of the nice music that he had incorporated into it. He quizzed me about my preferences, favorites, and one day shortly thereafter, he presented me with a CD that he had created. To my surprise, it included some of the most wonderful songs, each a favorite of mine. I know that it must have taken him a lot of time and effort to produce it. But that was Naji, always doing things for others without being solicited first.

In addition to his sharing and loving character, he had a marvelous sense of humor. He had an ability to mimic other peoples' voices and personalities, which brought out laughter in everyone. One day he was talking with a client whose voice he found to be hilarious. Of course he was all business on the phone with the gentleman, but after completing the call he called me over and demonstrated and acted out the voice. I laughed so much that my stomach hurt. This thought of him still brings a smile to my face. But that was part of his charm, always noticing when others were down mentally, and quick to make them smile, laugh and brighten their day.

His positive energy attracted many friends into his life. I recall one time; he had a friend in Portugal and was trying to contact her and had no way of tracking her down other

than through her family. He asked if I would act as the go between and seek the information. Afterwards to my surprise, he often came to me and asked for expressions and phrases in Portuguese so that he could send SMS to her. This was only one example of the different ways in which he exerted himself to stay in contact with his many friends.



After one of our busy days, the type that wear you down, he realized that I need something to distract me from the rough day. He invited me to attend a film at the Village Center, and afterwards we sat in a Café talked and laughed for an extended period. He sent me home with a smile and new attitude that carried over into the next day. That was Naji, always trying to help bring out happiness in everyone and quick to help others in any way possible.

To this day his memory still brings out a smile to my face. It is not easy to mourn the loss of special people in our lives, but with Naji, his legacy to me is one of happiness to have known someone with so much love for everyone else. I am sure he is dearly missed by all that had contact with him.

Electra Maragoudaki

People Are Born To Shine!

People are Born To Shine is a bi-monthly, electronic newsletter owned by The Naji Cherfan Foundation focusing on spirituality and health. The objective of *People are Born to Shine* is to raise awareness among our readers on health challenges and disease prevention, while inspiring them to live a fuller, more abundant life guided by Christian values. This newsletter is dedicated to those affected by brain injuries.

The content has been carefully selected from sources considered reliable and accurate, however The Naji Cherfan Foundation assumes no responsibility for inaccurate information.

For subscriptions, comments, contributions and suggestions please contact us: info@najicherfanfoundation.org

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