

Parents & Crosslink

Linking parents to one another and the cross

THEY'RE GOING BACK

Lynn Kuske

It's the most wonderful time of the year!"

No, I'm not referring to Christmas but, rather, an ad campaign from several years ago, which promoted a national office supply store. In the commercial, Dad is happily tossing school supplies into the shopping cart while his kids look on with less-than-enthusiastic expressions.

The beginning of a new school year can bring a mix of emotions for a child, including excitement, dread, anxiety, and anticipation. Visions of homework, tests, and science fair projects can create stress for your child. How can you help to make this school year a successful one?

Support at Home

Parents, you are an integral part of the school equation. Your support of your child and his or her teacher(s) is vital. Studies have shown that parents who are actively involved in their child's education have a significant impact on academic success. Not only do these students tend to earn better grades, but there are also fewer concerns regarding behavior.

Make sure your child is at school every day if possible. Academic achievement is affected by every absence.

Though your child can make up the classwork, he or she loses out on a significant amount of learning that comes through peer interactions and exploration through class discussions.

Designate a time and a quiet place for homework. If no homework has been assigned, encourage your child to read. Ask about test schedules and begin reviewing the material together a few days before the test. Help your child learn to manage time wisely, and allow for breaks as needed.

On the way home from school, ask about your child's day. Listen intently, and ask follow-up questions. If your child is reluctant to share, ask instead if anything happened that day that made your child smile.

Help your child become organized. Show how to break up larger, more intimidating projects into smaller chunks. Determine a location where important notes, papers, or other communication from school can be left for review. Check that all homework and necessary supplies are packed and ready to go the night before—ideally, placed close to the front door. (Make sure your child's backpack is cleaned out regularly. There's no telling what "treasures" you may find!)

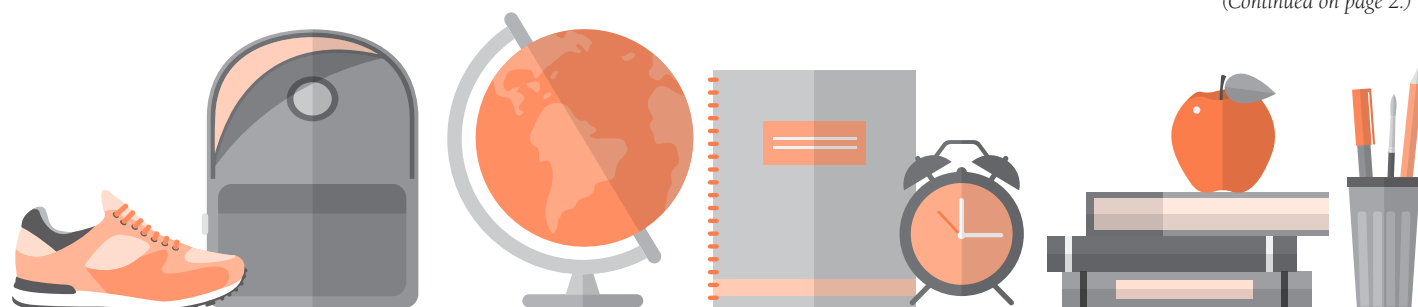
It is inevitable that your child will find that acquiring new skills sometimes is challenging. While it may seem counterintuitive, let your child struggle with the material for a while. Children need to learn to persevere. Give them the least amount of help needed to get them "unstuck." Talk about problem-solving strategies that can be utilized in that particular situation.

Encourage your child to ask questions in class when there is something he or she does not understand. As an elementary school teacher, I tell my students that I love questions. I work hard at breaking down the stigma that comes with asking for help. Questions tell me that students are actively analyzing what I am teaching, they are invested in and engaged in the lesson, and they are taking responsibility for their learning.

Making Sense of Math

Fluency with basic math facts is an important building block. Often there is not adequate time during the school day for fact drill; reinforcement at home is essential. Addition and subtraction can be practiced using dominoes; multiplication facts can be reinforced by playing "War" with a deck of cards. Consider introducing division facts simultaneously with multiplication

(Continued on page 2.)



(They're Going Back . . . cont.)

as “fact families.” (Since $3 \times 4 = 12$, then 12 divided by 3 is 4, and 12 divided by 4 is 3.) An Internet search will reveal a number of sites that may make math fact practice fun and engaging. If you prefer board games, MUGGINS is excellent for implementing mental math strategies while reviewing multiple mathematical operations.

Use common craft items, such as toothpicks or straws with marshmallows, to create geometric figures. While on a road trip, my own children were entertained for hours with a simple package of pipe cleaners.

Identify parallel and perpendicular lines; or find right, acute, and obtuse angles when out for a walk.

While grocery shopping, ask your child to weigh produce. Have him or her help estimate the savings obtained through BOGOs, special offers, and coupons; and estimate the total cost of the groceries and calculate the change.

Set up a budget for your child, or help them understand family finances. Start a savings account so your child can track his or her balance and the effect of interest received.

Keep a tape measure handy. Children love to measure height (including their own!) and length. Introduce the concepts of perimeter and area.

Recruit help in the kitchen. Read recipes together, measure ingredients, and discover equivalent fractions.

Hang a calendar in your child's

room. Make note of special days and use vocabulary such as *yesterday*, *last week*, *next month*. Trace the weather, phases of the moon, and seasons of the year.

When traveling, enlist the help of your child. Put him or her in charge of the maps that parks and tourist destinations provide. Identify locations of interest and discuss the coordinate grid. Calculate distances and mileage together.

The Rewards of Reading

Reading every day at home has been proven to result in a significant improvement in a child's academic success. One of the most convincing studies I have found states that reading for just 20 minutes a day translates to 3,600 minutes of reading (1,800,000 words read) per year and scores in the 90th percentile on standardized tests. A student who starts reading for 20 minutes a day starting in kindergarten will have read an equivalent of 60 school days by the end of 6th grade (Nagy & Herman, 1987).

Ask your child to share what he or she is learning as they read. Stop and make predictions about what will happen next. Change the ending of the story. Take turns reading and acting out the parts of the characters. Compare and contrast the characters and setting to other stories or to the movie based on the book.

Although your child may enjoy a particular book series or have a preference toward fiction, be sure to encourage reading from a variety of genres. When reading nonfiction, point out the importance of text features (headings, index, graphs, captions, maps, etc.) and discuss why they are embedded in the passage and how they help relate information to the reader. When reading poetry, discuss rhythm and rhyme as well as figurative language.

Visit the public library. Sign up for any reading programs that might be offered. Ask whether there are reading clubs or reading incentives at your child's school.

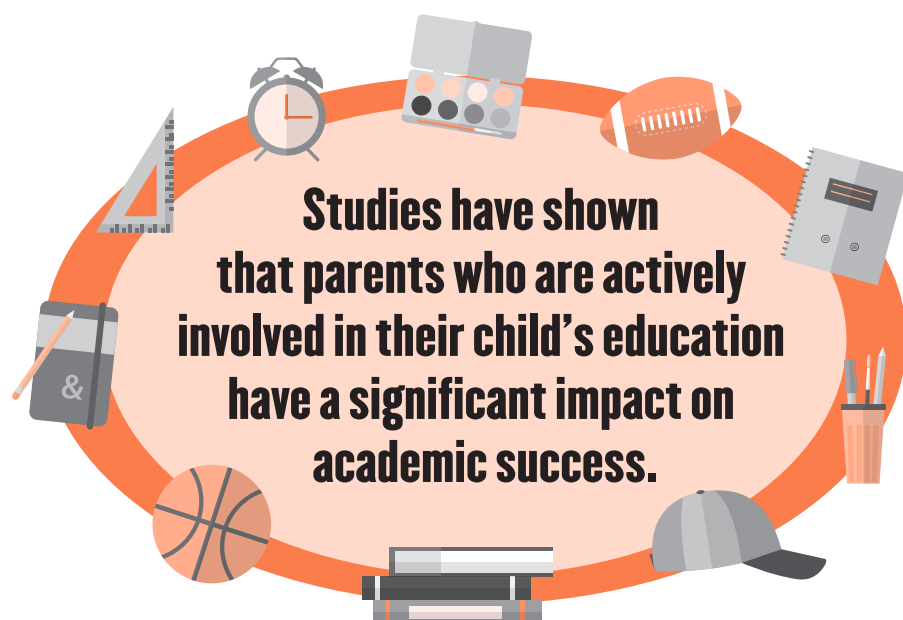
Ensure that your child is reading independently on their appropriate reading level. However, don't hesitate to expose your child to text that is more difficult. You may read challenging books together, or your child may listen to the book in audio format. Ask your child to visualize what is being read by imagining the scene.

Pause occasionally to check for understanding. Read a paragraph or two and have your child provide a brief summary or draw a picture of that portion of the text.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Finally, address any concerns or questions you may have with your child's teacher. Teachers may be able to suggest additional resources to strengthen skills. Most important, keep the lines of communication open with the Lord through prayer. The One who fearfully and wonderfully made your child also blessed this child with unique and special gifts and abilities. Encourage your child to use those talents to the fullest, becoming a shining light for his or her Savior.

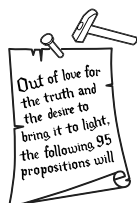
Lynn Kuske is a special education teacher and mother of two children. She and her family are members of St. Matthew in Appleton where her husband serves as an associate pastor. After being away from their “home state” for over 20 years, they have recently moved back and are looking forward to spending more time with family and friends here.



Luther and Lutheran

The Lutheran church gets its name from the last name of a servant of God who lived in the 1500s. God used Martin Luther to “reform” (redo, change) the incorrect teachings of the church of Luther’s time. The church had been teaching people that they could pay money to have sins forgiven and that they could earn heaven by following rules of the church. But when Luther read the Bible, he learned that forgiveness and heaven are gifts from God! God’s Son—Jesus—lived perfectly, died on a cross, and came back to life to earn those gifts for us.

The top row shows things Martin Luther did in the 1500s to help others learn God’s saving truths. In the illustrations below, draw or write something you can do in 2017 to show others what God’s Word says and what you believe.



On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed 95 statements to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, for people to read. The statements were meant to start a discussion about what was being taught in many churches.



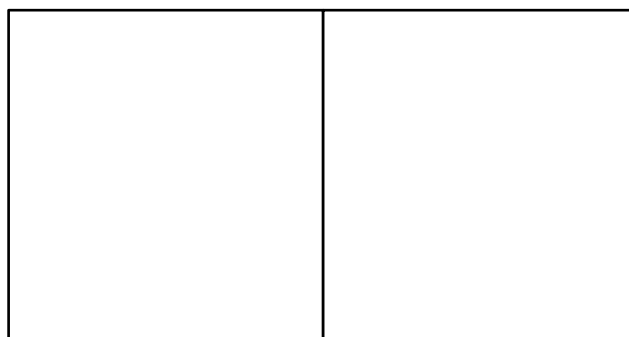
Luther wrote many books and articles to teach God’s Word to adults and children.



Luther wrote songs and hymns that praise God and share the gospel.



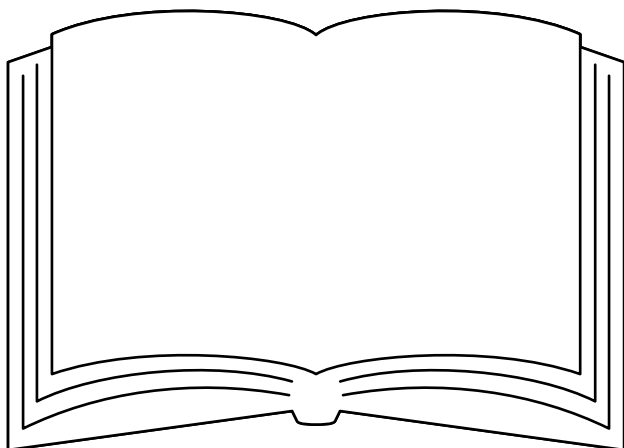
Pretend this is a plaque on or near your front door. Add a message that expresses your beliefs.



Outside

Inside

Design a Thanksgiving or Christmas card that shares your faith.



Write words or the title of one of your favorite hymns that tells about the Savior.



Now draw a picture showing how both Luther and you learned God’s saving truths.

The **CRISIS** of DISRESPECT

John M. Brenner

Has disrespect for authority reached a crisis level? If so, is the attitude in your household part of the solution or part of the problem?

Teachers in some school districts express fear for their own safety because of student threats and student violence. Umpires and referees at grade school and youth athletic events have been accosted by irate fans, including parents. Too often children openly show disrespect to their parents in public places.

Such behavior is shocking and disappointing, but it is not surprising. Every Christian child also has a sinful nature. That sinful nature doesn't like to be under authority or to be in submission.

Children are also affected by our society. Respect for authority is undermined by instances of misconduct and immorality in the highest offices in our land. Reports of misuse of authority by a few policemen cast shadows of suspicion on the majority who are upright and honest. Comedians publicly ridicule elected officials. TV sitcoms portray parents as buffoons and glamorize the characters of impudent children. American insistence on the rights of the individual sometimes degenerates into an attitude that rejects any authority. To some, freedom means that no one can tell them

what to do or that they don't have to answer to anyone but themselves.

Of course, Christians don't look to themselves for direction. Godly parents and children alike have a much wiser source for guidance—a divine source. By the power of God's Spirit, we are moved to search for answers to this crisis of disrespect in the wellspring of all authority.

What does the Bible say?

God commands children to be obedient and to respect their parents. Obedience and respect for parents are so important that God attaches a promise to his command: "Honor your father and mother . . . so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2,3). God expects us to show that same obedience and respect to all whom he has placed over us. Paul writes, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted. . . . Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:1,2,7).

How do we teach children to respect authority?

We teach children to respect authority by teaching children what God commands and by explaining God's purpose in establishing authority. God has established authority in order to bless us. He has given parents to children to provide for their physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare. He has established government to provide law and order, peace and safety. Civilization cannot long survive when anarchy and lawlessness reign. By showing respect to those in authority, we thank and honor our God, who has established all authority.

Respect for authority outside the home begins with respect for parents in the home. Parents will not hold the respect of young people for long if they try to be one of them. Children do not need parents who are their buddies. They need parents who are eager to train their children not only to know God and all that he has done to win salvation for them in Christ Jesus but who also will teach their children to apply their gifts and energies in obediently pursuing God's will in their lives. In other words, children need direction and discipline.

Fair and consistent discipline produces respect. Unreasonable demands

and harsh treatment produce resentment. The Bible warns, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Christian discipline involves more than pointing out sin and administering appropriate punishment. It involves assuring children of God’s forgiveness. It means telling them that Jesus died for all their sins.

We earn the respect of our children by acting with integrity. When we are wrong, we ought to admit it. Apologizing when we are wrong encourages respect. Refusing to admit when we are wrong undermines it.

Showing respect is often a matter of demonstrating common courtesy. Children can hold doors for the elderly. They can rise when someone in authority comes into the room. They can offer a chair to an adult and address people by their titles, rather than their first names. Children can be taught to say please and thank you. They can learn that their tone of voice can convey either respect or disrespect.

Parents teach respect by example. The way we treat our spouses and support their role as father or mother will either create an atmosphere of respect for parental authority or undermine it. When one spouse ridicules or disrespects the other, children lose respect for both parents. When adults act like children at athletic contests and become verbally abusive with officials, they send the

wrong messages to their children. Children will reflect their parents’ attitudes toward their employers, the police, elected officials, pastors, and teachers. We teach respect by speaking well of those in authority and taking their words and actions in the kindest possible way.

What about those who abuse their authority?

The Bible’s advice is completely contrary to the way we think by nature. Peter writes, “Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God” (1 Peter 2:18,19). God will hold those in authority accountable for their actions. He holds us accountable for our attitudes and actions toward those he places over us.

What about those whose policies are contrary to what we believe?

We can disagree without being disrespectful. We can point out the errors in thinking and in policies without undermining the public office an individual holds. We can teach our children that those in authority can make mistakes and can be wrong without giving the children the impression

that they can disobey officials with whom they disagree.

What about public officials whose moral conduct is wrong and shameful?

The respect we owe governmental officials and all who are in authority over us has to do with the office, not necessarily with the person. The men who were ruling the Roman world when Peter and Paul wrote were not very moral individuals. Some indulged in sexual orgies and drunkenness. Others were unbelievably cruel and inhumane. Yet Paul wrote, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1). He directed Titus, “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good” (Titus 3:1). Peter wrote, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority” (1 Peter 2:13). We respect the office because God instituted it, and we respect the individual because of the office he or she holds.

The only time we have the right to disobey those whom God has placed over us is when they command us to do what is wrong or forbid us to do what God has commanded. Then with Peter and the other apostles we will reply, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29).

John Brenner is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin.

**THE BIBLE’S ADVICE ON
SHOWING RESPECT FOR
AUTHORITY IS COMPLETELY
CONTRARY TO THE WAY
WE THINK BY NATURE.**

Trick OR Treat AMBASSADORS

John Cook

John, I have some great coupons for trick or treat candy. How many bags should I buy?"

"You mean we are still doing that? Diane, you know how I feel about that."

"I know you feel that kids are begging and some take advantage of the situation. I know you feel there should be an age limit on the trick-or-treaters. But, come on, John! Are those good reasons we shouldn't give out candy?"

"Well, what about all the Halloween connections to witches and covens? Are the costumes with all the gruesome monsters and blood good for kids?"

"So what you are saying, John, is that you don't see a three-year-old in a Frozen costume, but rather a budding witch? We may not like some of the costumes, but what the children wear is really a choice the parent makes. After all, it is just a costume. If I remember correctly, when some kids came last year, you complained because they didn't have any costume at all."

"Alright, Diane, you have me there. But why should we be part of a holiday, if you want to call it that, which has nothing to do with Christianity?"

"Halloween, originally All Hallows Eve, was a time to remember the saints and martyrs—heroes of the faith. Obviously, that's not the focus of the celebration today. But we have an opportunity to get the gospel to others by using Bible passage stickers on the candy."

"Sometimes I forget that, Diane. And I guess I don't mind putting all those passages on the candy, especially now that we started using stickers that we can run through the printer."

"Well, this wasn't my idea. You remember that our church started doing this a few years ago with the candy they distribute. We just copied them. But I am disappointed when I see the wrappers lying around outside."

"I know, Diane, but you also said that you saw kids taking the candy to their parents to read the passages. In those cases, both parents and kids are hearing the gospel."

"That is a good thing. And we seem to be passing out more candy. I can remember when people bypassed our house. John, you thought it was because of the Christian banner we have in front."

"I remember that. Then you decided to go outside and encourage the kids to stop at our house. I must admit I was thinking that if they miss out, it is their fault. But then you reminded me that they were missing more than the candy. I guess when Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, 'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,' that can include trick-or-treaters and their parents too. Good catch, Diane. I suppose every Christian can learn new ways to spread the Word."

"I was thinking about what you said. And John, you are the spiritual head of our family. Is this really the right thing to do? Does a sticker that points to Jesus as Savior really have a place alongside trick or treating?"

"Okay. Now that puts me on the spot. Jesus says that we are to be his witnesses. If we cannot see ourselves taking the opportunity to witness when someone comes right to our door, will we ever? So what passage should we use this year?"

"I was thinking of Acts 16:31: 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.' It points to the fact that everyone needs to believe in Jesus."

"Good choice, Diane. Now, if we buy Three Musketeer bars, can we save one for me?"

John and Diane Cook live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and are members of Fairview Lutheran Church. He is the Assistant Program Director for Forensic Services at Wisconsin Community Services. She works in design services at Northwestern Publishing House. When not at work, John spends time with his 13 grandchildren, serves as council chairman at Fairview, and writes his blog changing4him.com. And, yes, he really does like Three Musketeer bars.

**IN THOSE CASES, BOTH PARENTS AND
KIDS ARE HEARING THE *GOSPEL*.**

Editorial on MEMORiZation

Ray Schumacher

In a recent discussion I bemoaned the fact that kids don't memorize much anymore—and that few parents seem to help their child with, or even encourage, memorization.

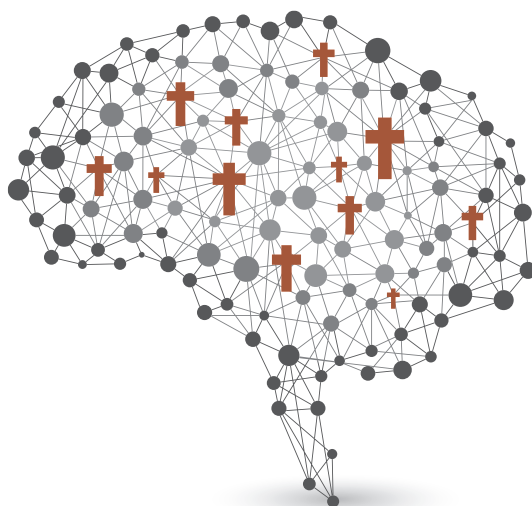
The response from the other end of the discussion went something like this: "Isn't technology great! Now we can access information wherever we are. We don't need to waste time memorizing."

A onetime colleague of mine (now in heaven) had a master's degree in reading. He maintained that memorization is important for a child's intellectual development on many levels and that we are doing our children a disservice when we don't have them memorize. More recent studies support his contentions and demonstrate the importance of memorization for people of all ages.

- Memorization trains your brain to remember things. It exercises the brain and strengthens the ability to hold on to information.
- Memorization teaches the brain how to focus.
- A trained memory is necessary in order to master new and larger concepts.
- Neurobiologists believe that memorizing can make your brain more agile and flexible.
- Memorization skills promote creativity. Research in the Netherlands points to a correlation between people's ability to focus and memorize and their creativity.
- Memorizing promotes neural plasticity, that is, the ability of the brain to change and adapt. This is particularly important for older people because, in the natural aging process, brain cells and connections are lost. (The teaching methodologies of a

century ago, which included a lot of rote learning, are often scoffed at. But I'm often amazed at the recall ability of many older people who learned under such "primitive" conditions.)

- Memory training delays cognitive decline. The National Institute on Health and Aging maintains that practicing memorization enables the elderly to delay cognitive decline by 7 to 14 years.



Memorizing Bible passages weaves GOD'S WORD into the fabric of our thinking.

The findings mentioned above offer much food for thought. We find ourselves in a societal and educational environment that seems to undervalue the importance of memorization.

But the most compelling benefits of memorization didn't play into the

research studies. Those benefits, of course, are the benefits of memorizing Scripture. Some question the value of memorizing Bible passages when online searchable Bibles can be accessed from the phone in our pockets. Certainly, that is a blessing. However, memorizing the passages weaves God's Word into the fabric of our thinking. When we are faced with temptations (and we are—all the time), we may not stop to take out our smartphones to see if God's Word addresses that situation. How much better equipped we are if God's Word is there—in our memory banks. When Satan tries to drive us to despair with the thought that the world and our lives are out of control or that we are beyond forgiveness, how blessed we are to have God's promises to shield us. Recently, I spoke with members of a young family who were going through a challenging and disappointing time. Even as they spoke of their challenges, they acknowledged the hope and confidence they have in Christ. "I know that God promises . . ." and then the wife and mother recited some of those promises, which, at that time, provided the solid foundation they needed for their lives. I'm confident that they will weather these storms because they know God's promises. I'm not sure how they would have viewed the same circumstances if they hadn't stored God's promises in their memory banks. The promises were there—in their memories, influencing their thoughts, shielding them from despair, reminding them of what is most important.

Encourage your children to memorize God's Word—and memorize along with them.

Ray Schumacher serves as editor of *Parents Crosslink*.

13 REASONS WHY

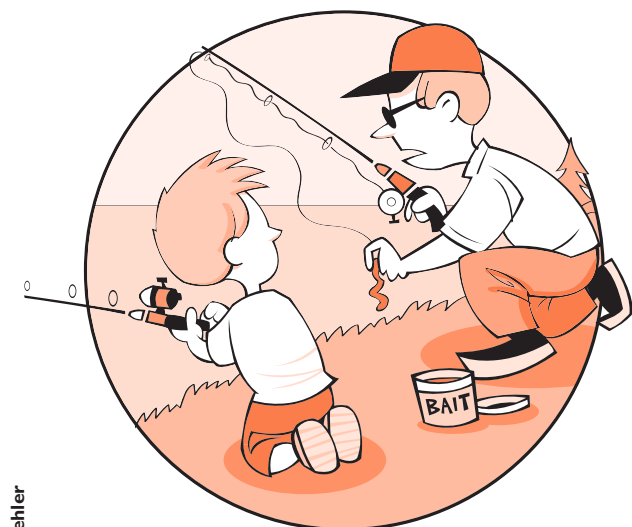
On March 31, Netflix released a series called *13 Reasons Why*. A recent message from WLCFS-Christian Family Solutions alerts parents and church leaders to the fact that it is “sweeping through the world like wildfire.” The show is about a high school student who committed suicide. It is a disturbing show that is very graphic and that raises many questions but fails to give wholesome answers. “Even if your teen hasn’t watched it, their friends probably have—and it is affecting them deeply. Parents, schools, and churches are wondering how

to address the issues raised in the show and what its impact is on our teens.”

Licensed professional counselor Elizabeth Robinson has written a series of blogs to help parents, schools, and teens respond to some of the issues raised in the show. (Elizabeth has ten years of experience counseling adolescents with mental health issues. She works extensively with teens who are suicidal and engage in self-harm.) The first two blogs are titled: “A Parent’s Guide to *13 Reasons Why*” and “A School’s Guide to *13 Reasons Why*.”

To read the blogs, go to www.ChristianFamilySolutions.org and click on the Resources button.

Illustration: Shutterstock



“Your Sunday School teacher said that Martin Luther had a diet of worms?”

Cartoon: Ed Koehler

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He healed the sick.
He helped the poor.
He taught about
God's love.
He offered hope
and canceled sin by
dying on the cross.
He is the one called
Jesus Christ,
beloved Son of God.

written by
MaryAnn Sundby, 2017