



# CREATIVE PARENTING

*The Christian perspective for a happier, healthier home life*

## Counting on Your Kids

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

In a recent poll at [www.newchoices.com](http://www.newchoices.com), respondents answered the following question, "Other than a spouse, who are you counting on most heavily if you need help as you age?" Visitors to the website said:

- ✱ Children 56%
- ✱ Other family members 19%
- ✱ Siblings 12%
- ✱ No one 9%
- ✱ Friends 5%

For a change of pace, I am going to challenge you to think about and plan for your relationships with your adult children in later life. While we cannot expect our children to care for us, and they have no legal obligation, most children want to honor their mothers and fathers. Certainly an important key is building a strong relationship now and all along the way. For those readers who have adult children, it's important that we recognize there can be great ambivalence in anticipating actually caring for parents in later life. Even when the relationships are loving and strong, the anticipation of one's parents becoming older and less independent is daunting for many adult children, and they are uncomfortable talking about it. Discussions about financial concerns, medical conditions, or moving into appropriate housing are worth the effort. It helps adult children see how their parents view the future and helps everyone make the necessary plans. I believe the older generation has a respon-

sibility to make arrangements to take care of themselves for as long as possible. It's important to remember that our adult children have careers and families of their own that require much energy and attention. Children in their 20's and 30's are busy seeking independence, learning how to be adults themselves. For our children with growing families, we can lend a hand by offering to step in and care for grandchildren living nearby, by traveling to see our children's families rather than always expecting them to come our direction.

Too often adult children grimace at their parents' nonacceptance of their lifestyle choices, the behaviors of their children, and their lack of understanding current life challenges. Even an adult child needs and relishes the tenderness of a parent.

So for those readers who have younger children, the possibility of these children ever taking care of them seems a very distant possibility. I invite you to think of the adult-child relationship you are building today as being a foundation, a type of insurance perhaps, for the adult-adult relationship you will want with your children in the years to come.

In Gary Smalley and John Trent's book, *Leaving the Light On*, they discuss the importance of meaningful touch. They recount Jesus' example of almost seeming to go out of His way to express physical tenderness and physical reassurance. "Once when some moms and dads crowded to the front of the line with their little ones, Christ's self-appointed guard dogs tried to intimidate them and keep them at a respectful distance (page 46). But Jesus was indignant at this, and He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them ...' (Matt. 19:14)."

I invite you to consider Jesus' tender touch. As our young children need our tender touch in everyday situations, so do adult children. Let us strive to live by Jesus' example of acceptance, physical reassurance, and tender touch. Someday we may be blessed and comforted by our adult children's tender touches as we look to them for support in our later years.

