



THE PROFESSIONALS

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An Open Answer to an Open Letter

By Peter

CM/FM 3399 4/02

Dear Daniel,

(Your letter was anonymous, but for the sake of answering I've given you the pseudonym of "Daniel.")

MAMA and I recently received your letter addressed to us. You didn't send it directly to us; we received it from someone who received a copy from you or from someone else. In any case, we got it and felt that it would be good to answer, especially since you asked those who received it to respond. You bring up a number of points that are worth addressing, and though most have been discussed in past GNs and other pubs, we feel it won't hurt to go over them again, since you, and perhaps others, might have missed them in the past.

2. After praying about it, we felt that putting our answers into the body of your letter would probably be the best way to answer, as that way it will be clear what points we're addressing. Some of the issues you bring up will require long answers, as we'll try to be thorough; others will require only a few words.

3. We're not editing your letter at all (with the exception of some typographical errors and abbreviations which we'll spell out, like "ppl" being changed to "people," etc.) and thus it is included in full. We're also including the prelude to your letter, where you address all Family teens and adults.

4. Before starting, there are a few points I want to make. First, you felt pretty free to "dish it out" in your letter, so Mama and I think it's only fair to respond in like manner. In other words, this isn't going to be an "oh, my darling loves" type letter. I'll answer directly and in some cases bluntly. Some answers you'll like, some you probably won't. I'm going to address the issues, but in doing so I'm also going to address where you're wrong, where you've used faulty logic, and where you've drawn the wrong conclusions. I hope you can take it.

5. Secondly, while Mama and I have absolutely no problem with you raising these issues, or writing and asking us about these matters, we think the way you went about it was pretty low. To write a letter like this and then send it out to as many people as possible, asking them to send it to others, all the while trying to give the impression that you want them to help you see if your conclusions are right or not, is, I'm sorry to say, bull.—Especially given the fact that at the time of publishing this GN it's been three months since someone sent us your letter, which was already circulating. You still haven't sent your letter to Mama and me directly.

6. This is a typical "Pastor's Pillow" scenario. You spread your opinion all over the Family, getting it out there to as many as possible, under the guise that you just wanted to run it by others to see if you are really right. Tell me, what was your plan for rectifying matters if after hearing the response from others you realized that you were wrong about some of these things? Were you planning on sending a letter back to everyone who read your letter, explaining that, in fact, you found that a lot of people don't agree with you, or that you were wrong on this or that point? Sorry, Daniel, too late. Your letter-feathers have already been spread throughout the Family. You can never change that. But then again, that was probably the point.

7. If you truly wanted input, it would have been much wiser to write your letter and to have four or five others read it and critique it. You could have chosen a few young folks who you know pretty much think the way you do, and a few who you know probably wouldn't have agreed, including maybe a few FGAs as well. By sending your letter to a small cross-sampling of Family members, you would have gotten a pretty good idea if you were on target or not. And, if after having sought the counsel

of a limited number of others, you decided to change the letter or clarify some points, you could have sent the final version back to your counselors so they could see the changes you made. Then you could have sent your views directly to Mama and me, and once we had answered you, you could have sent them our answer as well. But as it is, you sent your letter to your mailing list and have asked others to send it to theirs, which they have.

8. At the risk of sounding skeptical, I have my doubts that you were intending to gather what others said in response, especially if they disagreed with you, and take it all into account when you finally sent Mama and me your letter. However, I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt by assuming that sending your letter out wholesale was a blunder of the mind, and that you weren't deliberately trying to hurt others' faith or bring them around to your way of thinking. I doubt, though, that you prayed and heard from the Lord about it. I'm quite sure He would not have told you to handle it the way you did.

9. I'm honestly not condemning you for writing. Mama and I have always encouraged people to communicate with us and to ask questions. That's how you get answers. But as we've said time and time again, you need to ask the right people. In writing us you were asking the right people; in sending your letter out wholesale to all, you weren't. Frankly, I'd expect more of you as an SGA. I consider this an immature, un-prayed-about-action, maybe done with good intentions, but potentially hurtful to others. Sad.

10. In fact, we received the following question from a 16-year-old who read your letter. Is this what you had in mind? Consider the last line of this note especially.

Dear Mama, how's everything? Yeah, ok, well anyhow, I like got this from a friend of mine, and anyhow, like I really don't know what to think about it. 'Cause you see, I don't exactly want to believe it, but anyhow, it's quite true and I've heard of it before. So anyhow, could you just like get back

to me on it and tell me what you think about it? It's really bothering me and I don't know what to think anymore. K, thanks.

11. Since you've made your letter public, we feel the best way to try to pick up the far-flung feathers is to answer your questions in an open letter, so those who read your letter will hear our response as well. Fair enough? Okay, on to the letter. I've put your letter in *italics* and my answers are in **bold** when included in the text of your letter. Of course, it goes without saying that though I am writing these answers, I did so in counsel with Mama, and she has been over it various times and is in agreement and feels the same.

To all Family teens and adults...

I'm writing this letter to WS. It's some stuff that my friends and I have been thinking about for a long time.

I wanted to get your scope before I send it, as I might be totally or partially wrong on some points.

Please read it carefully and if you agree, send it on to other Family young people.

The only thing you have to do is sign your name (or you can write a note if you like) and send your name or response to [my email]. It's the same address that sent it to you.

If you agree with the letter, please send it on to your friends and ask them to send their signature and whatever they'd like to say as well.

I'll compile your signatures and send the letter to Mama and Peter after I get enough responses. When you respond, I'm also asking you to disagree with some or all of it and send me what you think, if that's indeed how you feel. I do want to be correct in my opinions, so I'd appreciate it.

I want to state that I'm not trying to "disunify" people or start some kind of new thing or something. It's just that I feel that I've gotten enough of the same

story over and over and now it's not just me speaking, so perhaps there's something we can do to make things better.

I know it's a bit long, thanks for your time. Thanks.



Dear Mama and Peter,

My name isn't really that important at this point. **Hope you don't mind our giving you the handle of Daniel, as it makes it easier in answering.** All I'm going to say for now is that I'm an SGA guy and have been in the Family all my life. **Glad you've shtuck thus far.** I don't know if you'll actually get this and read it, but I've felt like writing this for quite awhile now. **Got it, read it.** This is sort of a personal letter, expressing some feelings that I feel are not contrasting the feelings of Family young people all over the world.

12. Actually, Daniel, your letter isn't a personal letter; it's an "open letter," since you wrote us but sent it out wholesale to others. In any case, we hope our answers to you will help clarify and rectify some of these issues. We pray that these explanations will be a blessing and help to you and others.

If these had only been my personal issues and trials, then I would keep them to myself and try to get my act together. But I know for a fact that this is the way that most of the young people that I know feel (and I know a lot of young people).

13. While it may be true that a number of young people you know feel this way, you need to remember that there are more than 1,700 second-generation young people over 16 in the CM Family, spread abroad in over 100 countries. So the percentage of young people you know may be much smaller than you think.

Many FGAs that I have spoken to have expressed similar views to mine

about current life in the Family, the "standards," and basically what our life in the Family is supposed to be about. Therefore I feel that "I know whereof I speak."

I hope I don't sound disrespectful or contrary in this letter, but I do want to "say it as it is," or at least how I and many others see it. I hope you don't mind. **Nope, don't mind at all. But like I said, I hope you can take it the same as you give it.** If I do sound totally "out of it," then I do apologize for my tone. **Apology accepted. In some things you are a bit out of it, and you definitely have "attitude."** The overall tone of your letter could use some improvement, but there are things you feel strongly about and want to see changed, so we'll take the good with the bad. Then again, a lot of these things I'm talking or will be talking about, have been happening for so long that I feel it is time that somebody said it (as I said before) "As It Is."

14. We appreciate it, Daniel. We never mind hearing it "as it is." When things aren't working in the Family, we need to know about it and we need folks to tell us so we can pray about it and find the Lord's solutions, so changes can be made and things can get better. As you should know from the GNs, a lot of the answers we get from the Lord are in response to issues brought up from concerned Family members.

15. When people write us about things they feel are not going well in the Family, we take them seriously. We pray about the issues individuals raise, and we often send such letters to the COs for their comments and suggestions so the counsel we give the Family can be as well balanced and effective as possible. We discuss the points brought up, and the major ones often become topics at summit meetings; in some cases they become the basis for GNs that address widespread problems within the Family.

I did want to say firstly that I do love you, Peter and Mama, and all my shepherds. I love the Family. I love the things

we promote, I love helping people, doing CTPs, and The Family is the way I want to live my life. Wonderful! We love you, too.

But I also do believe that something is wrong with the current situation, as we're losing so many young people from the Family. I don't believe in the popular mentality of, "Oh hell, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few," ... or "we're going to lose many and be a Gideon's band," or ... "Son, this is the way the Lord ordained it, just don't look back and go on" etc., etc.

I'm sorry, Mama, I have every intention of going on in the Family, but with all due respect, that teen was my friend that just left. Or maybe that girl was my girlfriend! When this scenario happens time and time again, and almost every time for the same reasons ... you'd better believe that I WILL look back and start to question things and wonder just what is wrong.

16. Daniel, not only was the young person who left perhaps your friend or girlfriend, but someone's son or daughter or mate or brother or sister. For the most part, parents have genuine concern about their kids who've left the Family. Many FGAs have left their mission field and gone to help get their kids set up in the lifestyle they've chosen outside the Family. I personally know some who have. I don't agree with you that the "popular mentality" is as nonchalant as you've stated above.

17. We personally know parents who are heartbroken by their children's decisions to leave the Lord's service in the Family and the difficulties they face as a result. We know many parents battle with worry, feelings of condemnation, and concern that they can't "be there" for their kids as much as they'd like to. (See Mama's comments on this in recent Letters: ML #3388:4-12, GN 984; ML #3389:14-16, GN 985.) There's nothing casual about people's feelings when those they love choose another lifestyle,

especially if after leaving, their choice of job, friends, lifestyle, or recreational preferences negatively affects and actually hurts them, which causes the parents and others to be all the more concerned for their well-being.

18. So, Daniel, if someone made the remarks that you stated above regarding any of our young people who have left the Family, I'm sorry. But I don't think that's representative of most Family members' feelings. Most folks are very saddened when others leave the Family. I know Mama and I are.

19. But the fact is that people do leave the Family. It's always happened within the Family, and it probably always will. Statistically speaking, only one-third of all the folks that have ever been in the Family are still in the Family today. That means that 66% have left. What this means is that well before you were born, people were joining and then choosing to leave the Family. Believe it or not, close friends, and perhaps even boyfriends and girlfriends of your mom and dad, left the Family. We've all had those we are close to make the choice to leave. It's a fact of life. It's always difficult. It hurts, it's sad, but it happens.

20. We're all concerned about it, and it affects each of us personally, as everyone in the Family has had someone close to them leave at one time or other. And when a friend or loved one leaves, it inevitably brings up questions in your mind. It makes you take stock of why you are in the Family. It makes you look your faith square in the face. It forces you to reaffirm your own personal decision to remain or go.

21. It's not taken lightly.

22. On the other hand, the discipleship core of the Family will probably always be small. There will always be people who want to give discipleship a go, but who will, in the end, see that it's not the life for them. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few, and I, for one, wish we had more laborers. But you see, the kind of laborers we need are disciples. That's what Charter membership is: full-time discipleship. Those of us who have signed the CM contract have signed on as disciples. Those of us who have made the decision to stay in the CM Family after

reading the “Conviction vs. Compromise” series are disciples.

23. All those in the Family and in the churches are Christians, but not all Christians are disciples. We are disciples. We live the life of discipleship, and not everyone is cut out for that life. It’s important for you to realize this: Charter membership equals discipleship.

24. The publishing of the CvsC series did sift the ranks, as it caused each of us to either recommit to discipleship or choose another level of service. That was one purpose for it—to help people to assess their faith and see if they wanted to continue in the CM Family when they clearly understood what full-time discipleship means. We have used the term “Gideon’s band” frequently in the Letters, as did Dad, but that should not be seen as a derogatory term. It’s not with a “good riddance” attitude that we refer to that. It’s to remind us all of the Biblical precedent that that’s how the Lord works. He tests the faith of His followers, as He would rather have fewer soldiers who are fully dedicated than a large army, if many of the latter are distracted and not fully committed.

After all, that was an excellent young Family member that has just left.—Left not because he/she doesn’t love the Lord, or because he/she doesn’t love others enough to live a life of service. But he or she is gone because he is no longer able to keep up with all the things expected of him in the Family.

25. Like I said earlier, it’s sad when people leave the Family, for whatever reason. You seem to be saying that most young folks who leave the Family do so because they are no longer able to keep up with what is expected of them as a disciple in the CM Family. That’s not necessarily so. You need to realize that people choose to leave for all kinds of reasons. Some do leave for that reason; others leave because they no longer want to serve the Lord; others because they don’t believe in some portion of our doctrine; others because they want to pursue higher

education; others because they want to prove to themselves they can make it in the System; others because they want material riches; others because they’re married to or going steady with someone who leaves; others because they want to pursue a career not available in the Family; others to simply try out the System; others because they want a life free from any restrictions; others because they don’t like this or that. There are as many reasons for leaving the Family as there are people who leave. Everyone leaves for his or her own personal reasons. You can’t just lump them all into one category.

26. Having said that, I agree that some people leave because they are no longer able to keep up with all that is expected of them as a disciple. Discipleship isn’t easy. It never has been. Jesus made that clear from the beginning when He said: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple. Jesus saith unto His disciples, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Luke 14:26,33; Mat. 16:24,25; John 8:31, 13:35).

27. None of that is easy, but that’s discipleship as Jesus described it.

28. Discipleship is like playing sports professionally. Lots of people, for example, play basketball. Some just shoot hoops once in a while, others play with their friends or in pickup games, others are in amateur leagues, and a few—very few—are professionals. They’re all basketball players, but they aren’t all professionals. What’s the difference? For the vast majority of people who play basketball, it’s just play and exercise, something they do in their spare or free time. For the professional athlete, their sport of choice is what they live for.

29. To be a pro you have to give your sport everything. Your full workday is taken up with training, practicing, playing, or traveling to games. In the off-season you continue to train, body-build, run, and keep in shape. You don't smoke, over-drink, or abuse your body, because if you do, it affects your ability to play. You have to be away from your loved ones when you travel to other places to play. You virtually live with your teammates and you watch out for each other. You have coaches who make you practice, who give you orders that you have to obey. You play for a team. You wear a uniform. There are functions you're required to attend. You're expected to keep yourself in shape and work hard to improve your skill, and if you don't, then the coaches get on your case and make you work out. If you constantly cause trouble on the team or your performance is consistently poor, you're usually dropped or traded to another team. If you break the rules, you're fined, suspended, or fired.

30. So why do the professional athletes do it? Only for the fame and/or the money? I don't think so. I believe they do it because they love the game. There are other rewards and benefits—such as the fame and money—but I believe most of them play because they love to. They're willing to put up with a regimented lifestyle, the rigors of training, and the sacrifice of not being able to do some things that others can do, because they love the game.

31. Why would anyone choose to be a disciple in the Family? Why put up with all that's expected of a disciple? Why live the sacrificial lifestyle?—Because we love the Lord. Our love for Him causes us to live the discipleship life, and that's not easy. We're not just Christians, we're professional Christians. Christian service is our profession. It's our full-time job. It's what we do. It's what we live for. As a pro, we have to keep ourselves in shape, work with our team, grow in skill, and submit to our coaches, just like a professional athlete. If you're a disciple, you're a professional, and with that comes the requirement of being and remaining a professional.

32. The fact is, Daniel, there are a lot of requirements involved in being a professional

Christian, a disciple in the Family. A lot is expected of you. It's often difficult, it's sacrificial, but it's what it takes to be a disciple, and that's not going to change. Not only has that been the foundation of the Family from the beginning, but it's right there in Jesus' Own Words in the Bible.

33. However, I think a misconception that many have—especially, but not only, the younger folks—is that you have to live the life of a full-time disciple to be in the Family. That's not true. You can be a Family member without being a Charter member disciple. You can do the things that you, Daniel, listed earlier—that is, love the Lord, love others, and live a life of service in the Family—without having to deal with the difficulties of being a full-time disciple. How do you do that? By being a Fellow member.

34. I can hear some of the young folks groaning! But see, many CM and FM members have the wrong attitude about Fellow membership.

35. Many tend to look down on Fellow members. Some consider the Fellow member circle a place where failures or problem cases go, those who “couldn't make it.” But that's not what Fellow membership is all about. Fellow members are important, full-fledged members of the Family—they believe, they witness, win souls, and pass out the message; they tithe and do many of the same things as Charter members. The difference is that they've decided that living the full-time discipleship life within the CM Family is not for them. But though they don't live the way the Charter members are required to, they are Family members who are valuable and who collectively do a wonderful job.

36. When young folks decide that discipleship is not for them, not many choose to continue on in the Family as Fellow members. I think part of the reason for that is the wrong perception they have about Fellow membership. But for the most part, I believe that once a young person makes the choice to leave the Family, they're usually making the choice to no longer actively serve the Lord. I believe this because to my knowledge, the majority of our young folks

who leave the Family move on to lifestyles that exclude regular active Christian service.

Here's what I mean: In the Family you get your fair share of criticism and hardship, fair enough. I have accepted that a certain amount of both is part and parcel of living the way I do. But sometimes it seems that there are things (and by which, I mean attitudes and policies) in place that make it more difficult than is necessary for us to be good. I do believe that in order to have a successful and workable standard in Family Homes, there needs to be a balance—a balance that's met somewhere in the middle, with the FGAs' understanding and the young people's consent.

37. You bring up an interesting point here, Daniel, which I will explore as we go further into your letter. You state that there are things in place that make it more difficult than necessary for Family members to be good, and by this you mean attitudes and policies. As I go through your letter and answer it, I think you will see that there is a big difference between attitudes and policies.

38. There are certain rules of behavior within the Charter that Family members are expected to adhere to; there are fundamental beliefs and doctrines that we need to believe, and there are requirements for Charter membership. While you might think that these rules and requirements make it more difficult than is necessary for you to be good, I think overall that the rules, as listed in the Charter, have made things easier than they were in the past.

39. Before the Charter codified the rules, there were hundreds of “rules” that existed and were enforced to varying degrees in different Homes or areas. It was impossible to keep them all or even know what they were, since they were scattered throughout the Letters. This meant that one shepherd might really get on your case for something that another leader wouldn't even think was out of line. On top of

the rules that were in the Letters, different areas and even different Homes had local rules. It was very difficult to know if you were doing what you were supposed to be doing or not. That changed with the Charter. Everyone knew what the rules were, and if it wasn't listed in the Charter, it wasn't a rule. This definitely made it easier for people to be good.

40. Now, you might not like some of the rules or restrictions, but each of those rules was put in place for a good reason. We can discuss this further on in our answers to your letter, but first I want to address the other point you brought up—attitudes. You link policies and attitudes together as being what makes it more difficult than necessary for people to be good. While I will heartily defend the policies laid out in the Charter, I agree with you that some people's attitudes make the already sacrificial life we live much more difficult. I'll discuss this more at length later on in your letter.

I think if I placed a true scenario here it would be easier to understand just what I'm talking about. I won't get into who this person is, but the fact remains ...

41. Daniel, the following facts are taken from your description of the girl in your true scenario. I thought it would be helpful to list them at the beginning so it's easier to picture the person and her situation as you describe it.

42. The young woman in the scenario is 20 years old. She made the decision to go to the mission field with her parents. Originally she went to be the fourth voting member of the Home. Apparently she's the main childcare person in the Home, and sleeps in a room with at least two, and maybe more, children, probably between the ages of 4 and 10. It seems as if there are no other teens or SGAs in her Home or the nearby vicinity. She works in childcare four days a week, fundraises on the weekends, and has W&R on Monday. She receives a personal needs allowance. Besides her, the Home consists

of “Uncle P.”, who apparently is the personnel teamworker, her mom and dad, and, it seems, some other FGAs (who provide “the ever-present frowning of a couple FGAs”).

Here is a typical Family young person: She works in the Home fulltime. Shares a room with some kids, probably 4-10 years old. Does this young woman have any privacy? No way! But never mind all that because we’re all in the Family because we want to be and that’s a part of it, right? She usually spends most of the day with the kids that she also sleeps in the same room with and cares for at night.

Cooking? Yes! Cleaning? Oh yeah! Almost literally becoming the Home’s maid so that they can hit the streets and win souls? Yep!

43. While I know you’re trying to make a point, I don’t believe that the typical Family young person, especially a 20-year-old, takes care of children all day long, sleeps in a room with children under the age of 10, and is the housemaid who basically does all the cooking and cleaning. In any case, I’ll comment: If this girl really does all that, she deserves a medal of honor. People who care for and teach children are tops in Mama’s and my book. It’s a tough job and they deserve a great deal of credit, as was recently brought out very clearly in “Where to Now?” Our childcare personnel are extremely valuable, important people who need to be honored and respected!

44. The impression you give here is that this girl is forced to stay home and care for the kids and clean and cook. That her mom and dad and the other FGAs in the Home are making her do this, and that she doesn’t have any choice in the matter whatsoever.

45. Come on! If any 20-year-old is in a situation where she’s being forced to do work that she doesn’t want to do, or if those in the Home are treating her in a callous manner, she doesn’t have to put up with it! She has rights.

She has a vote in the Home. She has the right to bring up her concerns in a Home council meeting. She can write her VS about it. She can write her CO or Mama and me. And above all, she can vote with her feet, because she has the right of mobility and thus can walk away from the Home. All of those rights are clearly stated in the Charter and every person in the Home knows it.

46. Of course, if a person doesn’t exercise their rights, if they let others walk all over them and never bring the matter up; if they are being forced to do things they don’t want to do, but never object, never report it, and choose to stay in the Home, then they bear some of the blame.

47. The Charter empowers people to have some control over the situation they’re in and to leave the situation if it doesn’t change to their satisfaction. We made sure this empowerment was in the Charter in order to protect people from having to stay in situations where they feel they’re being treated in an unfair or improper manner. But those people have to take the stand and claim their rights if they feel they’re being mistreated in any way.

48. It’s important for people to understand that they do have the right to leave a Home they no longer want to be part of for whatever reason. They should, of course, pray and hear from the Lord, and should try to give the Home a reasonable amount of time to find a replacement, but the bottom line is that you can leave the Home if you want to. Even if your parents or shepherds make you feel guilty about leaving (which they shouldn’t), you still have the right to go. No one has the right to make you stay.

49. This young woman apparently took care of the kids and slept in the same room with them at night. God bless her, that’s pretty tough. I’d say that generally speaking, it would be better for her to have quarters that are more private. In fact, Mama and I feel, as Dad did, that people should have the best quarters possible. But in some situations, sleeping with the kids might be the best quarters available. I would imagine that in this situation there wasn’t a spare bedroom that the FGAs weren’t letting her use. I doubt that they were trying to be mean to her.

The house was most likely small and therefore it necessitated her sleeping with the kids. Is that the best situation? No, probably not. But sometimes, especially on a far-flung mission field (Timbuktu, you called it), that's the best that can be done.

50. People should be housed as comfortably as possible, and if conditions are too crowded, then the Home should pray about what to do—whether to move to a larger house, or to split the Home in two and have some folks move, or to stick with it for the time being while waiting to see what the Lord is going to do. If things are so crowded and people are unhappy, the issue should be brought up at a Home council meeting to be discussed and prayed about.

Boyfriend? Nope. Why? Well, there were some relationships before, but now her family has decided to pioneer Timbuktu and she has decided to go along, help them out, be the 4th TRF member, raise funds, etc. In other words, she has sacrificed many, many things that most young people hold dear, like fellowship, activities, friends, etc. Fair enough, again, part and parcel of Family life in a small Home.

51. God bless her, it's tough being in a small Home on the field with little fellowship with others your own age, no doubt about it. It's a definite sacrifice, one that she apparently was willing to make when she chose to go with her parents to pioneer "Timbuktu." We admire her and everyone who launches out and pioneers a new area. It takes guts and sacrifice. Of course, after the initial pioneering is done, others generally move to the area and things get a bit better.

She is certainly willing to do this because her most important goal is to serve the Lord. (And that's really what matters, not some minor misdemeanors, or at least that's how she feels and what she tries to live by.) I agree. The most important thing is serving the Lord. Minor mis-

demeanors are just that—minor—and they should be handled as such.

Oh yeah, there are plenty of cuties down the road that offer to be "more than friends" almost daily ... but no, they have their status and she has hers, and it stays that way.

Her mom's response to her desire to have someone to be close to? "Oh, hun, what do the Letters say? If you want a boyfriend, go out and win one to the Family!" Pretty simple, right? But is this notion realistic? I don't think so. More like a rather cruel mockery of her situation. OK, so she bites back her emotions, sticks her heartache deep down somewhere in her heart, and goes back to the kids and the pots and detergent.

52. Hmm, Daniel, you're kind of stepping in it here. First off, God bless her for sticking to her guns as far as the "cuties" are concerned. Now as for her mom's response to her desire to have someone close, if you remember, this is one of the solutions the Lord gave in prophecy that was pubbed in a GN. Nobody said it would be an easy solution, but apparently the Lord must consider it realistic, otherwise He wouldn't have said it was a solution. It's obvious that you don't think it's realistic; in fact, you seem to consider it "a cruel mockery of her situation." I guess this is where things come down to faith and belief. Some things that God says are hard sayings and take real faith to believe, but whether you believe it or not, there are women—both FGAs and SGAs—who have won their husbands to the Lord and to the Family.

53. Here is where the question of attitude and policy comes in. The Letters do talk about winning a boyfriend to the Family as a possible solution to her problem. Of course, there are other potential solutions to this girl's dilemma: She can move to a Home or area where there are young men her age whom she can try to develop a relationship with, or she could write some of the guys she's had relationships with in the past and invite them to apply to join her

Home, or even send an ad to *Lovelines*.

54. Her mother's response, directing her to what the GNs say, is technically a correct response; you should direct people to the Word when they have questions. However, if the mother gives the correct response in a manner that is condescending, unloving, and self-righteous, then it's the wrong attitude. Right response, wrong attitude.

55. Of course, I don't know what the mother's attitude was, since I wasn't there, and it doesn't sound like you were either, but I'll use this example to address a very real problem. Often people give the correct answer, but in a way that makes it very hard to accept because of the self-righteous manner or attitude in which it was given. The person on the receiving end mixes both the answer and the attitude together, and because the attitude is so repugnant, the answer becomes repugnant as well. Had that same answer been delivered in a loving, sympathetic and understanding manner, it might have been more easily understood and accepted.

56. On the other hand, sometimes the person asking the question already has their mind made up, and therefore they reject the answer no matter how it's delivered. Let's use this case as an example. If this girl (or anyone in her situation) just hated the rule of no sex with outsiders, and was totally against it and felt it was completely wrong, then no matter how the answer was given to her, she would have rejected it. So, as you can see, the attitude problem can exist on either side.

See, she's probably a literal angel. She believes in her heart that as she obeys and does what she thinks is the Lord's highest bidding and abides in her calling, that the Lord will bless her eventually. She knows that He sees her heart and loves her and will give her the things that her heart and body craves sooner or later. Right, and I believe that too. "Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psa.37:4).

Back to the regular day:

After the whole week is through, the weekend spent fundraising ... countless diapers changed and other people's burdens and trials carried all week, finally it's Monday. WNR. Time to flush. Take some time off, kick back and chill.

Let's see...what can we do?

How about the cinema? Alright! Let's go ... Cool, she has an IMAX free entry coupon someone gave her. Couldn't afford it on her "personal needs money allowance" anyway.

57. I take it that you're trying to say that she didn't get enough "personal needs money allowance," and that she should have gotten more. Mama and I agree that people should get some personal funds, if possible, as it allows them to do things they want to do, or to get things they would like to get. Of course, it's up to each Home to decide if they want to handle their finances that way, and every voting member in the Home aged 18 and over has a say in this decision.

58. It's important to remember though, Daniel, that each Home is different, and a Home on a poor mission field that has very little income might not be able to give Home members much in the way of personal funds. As you said, she's in a pioneer Home in "Timbuktu," which indicates that their Home might not have a lot of cash income, so it would be understandable if her personal funds didn't amount to much. Thank the Lord for supplying the free tickets, which I assume she got either through a friend or through provisioning, which is another great way the Lord often supplies our needs.

Oh, wait! Here's Uncle P. He says that she shouldn't go to the movies because they haven't been rated yet. Rated? Is this young person such a stupid idiot that she can't discern what's good for her to watch? Let's not forget that this young person has been in the Family for 20 years now.

59. I'm sure this girl isn't any stupid idiot. Frankly, I don't think we have stupid idiots in

the Family. Do I believe a 20-year-old can discern what's good for them to watch? Yes, I believe most probably can, but I'd say it depends on the person. I think most people can discern what's good for them to watch, if they ask the Lord, but whether they will pray with openness and yieldedness and then follow what the Lord shows them is another thing. Some people simply want to watch certain kinds of movies; they might know in their heart of hearts that certain movies aren't good for them and that they won't be rated, but they want to see them anyway.

60. Now, according to you, Uncle P. says she shouldn't go to the movies because they haven't been rated. Well, let's analyze this situation. First of all, it's difficult for me to imagine that Uncle P. wouldn't let her go to an IMAX movie because it's not rated. IMAX movies are usually nature shows and true-to-life films, more like documentaries than actual movies. It's hard to believe that you're not using the IMAX movie to exaggerate here, but I'll take your word for it. In any case, the point I think you're making is that Uncle P. feels she should only see rated movies.

61. Let's talk about movie rating for a minute. Why does WS rate movies? We rate movies as a service to the Homes—to save the Homes' time by previewing movies for them. If a Home is going to take the time to watch a video, they want it to be something worthwhile, or at least entertaining and enjoyable. It takes time to go to video shops and sort through the hundreds of videos on the shelves to find something that seems like it would be good for the Home to watch. So to help you on the field save time, WS preview teams watch movies and publish a list of those they feel are "watchable." Not only does this save the Homes time, but it also lets you know which movies were watched and prayed about.

62. For quite some time we have included the prophecies with the rating, so everyone will know what the Lord or Dad has said about the movie. We've received numerous comments from Family members saying the movie lists are helpful, and that while the lists may not be perfect or

fit everyone's preference, they do make the selection of movies for video nights much easier.

63. Now, is it absolutely essential that you watch only movies on rated lists? Let's look at what the Charter says: "It is recommended that members select movies they view from the 'Movie Lists' published by World Services and follow the advice as to the selection of the film, the age group for which the film is suggested, and the appropriateness of the film for the target audience. It is not recommended that you watch a movie that is not on the list, but it's not forbidden" ("Home Life Rules," K, pg.267). The answer is: We feel it's best to show your Home rated movies, but it's not forbidden to watch unrated movies. That's what it says, right? And that's what it means.

64. It goes on to say that if a Home is going to watch a movie not on the rated list, then a committee must preview it before showing it to the whole Home. Why is that? Have you ever gone to the video store and picked out a movie that had a pretty good write-up, that seemed it would be pretty good, but when you watched it, it turned out to be real lame, or worse yet, an insult to your intelligence and spirituality? I know I have. And if you've gotten your whole Home together for movie night and have shown one of these, it's a real bummer.

65. So in order to make sure a movie is not harmful to the Home members, a complete waste of time, or an actual evil film, a committee needs to watch it first. In other words, the committee has the power to decide if an unrated movie can be watched in the Home. You have to realize that WS can't preview every video or see every movie that hits the theaters. We'd have to have dozens of people whose full-time job was movie watching. We can only preview so many movies, which is why the Charter allows the Home's preview committee to make the call on movies that aren't previewed by WS.

66. But what about when someone from the Home wants to go out to a movie—do the same rules apply? No, they don't. Although, if your Home has a Home policy on this, then you need to abide by that policy. But let's say your Home

doesn't have a policy in place about unrated movies still in theaters. So, if a new movie comes out and isn't rated yet, but you want to see it, what do you do? Well, that is different than showing a movie to the Home, where it would need to be previewed first. Your seeing this new movie would be your choice. But it's in this individual choice where your personal test of faith and discipleship comes into play.

67. There are lots of movies that, if previewed by WS members, would probably be rated, but as I said, we don't have the time or the personnel to see and pray about every movie that comes out. So some movies playing in the theaters are watchable, while some aren't. When you're choosing an unrated movie to see in a cinema, you should use your discernment, prayer, and gift of prophecy. You should also be willing to consider others' counsel.

68. Generally speaking, Family members who spend their money to go to movie theaters usually keep themselves up to date on what's playing and what those movies are about, and they probably know which movies are going to be decent and which aren't—although I admit that sometimes you can be caught by surprise, and something that seems to be good turns out to be really lousy, so it pays to ask the Lord.

69. But like you said, Daniel, you feel that this girl can discern what's good to watch, and generally I agree with you. With very little research you can usually find out the general plot of a movie, or at least the genre of movie—action, horror, love story, etc. If it's fairly obvious that the film is dark, evil, full of horror, and glorifies violence, then, as a disciple who is trying to serve the Lord, you should avoid it. If you're pretty certain that the movie is going to be okay, and that, if watched by your Home's preview committee or WS, it would most likely be deemed watchable, then it's probably okay for you to watch it in a cinema, if you get a confirmation from the Lord.

70. The key, as with every other aspect of life, is prayer, counsel, and hearing from the Lord. You should ask the Lord whether it's okay for you to see the film in question, and your

partner should too. And it should go without saying that you have to pray and hear from the Lord with an open heart, and be willing to accept the Lord's answer, whether He says yes or no. If you're unsure, counsel with your Home shepherds. Also, ask around if anyone else has seen it and what their opinion is.

71. If you're a Charter member, you are a disciple. As a disciple, you should understand that there are some things that simply aren't good for your spirit. You might like to do those things, you might even want to do them, but because you're a Christian and a disciple, a doer of the Word, then you should choose not to do things that are bad for you.

72. We're not against people watching movies, within reason. Lots of movies are enjoyable and entertaining, some are outstanding, most are mediocre, and some are clearly bad. If a movie is not good or is not good for you, then you shouldn't watch it. The underlying reason for you to not watch an unedifying movie shouldn't be because the Charter says you can't, or because it's "against the rules," but because you know it's not good for you as someone who is living the discipleship life.

73. None of us are perfect; we all have faults and commit sins. Every one of us have things we like to do which aren't good for us, which don't help us in our service to the Lord. The question each of us is faced with is what do we do about those things? If we know that those things don't edify us, if they dull us spiritually, if they hurt us physically, if they're not a positive force in our lives, if the Word tells us those things are not good for us, then we have to make a choice. Do we go ahead and do them anyway, or do we try not to do them? As disciples, we should try not to do those things. It's hard—no one is saying it's easy—but trying to live according to the Word sometimes means not being able to do some things that we would like to. That's part of discipleship.

74. If the girl in your scenario felt going to an IMAX movie was something she wanted to do, she could have prayed and heard from the Lord, shown the prophecy to Uncle P., and he

probably would have said it was fine to go. Now, if she wanted to see a movie that was harmful, they would probably counsel her against it, and rightly so.

75. In your scenario you never mentioned whether she prayed about any of these things. You also didn't say whether she prayed ahead of time about the skating, which is mentioned later, or about the movie. She's 20. A 20-year-old is old enough to know she should pray about these things. Maybe she did and you just forgot to include that. When a person hears from the Lord and has the prophecies in hand, and is open to His counsel and that of others, then it's easier for shepherds to agree on things because they know that the person is praying and hearing from God. It's obvious the person is trying to do the right thing.

Also, let's not forget that the movie ratings come out so late that if you were to follow the ratings to a T, you'd probably end up never going to the cinema, ever! Because as soon as the ratings come out, there's something new (and hence unrated) playing in the theatre.

76. I think I've explained enough about this already. Our WS personnel do what they can to preview. We don't feel it's a good use of the Lord's funds, nor good for anyone's spirit, to have full-time preview teams simply so our missionaries can get to the movies while they're still in the theater. If it's really important to you to see a film while it's still in the theater, then why not just counsel with your shepherds, hear from the Lord about it, and decide together if it's okay for you and others to go? It's really not that big of a deal.

Of course, her natural (and I feel, justifiable) reaction is to get upset and express herself in an unchristian manner, but no. She stifles the urge to be rude, and instead she swallows, almost smiles, and walks back in. Good for her. I happen to disagree with you that it would be justifi-

able for her to express herself in an unchristian manner. *(This young person is a saint, by the way. You should see me in a similar situation: unfortunately, I am not so willing to put up with small-minded people deliberately sabotaging any chance I have at fun.)*

77. Hmmm, Daniel. Sounds like you might have a few of those attitude problems yourself. Your take seems to be that anyone who doesn't let you do what you want is small-minded and deliberately sabotaging your fun. Have you ever considered that sometimes parents and shepherds know that something isn't good for you, and they're trying to help you? But you perceive it as them sabotaging your fun.

But she stays cool, no problem. She's not going to let that ruin her only day to herself.

She gets on the phone and calls up one of the Home's sheep that also happens to own an ice-skating rink. "Sure," he says, "you can come down all day as far as I'm concerned. I'll call the manager so he'll be ready for you." So...

Young person: "Dad, I'm outta here ... going skating."

Dad: "Great! I hope you have fun!"

So she grabs her skates, socks, jacket, home cell phone, prays, thanks the Lord for giving her this treat to cheer her up, and off she goes.

Then the cell phone rings. It's Dad. He sounds sad and then she listens for the inevitable.

Dad: "Listen, Uncle P. just came to me rather upset that you didn't think about the two-by-two rule before going out."

This can't be happening, but it is... again!

Young person: "What's wrong with him, Dad? Doesn't he want me to do anything? Actually the rule did cross my mind, but you know as well as I do that there simply is nobody to go out with as a part-

ner. *Instead of going out skating, do you want me to stay in the house and rot?"*

Dad: "I'll talk to him, Honey, I'll call you back in five..."

Let's skip the next few minutes, 'cause we all know what's going on. In other words, what is happening is that Uncle P. is diligently showing Dad in the Charter where it says that Family members must go two-by-two unless it's "unavoidable." (Funny how this is applied almost exclusively to young people who want to go out, isn't it?) Anyway, the Charter must be obeyed. Skating is by no means an "unavoidable" circumstance. After all, it's a luxury, right? So she walks home, bursts into Uncle P.'s room and asks what the heck is his problem! Can't say I blame her.

78. Can't say that I totally blame her either. Dear Uncle P., and her dad, and for that matter, you too, Daniel, got it wrong. You said, "In other words, what is happening is that Uncle P. is diligently showing Dad in the Charter where it says that Family members must go two-by-two unless it's 'unavoidable.'" The actual two-by-two rule doesn't say that. You took that from the section of the Charter that explains the governing principles of the rules, not from the rule itself. Let's look at what the actual rule says:

When one leaves the Home's property, he or she should go with another member as a safety precaution, in accordance with the Scriptural admonition in Luke 10:1. There may be times when this is not possible, but such times should be infrequent and generally only for emergencies, or for a good reason agreed to by a Home officer.

Going two-by-two is Scriptural and a wise principle that Jesus established, and this rule has been in place since the beginning of the Family. There are, of course, times when it's not possible to go two-by-two, but for the most part, members should. When it is deemed not possible, it should

be with the agreement of a Home teamwork member ("Home Life Rules," A, pg.263).

79. That's what the Charter says, Daniel. Clearly it's saying that you should take a partner when you go out, but it acknowledges that it's not always possible. It states that the exceptions should be infrequent, generally for emergencies, or for good reasons agreed to by a Home officer.

80. As you can see, if Uncle P. and her dad had actually "diligently" looked at the Charter, it would have been clear that if this was deemed a good reason to go by herself, she could have done so and wouldn't have been breaking the Charter at all. In fact, if her dad was a member of the teamwork, which is likely, since this Home isn't that large, he could have given her permission if he alone deemed it a good reason. If they were using prayer and prophecy as much as the Lord has shown us we should, the scenario probably would have gone something like this:

81. Girl: "Dad, it's my free day. The Lord supplied a free pass to skate and I'd like to go. Everyone in the Home is busy today so there's no one to go with me. Can I go?"

82. Dad: "Well, we know it's best to go two-by-two, but since there's no one available, and since usually you go places two-by-two, maybe we can make an exception. I'm on the teamwork so I can deem it okay, but why don't we pray together and hear from the Lord for a confirmation that it's okay?"

83. Once they've prayed and heard from the Lord, if He confirms it, then she could go. In your scenario, she brought the Home cell phone, which is good, so if she had any problems she could call home.

84. Now, if this scene came up regularly and every week this girl wanted to go off by herself, then it would be going against the Charter, since these occasions should be "infrequent." If that were the case, then the Home would need to discuss ways to make it possible for her to have a partner on free day.

85. Here we have another one of those "attitude" situations. For starters, your attitude

seems to be that the Charter is too tough and inflexible, that people can't go out on their own unless it's unavoidable, which to your mind means it can never happen, unless it's an FGA who wants to do it. But as you see, the Charter doesn't say that, and your attitude about the Charter is wrong. There is balanced flexibility within this Charter clause, and, in fact, throughout the entire Charter. There are exceptions to the rules, and we've tried to give leeway for them; but on the other hand, those exceptions are to be agreed upon and made in counsel.

86. The second part of the attitude problem lies with Uncle P. While his intention is probably good, as he knows it's not best for a young woman to go off on her own, he apparently isn't being prayerful about it. It seems he falls into the mindset of, "It's not good, and I know the Charter doesn't allow it, therefore it can never be allowed." He obviously doesn't know the Charter like he should (and neither does the girl nor her dad). He just thinks he knows, and therefore makes judgments not on what is actually stated in the Charter, but what he thinks it says, or on his general recollection of what has been a long-time Family rule. He doesn't realize that there is some flexibility built into the Charter; instead, he reacts to matters in a rather inflexible and legalistic way, which seems to be one of the most irritating things for young people.

87. The girl's father is at fault too, because he doesn't know the Charter either. The girl could have shown her dad and Uncle P. what the Charter said as well, so she shares in the blame. In fact, judging from what you said, none of them seems to have really prayed about the matter, neither did they look into what the Charter actually says; they all just went on what they thought, and it turned out to be wrong, which ended up with the girl becoming angry and having a confrontation with Uncle P. Sad.

88. Now, is the two-by-two rule a good one? Yes. It's Scriptural, it provides more safety for those out, it helps keep people from doing something they shouldn't do, it gives you fellowship while you're out, and if there is a problem, someone is there to help. A recent example was

pubbed in the *Grapevine* where Simon Peter was out on his own, tripped, hit his head, and lay unconscious on the ground. Anyone could have come and have stolen his belongings, or he could have been seriously injured, and because he was by himself there was no one to help. Thankfully, the Lord sent someone by who recognized him and helped him to the hospital. Wouldn't it have been better for him to be with a partner who could have immediately prayed for him and helped him?

89. Generally, I don't think it's very good for people to go out on their own. Sometimes it's necessary, and when it is, it should be with the agreement of a teamwork member and with prayer and confirmation from the Lord, because then you can have the faith for the Lord's protection.

90. I think you also have to take into account who it is who's going alone. Would I let a young teen girl, say 13 or 14, go out on her own? No, I don't think so. I'd probably look at it differently with a 20-year-old girl. But then again, you have to realize that it could be dangerous for any woman to be out alone, especially at night, as there are a lot of men in the world who take advantage of women who are alone and pretty defenseless. As a Home teamworker, I would look at the situation, look at the person, and then pray and ask the Lord. Would I let every young person go out on their own? Probably not. Some I would, some I wouldn't. It would depend on the person and what the Lord said.

91. But in any case, I'd pray and hear from the Lord about it. The folks in your scenario didn't do that, and your conclusion is that Uncle P. and the Charter are inflexible and unrealistic. The truth is that there is flexibility available within the Charter, but if inflexible folks don't bother to follow the Charter and the spirit of the Charter, or if people don't bother to look it up, or pray and hear from the Lord, then things can become very legalistic. Also, even people who are normally flexible might, in some circumstances, be led of the Lord to say no. The answer "no" is not synonymous with inflexibility; sometimes it's simple wisdom and the Lord's leading.

92. Also, it's only fair to bring out that the girl didn't stand up for her rights. She could have shown the FGAs that there was room under the rule in the Charter for her to go out alone in this case. But did she? No, probably due to ignorance of what the Charter said. But whose fault is that? Is it the Charter's fault? The Family's fault? No. It's there in black and white, but unfortunately many folks, younger and older, just go by what they think the Charter says, sort of like you did, Daniel, when you misquoted the Charter. In your case, you get all riled up and place blame on the "rules," when if you would have looked it up you would have seen that it wasn't the rules but rather ignorance of the rules that caused the problems.

From what I've seen, young people everywhere are troubled by the fact that a lot of the time when they are talking to an FGA, after about five minutes they realize they're talking with someone whose mind is so regimented and molded and dare I say old-bottlish that they can't see anything past the end of their noses. It's exceedingly frustrating, to not put too fine a point on it.

93. I agree that there are some old-bottle FGAs who are self-righteous, critical, legalistic, and it can be frustrating to live and work with them. This can be especially frustrating if a young person is on board and is really trying to obey the Word, but constantly gets corrected or talked down to for minor or nonexistent issues. But you know, Daniel, some FGAs are troubled by the fact that within five minutes of conversation with some young people, they realize they're talking to someone who is basically anti-everything, and that's frustrating for the FGAs too. I feel that both types of people hurt the Family, and this type of negative interaction can turn into a vicious cycle.

94. If a young person has attitude, if he is constantly challenging every rule, tries to get away with doing things that he shouldn't be doing, and blows up at an FGA who he feels is

self-righteous or legalistic, it causes the FGA he blew up at to feel justified in feeling the way they do. The FGA's attitude then becomes inflexible and condescending, which causes the young person to be even more against the "rules," and on and on it goes.

95. Inflexibility has its place when it comes to certain absolutes. Am I inflexible on eternal salvation? Yes, I am. It's an absolute. But not everything is an absolute. Part of the problem is that it's easier to be rigid, to keep things black and white, with no shades of gray in between. If you go the black-and-white route, it's easy to judge situations; it's easy to say what is right and what is wrong. The problem is, very few things are that simple. Usually there's lots of gray in almost any situation, and it takes prayer and counsel to make the proper judgment. It also takes more time and more work, because you have to stop, assess the situation or the question, then pray, counsel, and hear from the Lord.

96. All of this is necessary to make good, well-rounded decisions, and it's not always easy. Unfortunately, some folks don't take the time for it. They just say, "You can't do it" or "you are wrong." Often they include, "The Charter says you can't." So besides their being inflexible, they justify their inflexibility by vaguely referring to the Charter. However, the Charter, for the most part, has flexibility built into it. It has checks and balances, and when it comes to the behavioral type of rules, there is an acknowledgment that not every rule can be kept every time.

Now why does it seem that almost everything that a young person does or could do to have fun, or be inspired, is either taboo, looked down upon, restricted, or even banned in the Family? Sometimes it seems that these policies are deliberately designed to make sure that young people never get to do anything that is fun (aka "worldly"). A lot of "rules" are really hard on morale, and that's just part of the problem.

97. Let's take a look at this. You feel almost everything a young person could do to have fun is either taboo, looked down upon, restricted, or banned. On top of that, you feel those rules are put in deliberately to make sure young people never have fun. Wow! Quite a statement!

98. For starters, Daniel, it's important to remember that we are a religion, a missionary movement. On top of that, those who are Charter members have pledged themselves to discipleship. As I explained earlier, there are some things that we as Christians and disciples shouldn't do, or that we should only do in moderation and not in excess.

99. I'm assuming that you aren't too familiar with other religions and faiths, because if you were, you'd actually see that we are very liberal when it comes to things that are fun.

100. There are no other Christian churches that I know of in which premarital sex, or sex outside of marriage, is allowed. What that means is that in no other Christian church that I'm aware of are unmarried young people allowed to have sex. It's considered wrong and a sin. We allow sex. We allow our young people to have sex. We allow those who are unmarried to have sex. Sex is definitely fun and it's allowed. Is it restricted? Yes. Are there rules? Yes. Are those rules designed for the purpose of curtailing people's fun, especially the young people? No. Those rules are in place to protect people and to make sure that when sexual activity does happen, it is done in love.

101. Let's look at drinking. Many Christian churches and other faiths ban drinking altogether. Some don't. As you know, we don't. Drinking is allowed in moderation. There is a maximum alcohol limit for each week, plus an allowance for two special occasions where an amount equal to the weekly ration is allowed. What this means is that if you consume your weekly ration on one night, you can drink this ration six times in a month, once each week and twice on special occasions. Let's take wine as an example. You're allowed a half-bottle of wine each week. Well, most people who drink a half-bottle of wine will feel it. They will probably feel

the effects of the wine to a point where it's enjoyable. So on 6 of the 30 days of the month, 20 percent of the month, you generally have the opportunity to enjoy alcohol.

102. I guess you feel these rules restrict your fun. Maybe you feel you should be able to drink as much as you want, whenever you want. I don't know what your experience is, but from mine, I know that when people overdrink, when they get drunk, bad things can happen. People do and say things they would never do or say if they were sober; people get hurt; things that shouldn't happen do.

103. We allow a pretty good amount of alcohol for a religion. The same rules are in place for everyone who's allowed to drink, FGAs, SGAs and YAs. We certainly didn't put the limits in to restrict young people's freedoms.

104. How about movies? Did you know that there are churches that don't allow movie viewing? We allow it. WS even takes the time to preview movies for the Homes.

105. How about dancing? There are a number of churches that don't allow it, ever. We do.

106. There are some restrictions on these pleasures. We can't go hog-wild and overdrink to the point where we damage ourselves, hurt others, have sex with whomever we want to, whenever we want to, with no concern for others, or watch movies that are clearly evil and spirit-polluting, etc. But then again, we're disciples. We believe in Jesus, we believe in the Bible, we're trying to live a godly life, to be a good influence on the world, to be a sample of true Christianity, to bring salvation to the lost. We've chosen to lay down our lives for these principles and goals. Of course there are some restrictions, usually for the sake of moderation, safety, or common sense.

107. But believe me, none of these rules are in place to deliberately restrict your fun. If you can't have fun within the rules, then perhaps you need to examine your definition of fun. Maybe some of the things you consider fun really can't coexist with discipleship. I have lots of fun, and so do those around me, both young and old. Do we do anything and every-

thing, no holds barred? No, but we have fun within the rules.

Anyway, it's back to her shared room. Can't she get online and chat to one of the friends she sacrificially left behind or something? There's no Charter rule against chatting online that I know of. In fact, it can provide some extra fellowship and companionship in isolated situations, if it's economical to go online to do so. Well, besides the fact that the computer is so booked, there's also the ever-present frowning of a couple FGAs as they walk by and mutter something about time wasters and the evil influences of the Internet that she'll have to deal with.

108. If this girl was just chatting, then certainly the FGAs shouldn't be mumbling and grumbling about it. Having said that, I'll also say that, considering all the Lord has said, it's understandable that people are concerned about Internet usage. The Internet has both its "evil influences" and a lot of very useful information, as well as things to do and places to go that are interesting, entertaining, and informative. There's both good and bad.

109. Is all time on the Internet a waste? No, it's not, even when some of the time is spent as free time. People spend free time watching movies, reading books, playing games, chatting, and a variety of other things, and generally those things aren't looked upon as bad. Of course, some of those activities can be bad for you, if you're watching the wrong kind of movies, reading the wrong kind of books, etc., just like some Internet activity is bad, such as chatting with the wrong people, going to the wrong sites or spending too much time online.

110. Let me ask you, Daniel, do you know anyone who is addicted to some Internet activity? I do. I know of people who've gotten hooked on certain websites and activities, and have spent an inordinate amount of time at these sites. They've stayed up until the wee hours of the morning playing computer games, surfing, or

hitting porno sites. They've done it night after night, even though it meant they could barely pry their eyes open for devotions and could hardly function throughout the day because they were so tired. Yet the next night they were back at it, getting high off the Internet.

111. Do I think that's good? Nope. Do I feel it helps them be a better disciple or that it's good for their service to the Lord? I sure don't. See, the Internet itself isn't the problem; it's the misuse of it that causes problems. It's the time wasting, the negative input, the addiction, the unedifying sites that are wrong. It's wrong when it draws you away from being a disciple, from fellowshiping sufficiently with others, from keeping a close relationship with the Lord, by either taking large amounts of your time or by filling you with things of the world.

112. Can the Internet be useful? Definitely yes. Can it be entertaining? Yes, it can. Is that always bad? No, but it can be bad. It can be spiritually unhealthy if you're spending too much time at it or if you're surfing sites that aren't good for you.

113. Should FGAs be concerned about it? Yes, and so should SGAs. If someone is getting addicted, if they're beginning to live for Internet use, then you should be concerned.—Just like if someone were spending all their time eating and were becoming obese, or if they were spending all day reading novels and didn't do much of anything else, or were drinking heavily, or watching movies, even good ones, every night. The excess of any enjoyable thing can lead to spiritual trouble, and we need to be our brother's keeper; that's why we suggested years ago that the rules regarding Internet use be established and agreed upon together, as a Home. (See ML #3053:134.)

114. Do I think FGAs should make comments every time they see someone using the Internet? No, they shouldn't, because they should understand that there is a legitimate use for it; but that doesn't mean they should never be concerned. Daniel, what if someone in the Home is at it all the time? What if they are online half the night most nights of the week

and can't do their job the next day? What if they are filling themselves up with the world and it's coming out their mouth when they are teaching the children or witnessing? Should someone be concerned? You bet they should be.

115. Here again there can be an attitude problem. Some FGAs might have a rather condescending attitude in regards to young people using the Internet. This could be because they've misinterpreted, misunderstood or misapplied some of the prophecies in which the Lord has given serious warnings about the dangers of unwise Internet use. (See ML #3053:91–135, Lifelines 23; ML #3174, GN 779.) In those messages the Lord warned of Internet overuse as well as the many sites that are ungodly, faith-destroying, and damaging. Let's face it; those sites exist! We should be warned about them, and parents should know they are out there so they can protect their children from them.

116. In those same prophecies, the Lord also said that there are useful reasons to be on the Internet, that there is good there too. Perhaps some FGAs forget those parts of the messages therefore and they look down on the younger ones who want to spend time on the Web. They shouldn't, if the young ones are using the Web in a responsible manner.

117. On the other hand, some teens and young people do misuse it; they go to sites that are detrimental to their spirits, or they spend too much time online, and it shows in their lives and their interaction with others in the Home. Other young folks seem to feel that anything they do is okay and no adult should ever question them, and when they are questioned, they get all riled up and angry. That's not right either. They need an attitude change just as much as some of the adults do.

118. Overall, it seems that the problem lies in the two extremes. There are FGAs who have a very rigid, and even extreme outlook on things, and they're very vocal about it when they feel a young person is stepping out of line. That is wrong. On the other side, there are young people who feel that any interference from an adult is unfair, that those who correct them are just self-

righteous old bottles, and they can be quite vocal about their off attitudes too. That is also wrong.

119. I believe that the majority of Family adults and young people have a pretty good balance in their interaction with each other. While they may not be the best of friends or want to do everything together, at least they can understand their differences, and in spite of them, can work together in relative harmony, getting the job done for the Lord.

120. The way I see the problem is that those who are on the extreme edges—both adults and young people—are vocal about their differences. They exaggerate, they blast one another, they soon begin to hate the other age group, and seldom have a good thing to say, or even a positive thought about the other generation. Those who are this way, whether young or old, may feel they're justified in being so, but they're not! They need to get prayer. They need to get serious with the Lord about the attitudes they have that are seriously wrong. They need to get over their bitterness by forgiving, in their heart, all the wrongs they feel have been inflicted upon them by those of the other generation. Daniel, this may include you.

OK, so how about some music? She would like to listen to something good for a change. FTTs??? Excuse me when I say I'd rather listen to the sound of a constipated baby crying.

The music that gets out to us in the form of "FTTs" is so wack, the style is so dated, not to mention less-than-original sounding, that it just plain doesn't appeal to you. I realize that a lot of work and effort goes into these "FTTs," but I honestly don't know why they bother. I can't remember the last time I listened to an FTT. Come to think of it, none of my friends can either. When I say that none of the teens I have met ever listen to FTTs personally and enjoy them, I truly mean NONE! I don't mean to say that I can do any better myself. Not at all, there

are many talented people working on the Family tapes. I'm just saying that the style of the "Family Teen Tapes" is something that I've seen only my parents and young children enjoy.

The Family makes excellent music for kids and adults alike. But we just haven't produced anything that young people want so far.

And it's not that you don't want to listen to Family music. Some people (usually FGAs) interpret the young people's rejection of FTTs to be a form of rejection towards the Family or Family items and/or values. That's not the case.

It's just that "Family music" in its present state doesn't appeal to young people. I think that that statement is almost literally a proven and well-known fact!

121. You know, Daniel, I think your statements here are going to offend a number of very hard-working folks, namely the musicians. Mama and I are sorry our hard-working, faithful musicians have to even read your comments. In addition, I think that some young folks aren't going to appreciate you saying that they don't like the FTTs. You're putting words in their mouths and declaring that your musical tastes are theirs. I know you're young, but young or not, to state in a letter that you've sent far and wide that you'd rather listen to the sound of a constipated baby crying than FTT music is pretty high on the unloving scale. If I were a musician, I'd be pretty bothered.

122. To state that none of the teens you've met ever listen to FTTs personally and enjoy them quite honestly stretches reality. Sure, some people don't like the music on the FTTs, but generally there are songs on the tapes that people like, and others that they don't like. But to say that nobody you know either listens to or likes FTT music implies that they dislike every single song. I doubt it.

123. Daniel, have you ever considered that maybe those teens you know just don't want to

tell you that they like such-and-such a song because they're afraid that you're going to rail on them? Maybe you intimidate them. Since you're vehemently against this music and apparently are vocal about it, could they just be choosing to say they dislike it all so as not to incur your wrath or ridicule? Think about it.

124. You're wrong when you say, "We just haven't produced anything that young people want so far." We've received lots of unsolicited comments from young people, some of which have been published, saying that they love certain songs. Some of our songwriters are extremely popular with our young folks. Simply stated, there are young people who do listen to and enjoy the FTTs, at least the songs on them that are the style they personally like.

125. Let's talk about the FTTs. Do I like all the songs on them? No. Do I like many? Yes, some I'd say are really good, even classic. Some I think are not so great because they're not my preferred style; I don't care for them, and I never listen to them. From talking to the SGAs I find that that's their opinion as well, that some songs appeal to them and others don't. I've also seen that as the SGAs get older, less and less of the FTT songs appeal to them. Some SGAs have commented on this fact to Mama and me, and they've even suggested that we stop producing such music. But each time we've prayed about it, the Lord has brought out the point that the SGAs are not the target audience. FTT stands for Family Teen Tapes (now called TCDs—teen CDs). I believe the emphasis is supposed to be on the word teen. The fact that some of the music appeals to older age groups is a bonus.

126. By the time you're older, like an SGA, you're supposed to have hit a certain level of maturity, which I'm glad to say most have. You're supposed to have made a commitment to discipleship and to all that it entails. Feeling like you're being deprived because the Family doesn't produce music that suits your particular tastes seems a bit on the immature side to me. As a 21-plus-year-old disciple, there should be other matters that are more important in your life.

127. That's not to say that you shouldn't enjoy music, but by that age you need to be making some decisions. You need to decide if you believe what the Lord has said about the good well, the brackish well, and the poisonous well when it comes to music. (ML #3022:27-40, Lifelines 22.) You need to decide if you're going to apply the Word even if it goes contrary to your personal desires. Remember, that's part of being a disciple.

128. Perhaps, Daniel, you need to look at the FTTs for what they are. Producing this music provides an alternative to System music, especially for the 12 to 16-year-old group to whom music is very important. For the rest of us it offers us a selection of songs from which we can choose music that suits our tastes. While there are some songs that might not appeal to you, they do appeal to someone else. Most of us simply copy the songs we like and listen to those while never listening to the others that are not the style that we particularly care for.

129. You may hate the music that so-and-so musician or such-and-such a studio produces, but you can be sure that there are others around the world who like or even love it. That's just how it is. Musical taste is subjective and each person has his or her own likes and dislikes. Personally, I think you should thank the Lord that our musicians produce the music they do, and that while few might like it all, almost everyone likes and listens to some of it.

130. However, maybe we should stop producing FTTs. Maybe they've outlived their usefulness. There are some of our counselors who think so. They feel that people don't like and don't appreciate them and that the funds could be better used for something else. Maybe they're right. We're going to try to find out by putting a poll on the MO site to ask about this. We'll see what our young people feel about the music produced by our Family musicians.

131. The bottom line, though, is that we'll never produce music on a regular basis that keeps up with the System. We have a handful of studios with maybe about 30 musicians total. Mama and I are very proud of our studio musi-

cians; we feel they've done a tremendous job under difficult circumstances. They've made many sacrifices that you can't possibly be aware of, Daniel. These musicians are missionaries and disciples, whose commission is to produce music that preaches our Family message. The System has thousands and thousands of studios with tens of thousands of musicians who pump out music on a daily basis. Today's musical style is often obsolete in a year's time. Even their musicians can't keep up with the new styles; instead, new musicians playing a new style arrive on the music world scene on a regular basis.

132. Making hit music is not our main ministry. We are disciples, we have goals, and our music is meant to reflect and promote those goals. For the most part, our musicians do a wonderful job producing such music. If it doesn't suit your tastes, I'm sorry. Perhaps you need to reevaluate your musical tastes. Or maybe you need to evaluate whether music has grown more important to you than discipleship.

You would most certainly like to go out two-by-two. But the only other person on WNR is your brother, and he sleeps WNR away ... I can't imagine why. Or can I?

By now she really can't think of much to do. Either she can't, because of the "rules," or it costs money. But tomorrow's another day. Got to press on ...

Movies, music, games, sex, going out on Saturday night, spending money ... all stuff that some people have more or less than others, depending on circumstances. But we can all do without it for the sake of the Family, right? Perhaps sometimes, or even most of the time for some, but you will remember what Dad said: "All work and no play makes a dull student, and an even worse witness."

133. I agree with Dad, that's for sure. See, Daniel, you are looking at it all with a negative slant. To me what you're really saying is, "I can't watch whatever movie I want, I can't listen to

whatever music I want, I can't play games whenever I want, I can't have sex with whomever I want, I can't go party on Saturday night, and I don't have as much spending money as I want."

134. And you're right! As a disciple there are some limitations. But the fact is that as a disciple in the Family you can watch movies, listen to music, play games, have sex, spend the money the Lord has given, and if you can't go out on Saturday night because you're witnessing, usually you have some other night free in which to relax. Believe me, there are plenty of religions where you can't do any of those things. We can enjoy those things, although there are some limitations and rules. Maybe you need to try to look at life in the Family from the positive point of view rather than the negative.

Skipping, skipping, skipping.... It is now next year.

This girl in my story was one of my best friends. Now she is out of the Family. She came to visit for a day, and of course I wanted to see her.

In the course of our conversation I ask, "Hey, what happened?" "What made you leave the Family?" I ask. She was always stronger than most of us, dedicated, just basically a great person.

When she tells me her all-too-familial story, I just look down and shake my head.

See, we've all lived this.

Granted, it is better now than it was before, when we (as kids) would get literally beaten for not standing in line, have duct tape stretched across our faces when talking out of turn, or be on "silence restriction" 24 hours a day for weeks on end. Then of course there was the "paddle designer." On request of some adults, this "Paddle Designer" would design wooden paddles, carve them out, drill holes in them and sometimes suggest that they be wet before used as to maximize the pain as much as possible. I remember watching a kid get repeatedly spanked so hard

that his skin literally busted and began to bleed. I don't know precisely what the legal definition of "child abuse" is in your country, but in most places, if you do that, you get locked up for a long, long time. I don't really have a problem now with the brutal punishments we received as kids. It is a little hard to feel friendly living around the same adults who a few years back went out of their way to physically hurt you. Some even seemed to enjoy applying corporal discipline.

135. I agree that anyone who was handled in the manner you describe was treated horribly. If such treatment were to happen in the Family today it would be severely dealt with and would result in excommunication. Such violent discipline is wrong and not acceptable. It shouldn't have happened; unfortunately, in the past, it did in some instances. Mama and I are very sorry about that. We've apologized in a number of Letters, and we'll take this opportunity to apologize again. We're very sorry these things happened and we apologize to you and anyone else who was disciplined by anyone in a harsh manner.

136. As you know, we published the "Family Discipline Guidelines" eight years ago in May 1994, which banned all harsh discipline and gave clear guidelines as to what was acceptable child discipline within our Family Homes. Our prayer is that such discipline will never again happen within the Family, and that those who were harshly disciplined will find it in their hearts to forgive those who disciplined them in this manner.

137. It's understandable that it would be difficult to feel friendly towards adults who disciplined you harshly many years ago. It might be hard to forgive them. If these folks' past actions affect your interaction with them, then you should seek the Lord about it. Maybe you should let some other adult in the Home know that you're struggling with this so they can pray for you and offer some advice. Maybe you should talk to the person and explain that you're hav-

ing a difficult time with the past. I would imagine that this person has also had to come to grips with the past and ask the Lord and others for forgiveness. They probably don't know that their past actions are bothering you today, and if they did, they would probably apologize to you too and ask your forgiveness.

138. If you are in such a situation, seek help. Ask the Lord to speak to you, and speak to your shepherd or another adult about it, and consider speaking with the FGA concerned.

139. If you're struggling with resentment over the past, the bottom line is that you need to forgive, as difficult as it is. In forgiving, you're not only obeying the Lord's admonition to forgive even "seventy times seven"; it also benefits you as it helps to heal the hurts of the past. Forgiving those who've wronged you helps release the grip of those past events on your life and sets you free to move unhindered into the future. It brings you peace of mind and heart. It may be hard, but forgiving is beneficial in every way.

140. I believe that for the most part, those of you who were harshly disciplined probably have forgiven those who hurt you. As you've grown older and have seen such treatment banned within the Family, you realize that these folks went way overboard in their discipline and that it was wrong, but you've been able to forgive. We also trust that those who administered such discipline have honestly seen the error of their ways and have repented.

141. If you haven't forgiven those who wronged you in the past, then I ask that you take it to the Lord and ask Him to speak to you about it. My prayer is that you can find it in your heart to forgive those who've hurt you in any way, as the only way to put it completely behind you is to forgive. By asking you to forgive, I'm not in any way taking the side of those who may have done these things or justifying their behavior. It's a Scriptural admonition that you are to forgive, even if you were wronged. As difficult as this is, it's possible. Even if you've felt it's impossible to let go of these resentful feelings, because you know that what you or others suffered was wrong, please seriously consider

that with the power of the keys, it is possible to let it go, to forgive, and to move on. As the Lord promised, "Through the keys of the Kingdom you can forgive anything."

142. These things don't happen in the Family anymore; that person who was harsh with you no longer is, and they no longer discipline others harshly. I'm sure that if you spoke with that person, you would find them to be sorry for the past. But regardless of whether they apologize, or whether they received some discipline for their actions, the only way you can get over it is to forgive them.

143. It's also important to remember that all discipline isn't wrong, and all discipline that was meted out in your lifetime wasn't wrong or unjustified. If it was harsh, then it shouldn't have happened; but much of the discipline of the past wasn't harsh, and in many cases it was good and needed.

144. Another point is that just because many countries have recently passed laws that make corporal punishment illegal, it doesn't mean that those laws are right. If you live in one of those countries, then you live under those laws; but regardless of man's laws, it's important to remember that God's Word allows for corporal punishment. As such, we allow some mild corporal punishment, but the type of punishment you described above is way overboard, and as you know, it does not happen within the Family today; if it did, the offenders would risk excommunication.

And I know my mom was forced to go "FFing." There's another lady who has a kid from some "shepherd" who forced himself on her (also commonly called "rape"). It's a common enough joke nowadays in the Family. We used to kid around with each other on the FFing topic, and the most common summary of those times would probably be a line like, "It's okay to have sex for money as long as you talk about Jesus!" I know it's a nasty joke, but it has more than just a ring of truth to it.

145. Daniel, it is a nasty joke, and it slaps every woman in the Family right in the face who ever used FFing as a witnessing tool. It degrades the faith they had in laying down their lives for lost souls. It degrades every husband in the Family who ever sacrificed their loved one to someone for the purpose of saving their soul. Who in the world do you think you are to make such a statement? You have no idea the sacrifice our women made to win souls in that manner. You have no idea what it cost them. You and others mock them today, which is part of the price they have to pay for their wonderful faith. You should be totally ashamed of yourself. I sure am ashamed of you!

146. I don't know your mother, but quite frankly I question your take on her being "forced." If she was forced to go FFing, it wasn't right. Chances are, like most of the women who FFed, they chose to follow the Word and did it as unto the Lord, to win souls, even though it was the ultimate sacrifice.

147. When FFing came out, I wasn't living with Dad and Mama. In our Home we read the Letters, we prayed, and we employed this as a new witnessing tool. Nobody forced us to do it. We chose to and it worked. Souls were won. Men who would have never gotten saved any other way received the Lord because the "preacher" was someone who didn't just talk about Jesus and His sacrifice, but someone who lived it, who sacrificed to bring them the truth. You might mock FFing and you might think you know all about it, but let me tell you this: When your mother, and the mothers of all our SGAs, arrive in Heaven, there are going to be men there who kneel at their feet and pledge their eternal gratitude for the sacrifice your mom and other Family women and their husbands made to get them into Heaven.

148. And if some folks went a bit overboard, if they got too money-minded in the matter, so what! They were out preaching the Gospel, they were winning souls, they were sacrificing, and until you're willing to make equal sacrifices to serve the Lord and to win souls, then I think you should take your nasty jokes and ... well,

I'm a Christian so I won't say what I feel in this case! You should show your mother and all of our FGA women the respect they deserve, instead of making fun of them, offending them, and mocking them, all because you think it's so cool to joke about something you would never have the faith or conviction to do, and that you obviously don't even understand!

149. You are so down on the adults for all of their attitudes, but let me tell you, you've got a bad case of attitude on this one. Personally, I think you should apologize to any of the women around you whom you have offended by your lousy attitude in this matter. Are you man enough, Daniel?

There was some sexual abuse when I was growing up. I know why we deny it, but I don't know why we try to lie to our children and ourselves. I saw some myself and heard of quite a few more instances.

150. Daniel, I wonder if you read the GNs. Maybe the problem is that you were a bit younger when we acknowledged that sexual contact between adults and minors has occurred in the past. Maybe you missed reading the five Letters in which Mama and I, as well as Dad from the spirit world, not only acknowledged it, but apologized for it. (See "Our Beliefs Concerning the Lord's Law of Love," ML #2858:50-51, published in 6/93; "An Answer to Him That Asketh Us," ML #3016:18-20, 52-56, published in 9/95; Mama's Letter to Former Members in "Bridging the Gap," ML #3068:101-108, published in 8/96; "An Open Letter to All Current and Former Family Members," ML #3091:3,10h, 15-22, published in 12/96; "None of These Things Move Me," ML #3307:65-66, published in 9/00.)

151. Daniel, we don't deny that these things happened. We don't lie to our children and ourselves. You're wrong on both those points. We've made it plenty clear, and have for years, that sexual contact between adults and minors is not acceptable, that those who engage in it

will be excommunicated, and we have excommunicated such folks over the years.

152. We don't deny it happened. We've said it did, we've apologized, we've set very strict rules in place, and we excommunicate anyone who does it—and everyone knows this!—Except in this case you, who must have missed reading these Letters. Perhaps before making such mis-statements, you should do what we've been advising for years: go to the Word and see what it says. Had you done this, you would have seen that your accusations along this line are false.

Once I walked in on an older man trying to get a little girl to do something oral on him in the bathroom. He threatened me with a beating (to put it simply) if I talked.

I was young (and stupid). I went and told someone who was our shepherd at the time.

(This "shepherd" by the way, was, and still is considered a rather high-ranking, famous "icon" in the Family).

Of course I was surprised, but most of all horrified to be brought into a room a day later where I got 10 swats from the pervert and my shepherd for "my wrong attitudes."

I had dark bruises on me from that spanking and couldn't sit down in class.

When I was asked to "sit down like the rest of the children," I explained that I couldn't because I was very sore from a spanking. I got yanked up, marched out, and received some more swats for my "insolence." I think it took me about a month before I wasn't in pain after that.

153. If this happened as you said, then Mama and I think it was terrible. We sincerely apologize to you and ask that you forgive us that you weren't protected from such things happening years ago. It must have been very confusing and disturbing for you. If the shepherd involved gave you the swats for reporting this incident, then he was wrong, plain and simple. I'm very

sorry for the girl involved and for any young person who has experienced anything like this at all. If you have suffered something like this, please ask the Lord to speak to you about it. I'm sure He will have words of comfort to speak to you, as well as assurance that any such actions are not tolerated in the Family. Please don't let these past wrongs continue to negatively affect you today. Accept our apology, bring it to the Lord, and let Him wash the hurt away.

This is just one personal experience. I can count more than six girls I know that were quite literally raped by other Family members and have gotten not even a form of apology.

154. If anyone was raped, it was wrong. It was not in accordance with the Law of Love, and anyone who committed such an act was wrong; it was sin.

155. Your letter doesn't state who was guilty of rape. You said, "other Family members." I'm glad you didn't single out FGAs, although it's a serious offense whether it's committed by an FGA or an SGA. Perhaps you've heard, as I have, that a number of our young women have experienced what would be called "date rape" by some of our second-generation men. Most incidents involve alcohol. The young man and woman are at a dance or party, they drink a bit, they start making out, they end up in bed. The boy wants to go all the way, and the girl doesn't want to. The boy takes advantage of the situation and goes ahead and forces himself on her. Of course, he feels bad about it later, and sometimes will tell her he's sorry. The girl usually doesn't report it to the shepherds, but forgives. I'm glad she forgives, but I do feel it should be reported to the shepherds and the young man should be disciplined, as he's violated the Charter and the Law of Love, and has forced someone to do something they didn't want to. It's very unloving and wrong.

156. These things happen. It's bad. When a girl says no, then it means no. If a woman of any age doesn't want to fuck, then the man

should not, under any circumstances, fuck her. Got it? I'll say it again. No means no.

157. The guidelines in the "Law of Love" GNs and the Charter are very clear about this.

You should pray about your dates and you must agree beforehand if you're going to go all the way. If you don't talk about it, then that automatically means no fucking. In other words, if you don't actually decide together ahead of time that you're going to fuck, the foregone conclusion is no fucking, even if as your time together progresses you feel like fucking. The question of fucking shouldn't even come up unless you have prayerfully decided together before the sexual contact even starts that you agree together that you will fuck and that you are willing to take responsibility for the outcome, which could mean a baby.

158. The problem is that some dates happen spontaneously, especially after a party or dance when those involved have been drinking.

The same rules apply in those situations; you still need to talk about it. And even if you have discussed it ahead of time and agreed to fuck, but the woman changes her mind and says no during your lovemaking, then her wishes need to be followed. If a man forces himself on a woman, he is wrong. He has sinned. That is not loving, that is not "willing consent," that is against the Law of Love and the Charter and should be punished accordingly!

A friend of mine got partially excommunicated not long ago. What I really didn't like was seeing my friend get partial excom for something he didn't do. Actually I was there, and he didn't do anything.

I wrote the office later, asking why would they place someone on punishment when he and others denied doing anything wrong?

Oh, I forgot ... they had "asked the Lord!" Therefore he had told them that he was guilty as accused and that I should leave it at that. Umm ... yeah, let me repeat. "I WAS THERE!" That means I saw what happened. Makes me hope

that that VS/CRO/ABM or whatever works on his channel with the Lord.

159. This is difficult to answer, Daniel, because I don't have all the facts and there is no way I can get all of the facts, since your letter is anonymous. If I were to receive a letter from you or the boy who was put on partial excommunication claiming the right of redress, I would do what the Charter says, which is to conduct a thorough investigation. Our administrative department would take care of asking the boy about the situation. They'd see what grounds the COs had for partially excommunicating him. They'd find out where the information about what this boy allegedly came from, as someone must have reported it. They'd communicate with you and others who were there, to see if what he was accused of was true, and if you were in a position to know if it was true or not. They'd delve into the details, such as whether you were with him every minute during this time, or whether it was something that happened at a party, for example, where you might have been out of his presence for part of the time, etc. They'd read the prophecies received about the matter and would ask the Lord as well. Of course, none of this can happen since your letter is anonymous and the boy who was put on partial never claimed the right of redress.

160. I would imagine that if this boy was wrongly given partial excommunication for something he didn't do, that he would write us about it, claiming a right of redress. (Most right of redress requests should be sent to the COs, with a copy to Mama and me, if you like. But in this case, since the COs passed the judgment, the right of redress request would need to be sent to Mama and me.) Since he didn't write, it makes me wonder if perhaps he did something which warranted being put on partial, even though you don't think he did.

161. However, I would venture to say that COs wouldn't partially excommunicate someone based only on a prophecy. I would think that the COs felt there was reasonable guilt, and sufficient evidence in the form of others who

were there, who said the event did happen, and that the prophecy was simply a confirmation.

162. But like I said, I can only speculate since there are no facts available to me. I don't know what the boy did. I don't know why the COs made that decision. I don't know what the prophecy said. All the information that is available to me is you saying it was unfair, that you were there, and that the COs got a prophecy saying this boy was guilty and partially excommunicated him based on the prophecy. Those aren't enough facts to make any kind of judgment.

163. You seem to be making the case that the COs made this decision based only on prophecy; I would tend to think otherwise. In any case, one thing I know is that neither the COs nor any other Family officers are perfect. They can make mistakes. This is why we included the right of redress in the Charter. If either you or the boy felt he was unjustly punished, you could have formally claimed a right of redress and the matter would have been reviewed. In this case, since it involved a CO, you or he should have written us. As far as I know, neither you nor he did. You say you wrote the office—did you make it clear that you were claiming a right of redress? If you weren't satisfied with the outcome, you should have written us. I'm sorry if this boy was unjustly accused and punished. But then I don't know that he was, since I have no facts to go on.

164. In matters of this sort, I have learned that everyone doesn't always tell the truth. Many times people are confronted with an accusation that they committed an excommunicable offense, and they deny it. Sometimes they deny it over and over, only to later admit that it was true. I know of situations where a person and their friends say an incident never happened, when in fact it did.

165. There was a case a while back of some boys who were accused of excommunicable offenses but who had denied committing them to several different officers who questioned them. One of the COs prayed about the matter and the Lord, in prophecy, said that the boys did it and were lying. When the CO told the boys what the Lord had said, they confessed.

166. I'm glad the COs pray and hear from the Lord about excommunications. They should. They should follow all the procedures spelled out in the Charter about excommunication. And if someone feels misjudged, then that person should formally claim a right of redress. That's the check and balance system within the Charter.

The reason I mention these things at all, is that I don't understand how it could be OK for FGA adults who (even admittedly) did things like that, or at least turned a blind eye to many of these types of things, could still have such a huge problem with young people having a little independence. It kind of seems like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel to me.

But hey! We don't care! I do want to serve the Lord and others. The past is all behind me.

The Family is in my blood and is my upbringing. I don't know what I'd do if I left.

It would take out what I believe in, the things that I have tried to live for so long!

But now as I sit and talk to my friend, I can hardly keep from crying. See, she also feels like I do.

She feels guilt for giving up and thinks about her struggling parents. But I think she can only take so much. Perhaps it was too long without any real fun, human affection, or even just a break.

167. I'm sorry for her, and I pray that if she has chosen to follow a different path, that the Lord will protect her, supply her needs, and help her to find all that she's looking for in life. I'm thankful that she served the Lord with us for all these years, and I know she must have done some real good in the world. God bless her.

168. As far as her being without any real fun, human affection, or even just a break, I'm sorry that she didn't find those things within her Home. There is certainly opportunity for

those things in the Family. I know many folks who have real fun, who have sufficient affection, and do take a break when possible, and I'm sure if you looked at it objectively you would admit that you do too. If this young woman was in a Home where there was no fun, no affection, and no breaks, then I'm sorry for her. It sounds like her Home had some problems—at least according to your account—and I'm sorry that she didn't decide to go to another Home instead of leaving the Family.

169. But again, Daniel, if you're trying to make the case that the Family doesn't allow fun, affection, or any breaks from work, then I don't buy it. I'd be the first to admit that not every Home is a barrel of laughs, where fun just oozes from everyone's pores. Certainly most Homes don't have tons of young people who are all the same age who can have sex together or even lots of fellowship, and some Homes are probably not managed as well as they should be, and thus some people don't get enough time off. But to insinuate, as you do, that the whole Family is that way, and that as an organization we are against fun, affection, and time off, simply is not true.

CVC diplomas don't do much for you anywhere outside the States, or even in the States, for that matter.

170. This is another one of those statements that makes me wonder how much you read Family pubs. There are quite a few published testimonies that testify that CVC diplomas do carry weight in the U.S. and other countries. Many folks take the courses, get diplomas, and use them as a proof of their academic achievements. It seems to me that you have a bit of prejudice against the CVC, and judging from your comments thus far, I wonder how much you really know about the CVC and what it's all about.

My friend has no bank account, no real documented education, no credit history, and not even ID beyond a passport.

171. Daniel, you make it sound as if it's some terrible thing if you don't have a bank account, credit history, or ID other than a passport. Did you know that lots of young people in the world who first leave home don't have bank accounts or credit histories? Generally speaking, if you have a little money, you can go open a bank account. After a while, if you borrow money, or buy something on time payments, you will build a credit history. If you have a passport and a birth certificate, you can generally get a local ID quite easily. It's not a crime or even unusual not to have these things, and it's not rocket science to get them.

172. Again, Daniel, you're trying to make it sound like the Family is grossly negligent by not making sure our 20-year-olds have bank accounts or credit histories! When, in fact, any young person in the Family is free to open a bank account if they so desire, with the consent of their Home; or if their opening of a bank account doesn't involve or impact the Home in any way, they're free to pray and make that choice on their own.

173. As for this girl having no documented education, I can imagine that in some cases, and perhaps in hers, that might be true. This doesn't mean that she didn't receive an education, but most likely that it wasn't documented properly. That's sad. According to the Charter, parents are required to document their children's education. Even before it was a Charter rule, parents were encouraged to document their kids' education. Perhaps hers didn't, which I'm sorry about.

174. On the other hand, since 1995, seven years ago, it's been in the Charter that any young person has the right, with their parents' agreement, to work toward a high school diploma or obtain other academic credentials through testing, and with Home approval, participate in any suitable educational program. This means that since the time this girl was 13 she had the right to do so. Something that I find kind of odd is that some of our young people really gripe when they leave the Family that they don't have any diploma and that the Family is

at fault; however, when they were in the Family they made no effort nor even showed interest in getting their diplomas or certification of any kind.

175. Believe me, if we made a rule today that every young person had to get a high school diploma, there would be a howl from a lot of our 16 to 20-year-olds. Who knows, Daniel, if such a rule were in place, you might have included it in your letter, showing how it was bad somehow.

No father listed on her birth certificate and no school records ... basically not even enough stuff to get a phone line installed legally or rent a movie from Blockbuster. Sorry, Daniel, quite an exaggeration, wouldn't you say? So she gets the \$5.55/hour job. She lives in a hostel with four other strangers. Boyfriend? Yes! Does he love her? She doesn't think so, but, hey, at least there's someone now there at night when you need someone to grab onto.

176. I'm assuming that this is her first job. For some reason you seem to think that she should have gotten some top job paying big money. In case you didn't know, many people's first job isn't a top grosser. Young people often start at the bottom of the pay scale and work their way up over the years. That's how the job market is worldwide. She's just beginning and will eventually probably get a promotion or raise, or if she's unhappy, will need to find another job. That's just the way it works. Thankfully, most of our young people who leave the Family end up with a decent job and do pretty well. Is it handed to them on a silver platter? No, they work hard for it, just like everyone else in the System has to.

177. You know, Daniel, life is hard. Not everyone in the world has a great paying job; not everyone has a lot of money. Be realistic, think of the poor people in the System. Lots of them go through their whole lives without someone to love them. Some grow up without a father,

some parents divorce, some folks don't have credit histories, some go bankrupt, some suffer hardship, have no friends, no money, no affection. There are people in the world who don't ever get to see a movie or who never have time off, who never get to go out and party, and drink, have a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc. Life is like that for some people. It's hard.

178. My feeling is that you've had it pretty good on the whole. My guess is that you have what on average in the world would be considered a fairly middle-class life. Sure, you're not rich and you can't have anything you want, but neither can the majority of the people of the world. You probably have enough food and fairly decent clothes. You obviously have access to a computer. I'm sure your Home has a TV and video machine, probably a CD player or tape recorder as well; in fact, you might have your own. You aren't out there working your fingers to the bone day in and day out under a demanding boss who could care little or nothing about you personally. You have salvation, you have faith, you have the power of prayer, you have friends, and you have people around you who love you, who will help you, who will listen to you. By comparison to the majority of the world, you have it pretty good.

179. I guess what bothers me is that you insinuate that everything that's difficult in this girl's life is the Family's fault. That if she—or you, for that matter—can't have everything just the way you want it, that the Family is to blame. Somehow you seem to think that everything that's bad or difficult or doesn't allow you to do exactly what you want is because of the Family. Well, believe it or not, there are billions of people who have never heard of the Family and they suffer hardship in their lives. They don't get everything they want out of life either. That's how life is. Whether you're in or out of the Family, you're not going to have everything you want.

When I talked to an adult about the person I mentioned above and how sad I was to see such a good person leave, he shrugged and said, "Heck, not every-

one makes it,” and this adult turned and left after suggesting that I not keep in touch with “backsliders!” Mentalities like these are just what I’m talking about.

180. For anyone to respond this way is certainly insensitive and unloving. Mama has written plenty about the proper attitude to have toward those who leave.

181. Mama and I don’t like to use the word “backsliders” for those who leave the Family, and we’ve stopped using it in the pubs in recent years. Those who leave have decided, for whatever personal reason, that the Family isn’t the place for them. That’s their choice. We respect that.

182. It bugs me when people outside the Family speak ill of the Family, and it bugs me when people in the Family speak ill of those who decide to leave. For many it’s a difficult decision to leave the Family. They know they’re entering a completely different society than the one they’ve been in for years. They face a whole new life, with different challenges and problems, and it can be scary. We’ve been trying to help the Family understand this and have encouraged them to show love and compassion, to be helpful, to not be condemning. For the most part it seems that Family members have changed their mindsets about those who leave. Apparently some haven’t, which is sad.

If I was to go out now to just chill and have a relaxing time, I stand in danger of breaking several Charter rules. Let’s say I want to go with my girlfriend to the movies, then a club, let loose, have a great time and come home. I may as well be accused of “not minimizing ungodly influences,” “overdrinking,” “watching unedifying movies” and “listening to ungodly music.” But goodness, all we wanted to do was go out and spend some time together! I don’t feel further from the Lord after I had watched a movie that just so happened to not be “rated” yet. I don’t think God’s going to judge me for having more than

1½ bottles or whatever amount of beer that we’re allowed to drink.

183. Daniel, I suppose that once in a while, with the Lord’s confirmation and in counsel with your shepherds, you and your girlfriend could enjoy a night out like you’ve explained. I can see that you could go to a movie and a club for a drink and some dancing without it being a big no-no. But I wouldn’t recommend it on a regular basis, because even though you might not feel further from the Lord, if you were to engage in that kind of recreation frequently, you would eventually be pulled further from the Lord.

184. That’s why those rules and guidelines were put in the Charter—not because it’s necessarily wrong in all cases—to have a night out like you explained, but because if you make a habit of overdrinking, not minimizing ungodly influences, watching unedifying movies, and listening to ungodly music, you will definitely be weakened spiritually. It’s a spiritual law that you can’t take all that in without being affected. “Can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned?” (Pro.6:27). At this point in our history, we should be striving to be closer to the Lord and more in tune with Him—not to see how close to the edge we can live. The goal is “full possession” so we can have the full power the Lord knows we need. I doubt that discos, booze, unedifying movies and System music help you toward that end.

There’s a 17-year-old guy I know who is as sweet as hell! He stays with a family only because he feels that it’s the “right” thing to do. This family has a lot of kids and he’s the only teen there. I don’t think he’s even kissed a girl for years. He’s a great guy and we talk often.

Sometimes he jokes with me how he’s going on 18 and about what he hasn’t “done” with a girl. We all know he’s not a bad-looking guy; in fact, there’s like three girls in the neighborhood that constantly let him know he’s “welcome anytime.” Of course that’s out of the question, be-

cause he tries to abide by the rules, even though he probably knows that he's less likely to get caught having much more risky sex with an outsider than what eventually happened, which is this:

A little while ago, a cute 15-year-old girl stayed temporarily at the Home. Yeah, they kissed or something and he got slapped with six months babe's status. Six months!!! That's a LONG time, if you've ever been on babe's status. Basically what it boils down to is six months of misery, six months of no fun whatsoever. Yes, he did break the rules. I can't deny that. But you do have to admit that it was pretty hard for the fella to be good. He called later and during the course of our conversation asked me: "Hey dude. I did the wrong thing, didn't I? Did I really mess up?"

I didn't know what to say. See, he did "break a rule." That's for sure. Although I am leaning towards saying that I think he did what just about anyone else would have done in the same situation.

185. To start with, Daniel, for the past seven years there hasn't been anything called Babes Status. There are only two forms of this kind of discipline—Probationary Status, which the Home gives an offending member, which has a maximum of three months, or partial excommunication, which can last up to six months. In this case it seems that the boy received partial excommunication for his offense.

186. If this 17-year-old guy was kissing the 15-year-old and got six months partial excommunication for it, then someone wasn't reading and following the Charter, because he wasn't breaking any rules if the parents of the girl were okay with it. Of course, you are a bit unclear about what happened, "they kissed or something." If the "something" was intercourse, or skin-to-skin genital touching, then, yes, he broke the rule and should receive partial excommunication, which could be for up to six months.

If they were fooling around and they both had orgasms, but they both kept their clothes on and didn't have any skin-to-skin genital contact, and her parents were okay with it, then they didn't break the rule.

187. I have my doubts that this fellow got six months for just kissing her. If he did, it was wrong. But if he had full sex with her, or there was skin-to-skin genital touching, then he may have gotten such a punishment. I know six months on partial excommunication is tough; it's supposed to be. It's there as a deterrent, to keep people from doing things they shouldn't.

188. We have this rule in place for a reason. 14- and 15-year-olds are minors; they're under their parents' care because they're young and they need protection. As explained earlier, we allow sex in the Family, but we must have rules in place to help people act in a loving manner and protect people from unloving actions.

189. We realize that 14- and 15-year-olds would like to be able to have a little sexual activity, and we allow it with other teens ages 14 through 17. But, as smart as those 14- and 15-year-olds may be, in most cases they aren't mature enough to deal with the consequences of full sex, and therefore they aren't allowed to make the decision to have full sex or skin-to-skin genital contact.

190. Our rule on this is more lenient than that of many countries, and certainly the most lenient of any Christian religion. But lenient or not, we simply can't allow 14- and 15-year-olds to be having serious sexual contact with 17-year-olds. Even if we thought it was a good idea, which we don't, we still couldn't allow it, because young people that age are under the jurisdiction of their parents, and we'd be overriding their parents' wishes. That's why it's made clear in the Charter that any dating for 14- and 15-year-olds is up to the parents, and if they don't agree, then the teens involved can face disciplinary action if they go ahead.

191. I'm sorry that your friend hasn't been able to kiss anyone for years, and I admire him for not having sex with outsiders. I'm sorry he broke the rules, which it seems he did, as in

more than kissing. But you have to understand, Daniel, that there are rules in place for a reason—in this case, to protect the younger ones.

The Family chat site just got closed recently. All those guys (many of whom were younger teens) are going to keep chatting, right? I know that for a fact. Now the kids in my Home get on MSN chat instead, where there's a whole lot of freaks. Was that the solution? To close it down? I think not. In my humble opinion it's being pennywise and pound-foolish. But then again, it's just my opinion.

192. Thanks for expressing your opinion; it's just that I happen to disagree with you. See, you are looking at it from one point of view and I'm looking at it from another. I do understand that some of the people who used the now-closed chat site will go chat somewhere else, which is their prerogative, but at least having those who were foul-mouthed or speaking badly about the Family chatting elsewhere doesn't hurt the rest of the Family. See, what you don't know about is the complaints we received from folks who went to the chat site to fellowship with other disciples, who were disgusted by some of what was being said there.

193. People in the Family look at the Members Only site as a place to go where they're going to enjoy the company of the Family, to get pubs, see photos, download Family music, and get Family info. The majority of them aren't interested in listening to someone cut down the Family, murmur, swear, complain, etc. When they went to the chat site, that's what a lot of them saw and they complained. They asked us why it is that when they want to chat with some other Family member, they had to be subjected to what often amounted to anti-Family chats. Mama and I agreed with them. We don't allow such anti-Family tirades, constant criticism and swearing in our Homes, so why would we allow it on our website? It's not our fault that some people abused the privilege. But it eventually became a real drag, to the point that those who misused

the blessing caused the closing of the chat site for everyone.

194. We might be able to activate the chat site again in the future, but it's a lot of trouble to have to assign people to monitor it and make sure that it's not more harmful than helpful. We'll be looking at it in the future and will pray about it.

Look, I'm nobody. I'm probably worse than anyone that reads this. I don't want to come across as self-righteous and I don't mean to accuse, but I do want to see something change, because I don't feel that this can be right.

195. Daniel, I know you say you don't want to come across as self-righteous or accusing, but in fact you do come across that way. This doesn't mean that you haven't brought up some legitimate and even very good points, but you have been quite accusing in your presentation. Your points could have been better presented and would have come across in a more mature manner had you dispensed with the over-generalities and had you done your homework. You've made accusations that were simply not right. You've set scenarios that show that those who were involved were ignorant of the Charter, but in doing so, showed yourself equally ignorant. You paint with a very broad brush when insinuating that all FGAs are to blame for this or that.

196. I'm not saying this to put you down, but to try to help you see that if you had brought these matters to the Lord, if you had gone to the Word, if you had counseled with others, you could have come to many of the same conclusions that I'm bringing out. When answering you, I've had to go to the Charter and the GNs to look up and confirm what is said there to make sure I'm telling you the right thing. You could have done the same, but you didn't. To me that shows that you are upset about some things, which you feel are wrong or unfair, and instead of going to the Word to find the right answers, you wrote down your feelings in a

blaze of fury and shot off your letter to as many as you could, asking them to pass it on to others. While you bring up some valid points and point out some existing problems, you paste them between rash statements, incorrect deductions, and false accusations, all of which makes for exciting rhetoric, but very flawed logic.

197. Having said that, I do agree that some things within the Family need to change. We often get letters and reports from Family members that cause us to reevaluate our way of doing things, and we change as a result. Besides that, there are changes that need to be made in the hearts and minds of our FGAs and young people as well.

It just seems like we're an organization chock full of young people that is run by older adults who don't really understand the needs of a young person. I think that if we were doing things right, the results wouldn't be what we're getting now.

198. What you said might sound good to you and others, but I take exception to your analysis of the leadership of the Family, that it's "run by older adults who don't really understand the needs of a young person." I don't know where you live, but it's understandable that you can't see the big picture as Mama and I do. Let's examine the facts.

199. At the moment, 40% of our COs are SGAs. 31% of our VSs are SGAs, while another 12% are folks who joined the Family in their 20s and are now in their 30s. So overall, 44% of our VSs are in their 20s and 30s. At the time of writing this we don't have all the figures for the boards, but eight of the 12 worldwide regions have reported so far, and seven of those eight have SGAs as regional chairpersons. Of these seven regions, the region with the highest amount has 57% SGA regional chairpersons, and the one with the lowest is 12.5%. This means that these SGAs not only chair or co-chair the regional board for their particular pillar, but they also sit on the regional council, which basically

oversees the work of the region. We don't yet know how many SGAs sit on the national boards, but I'm pretty sure it will be a significant amount.

200. In our WS units, 46% of our members are SGAs and senior teens. Of the eight department heads, four are young people. Our publications committees are staffed by 58% SGAs, and all of the committee heads are SGAs. The Home committees within our WS Homes are made up of 54% young people. 50% of our Family administration team is made up of SGAs. The *Grapevine* is compiled and edited by an SGA, the team that spearheads *Xn* is completely young folks, the GP pubs department consists of two FGAs and four SGAs, our layout department is all SGAs, *Kidland* and *Eve* are compiled and edited by SGAs, the Web team is all SGAs and a junior teen, half of the computer team is SGAs, and many of the people Mama and I counsel with and communicate with on a regular basis are SGAs. And let me tell you, these SGAs are not Mr. and Mrs. Milquetoast when it comes to offering their opinions; they will speak up loud and clear about their feelings on Family matters, as do the SGA COs in their reports and at the summit meetings. The wonderful thing about them is that they pray, they hear from the Lord, and they are wise counselors.

201. Worldwide, at the Home level, anyone 16 and above can be a member of a Home's teamwork, which makes up the Home's leadership. We don't have the statistics as to what percentage of the teamworks around the world are second generation, but I would venture an educated guess that it's probably between 30 and 40 percent. So Daniel, the facts show that the Family is run by a pretty good mix of young and old, who probably have a pretty decent understanding of the needs of both the young and the old. You see, we depend upon a good balance of young and old throughout our complete leadership structure to govern the Family. The older generation can't do without the younger, neither can the younger do without the older; we all need each other.

I love the Family and I wanna see it stand! But I'm counting the teens that are rapidly leaving now and I want to see it stop. I heartily agree. Mama and I want to see it stop too.

I don't know if what I'm saying is totally right, but I've been to five continents and have seen a lot of people, a lot of situations, and this is my present conclusion. If we don't change something, and change it soon, there will be very few young people left in the Family. The Family will become an organization comprised mostly of people over 40, and that would be a shame to let happen.

202. It is a shame that so many young people choose to leave the Family. It's a problem that Mama and I have written quite a bit about over the years, and it's our hope that the JETT/Teen boards around the world will help find further solutions toward making serving the Lord more appealing, so when the young people reach the age of decision, they will choose to continue on in the Family. However, no matter what good changes come about as a result of the boards, we will still have people deciding to leave the Family in the future. That's natural and to be expected, since people need to make up their own minds, and serving the Lord in the Family just isn't for everyone. I'm not saying that lightly; I'm just realistically stating the facts.

Perhaps a good approach to this would be to not keep coming down hard on people for small mistakes and blunders of the mind, and quit telling people that they don't have what it takes, just because they're human. What bites the most are people who feel that because they're older, then they must be better.

203. I agree with you, Daniel, that it's not good to come down hard on people for small mistakes and blunders of the mind. In fact, Mama and I don't like to come down hard on anyone for anything; while we may hate the sin

we still love the sinner, so even when someone has blown it pretty bad, they should be handled in a loving manner. Everyone makes mistakes, everyone sins, everyone does wrong or stupid things once in a while, because, as you said, we're human.

204. When we do these wrong or stupid things, we still need love and understanding. It doesn't mean that there might not be some consequence, but even when a consequence needs to be meted out, it should still be done in love. Mama and I wish everyone in the Family understood that we're not trying to achieve personal perfection and we shouldn't expect such from others. If we do, it places unrealistic burdens on ourselves and others.

205. On the other hand, we are a faith, a religion, a radical missionary movement, and we have certain beliefs, based on the Word. We're a band of disciples who are here to do a job, and part of that job, like I said earlier, is to stay in good spiritual shape. So while I'm all for cutting someone some slack when they make a mistake or a blunder of the mind, and even when they break a behavior rule in the Charter, when someone consistently does so, or when they've made a decision to live outside of the rules of our faith, then that's a different story. That's where the Lord draws the line. That's where He has tried time and again to get people to make the choice of whether to remain in the Family or not.

206. If you want total freedom to do what you want, whenever you want, as much as you want, then the Family is not for you. If that's your goal in life, then you should realize that you will never be happy in the Family, because we do have rules and we're expected to live our lives in compliance with them. There are also the spiritual requirements of disciples; there are things the Lord expects of us, which we need to live up to as professional Christians. If someone doesn't want to try to meet those expectations, if they don't want to live according to the rules, then that's fine; it's just that they can't continue to live in the Family any more than a professional sports figure can remain on the team if he or she doesn't keep up.

207. It grieves me to hear of people demanding obedience to every jot and tittle of the “law” and punishing folks every time they step an inch out of line. But it also grieves me when folks know in their hearts that they don’t want to be disciples, and as such, continually break the rules, murmur, spread their doubts, and generally disrupt the Homes. When folks are that way, Mama and I wish they would just face up to the fact that discipleship isn’t for them and move on to the style of life they would like to live. We don’t condemn them for it; in fact, we’re glad they made the choice, because as long as they’re of that mind, but living in a Family Home, they’re often doing damage to others.

208. On the other hand, a lot of young people—and here I’m talking about the 16- and 17-year-olds—haven’t fully made a decision. The Lord has made it clear that those are turbulent years, and at that age a bit of leeway needs to be given, which led us to make a provisional Charter member contract for senior teens. We can’t expect a full discipleship standard for young people in that age group because many haven’t made a total discipleship commitment yet. Some have made the decision, while others have made the decision to try.

209. But even for the 16- and 17-year-olds, since they live in a Family Home, they still need to follow the rules. Of course, the older folks need to understand that the young people are not going to be perfect and they’re going to break the rules from time to time. And as long as they’re trying and generally doing their best, then wisdom, love, understanding, and patience should be shown them. They shouldn’t get the ax or punishment every time they fall out of line.

210. When you become a YA, then it’s time to put away childish things and to move on to your adult life. As you get older you need to make a solid decision about your life, and then do your best to live it. You’ll still blow it sometimes—everyone does—but you need to endeavor to live the discipleship life and all it entails if that is your choice.

The generation gap is there because it’s supposed to be there. It’s natural. The way God made us actually.

211. Yes, there is a natural generation gap. There is a built-in natural mechanism that kicks in when kids turn into young teens. They go through a period of questioning authority, of making their voice heard, of questioning, of rebelling against the rules and regulations, of wanting to break away from the confines of their parents and even of society. It’s part of growing up, becoming an adult.

212. It’s a difficult time for both the young person and the adults, because their relationship is changing. The young person is in the transition period to adulthood; they’re learning to make their way in an adult world. The adults need to understand this, and stand back somewhat in order to let them grow. Some adults have a hard time letting this happen; they don’t see that the relationship is changing—that while this person is not yet an adult, he or she is also no longer a child. They don’t understand when the young person wants to be different and do different things. This is something adults need to make room for. I think Mama explained it very well in “Overcoming the Generation Gap” when she said:

Now you of the older generation could make it easier on the young people by taking a little more time with them to try to understand what goes on inside their hearts and minds, and by not being so quick to judge or jump to conclusions—many of which, unfortunately, are often negative conclusions or unfair, biased judgments. If you would try to be more prayerful and led of the Spirit when working and living with the younger generation, then I think the Lord would help you have a better balance to know when you need to give them a break, to cut them a little slack, and to give them some room to just be young people, to experiment, to break free a little bit. He can also help you know when you need to rein

them in a little, or give them a little counsel or correction or a check—to give them the shepherding that they need.

You have to realize, adults, that the young people are different. The Lord has made them different than you. They want to be different and they need to be different. And we of the older generation in the Family need their youthful enthusiasm and new ideas and the infusion of life, strength, and change that comes from the new blood of the new generation. We need their strength and their radical ways of looking at things. It's good for us when they express their sincere questions and challenge the way things are done. It makes us check our hearts and policies, see and make necessary changes and improvements, and it keeps us from sinking into the horrible abyss of compromise and the apathetic status quo.

Some of you adults are going to have to just lighten up, back off a little, and let the young people breathe! Let them be young people. Let them be themselves. Let them be different, as long as what they're doing is not contrary to the Word or the Charter, or endangering or negatively affecting either themselves or others or your work for the Lord in some way. (If you shepherds have a hard time applying the counsel in the Word or the Charter, and discerning whether something the young people are doing or want to do is okay, you or they could ask the Lord. I'm sure He would be happy to give you in prophecy the specific detailed guidelines, confirmations and instruction that you need, which will fit your particular situation.) (ML #3161:29–31, Lifelines 24).

213. Daniel, while you will probably agree with the first part of what Mama said, you might be choking a bit on the last part in regards to the Charter and the Word, because of your next statement.

The reason that we have the generation gap problem in the Family is because

us teens don't agree with the rules and regulations that are being enforced on us—it's unrealistic and ultimately leads to frustration and rebellion as we have all seen time and time and time (and time) again. I'm just going to spit it out here and say what many others and I feel. The Family is too strict! There's too many rules on tiny, minute things that make life very uncomfortable for a young person.

214. As I explained earlier, in comparison to other faiths and religions, the Family is not so strict—but we do have rules and regulations. You state that there are “too many rules on tiny, minute things.” I guess part of the problem is a difference between your definition of a “tiny, minute thing” and mine. So far in your letter, and a little later on, you have brought out matters concerning sex, like sex with outsiders, sex with those out of proper age range, the two-by-two rule, going to bars, overdrinking, watching unrated movies, and listening to System music. I'm assuming since those are the topics you've been discussing, that these are what you consider “tiny, minute things.” I don't. I think some of these things are big, important issues when it comes to living a life of service to God, of discipleship, and communal living.

215. To me you're saying that the way to keep the teens in the Family is to get rid of the rules and regulations that the teens don't agree with. You may be right; we might keep more young people in the Family if we did that, but then what would the Family be? If everyone could do whatever they wanted, if there were no rules, if there were no spiritual expectations of people, then what would the Family end up like? And how many young people would we lose who don't want to be part of a do-nothing, easy-going, anything goes sort of group?—Young people who have chosen discipleship, who have dedicated their lives to reaching the lost and who want to live for Jesus no matter what the cost or sacrifice.

216. I guess if we're going to throw the rules away, we should also throw away anything

those rules are based on, so we should drop the Bible as well, and of course all the Letters from the last 30 years. Or maybe you're suggesting that we keep the things from the Word that we like and just get rid of what we don't like?

217. We could keep the doctrine that allows us to have sinless sex with others because we like that one, but we could get rid of the part that says we should be loving about it and not hurt others through our actions, 'cause, you know, that can be kind of hard sometimes.

218. We'd sure want to get rid of the "un-realistic" verses in the Bible like, "Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing" or "who-soever is the friend of the world is the enemy of God" (2Cor.6:17; James 4:4). Some of those would surely have to go; they're way too restricting! We could keep "a little wine for the stomach's sake," 'cause, hey, "little" isn't exactly defined (1Tim.5:23).

219. If I'm reading what you're saying right, you feel that our faith and our religion should allow people to do pretty much whatever they want to, that there should be no restrictions, and that even if something is spiritually or physically bad for you or others, it should be allowed because we should be able to discern what's good for us and what's not.—And that this especially holds true of things that are "fun."

220. I have to tell you, Daniel, that from the Bible that I've read, and from reading what the Lord has said to us over the years, He seems to think that people need some rules and guidelines to live by. He's put a number of them in the Bible, and has led us, and has confirmed, that it's His will to have some rules in place for the Family. I think He knows that if there were no rules or guidelines to keep us in line, we'd all stray pretty far from Him.

221. Remember, Jesus lived on Earth. He was a man and He experienced the same feelings we do (Heb.4:15). And maybe that's why He's led His believers throughout all time to follow Him closely, because He knows how tempting and deceiving the things of the world can be. He said to His disciples, "You are in the world but not of the world" (Jn.17:14–18). Obvi-

ously He wanted His disciples to not be of the world. That's what we are trying to accomplish through the Fundamental Family Rules; we're trying to keep ourselves from being of the world.

222. We do allow things in the Family that many other Christians—and in some instances, all other Christians—think are very worldly: sex outside of marriage, dancing, drinking, music, movies, etc. The point of our rules is to try to help keep our folks from going overboard in these things, to where they do damage to themselves or others either physically or spiritually. We want to enjoy the wonderful things the Lord has given us to enjoy, but we can't forget that the Devil also uses some of these very same things, but to an extreme, which causes damage.

223. Sex is great, it's beautiful and godly, but if done with the wrong person, at the wrong time or against someone's will, it can be ungodly. It's nice to enjoy a drink, even getting a bit tipsy—it's fun and can even be edifying—but if taken too far or overdone, it can hurt you or others. Much music is wonderful, it's inspiring and uplifting, but not all of it is. Some of it propagates things that are against God, against love, against humanity. Same with movies.

224. As a religion, we believe in "choosing the good and eschewing the evil" (1Pet.3:11). We want to take things that are good, that are fun, and use them in a responsible manner. But what you need to realize is that some of those fun things, if taken too far or misused, are no longer good and can be evil or damaging, either to ourselves or others. We have rules in place to try to prevent that. We try to "minimize ungodly influences" because ungodly things aren't good for us spiritually, and especially if we have a steady diet of them.

225. So if we were to follow your formula for keeping young people in the Family by dumping the rules and opening the door for every person to come up with their own definition of what's fun and okay for them, then I don't think we'd have a Family anymore. In fact, I doubt we'd even be a religion. And on top of that, I don't think it would make very good Christians out of our young people.

226. If there were no restrictions in place, a great number of our young people would simply fill themselves up with the world, and they wouldn't even know there was anything negative about it. There would be no absolutes, no truths, no guidelines. Folks could do what they want without any twinge of conscience, because it is fun for them, and, “Hey, fun is good! It will keep me in the Family.” Well, that sounds to me like we'd be the System—the very thing God has called us to drop out of.

227. So that's the dilemma. If we drop the rules and regulations in order to keep the young people in the Family, in doing so we make the Family like the System, which we're not supposed to be part of. We destroy what God has called the Family to be in order to keep some of our young folks in the Family. Doesn't sound like much of a choice to Mama and me.

It's a fact that forbidden fruit becomes a craving. Look at the States. Hmm, let's look at the Garden of Eden and its forbidden fruit ... Adam and Eve got us all in a lot of trouble over that one! It has the strictest drug and alcohol policies and yet has the worst offenders and casualties by it.

228. Actually, the U.S. doesn't have the strictest drug and alcohol policies. There are countries where you're either executed or sentenced to life for drug crimes, and other countries where you're flogged or caned if you drink, and that doesn't just mean young people, but adults as well. But I do get the point you're trying to make—that because we don't allow things, then young people want to do them. I guess that's part of life—the “apple” is so appealing, even when God tells you it's not good for you.

229. Amazing that the Devil's still using the same trick since the beginning of time. But it doesn't have to be that way. If people understand the reasoning behind the rules, then those things that are not allowed should not become “a craving.” That idea of the appeal of the “forbidden fruit” is overused in my book, and be-

comes somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. But it's not inevitable, not if you understand why something is not allowed and what the risks are. In such a case, if your spiritual appetites are fairly healthy, then such “forbidden fruit” can become unappealing, or at least you should have the strength to resist it.

You know why Family teens travel all over the world now, or from Home to Home constantly, or make YA/SGA Homes? Many times it's because they're looking for a place where people will get off of their backs, stop breathing down their necks, so that they can serve the Lord to the best of their personal ability and faith.

230. Daniel, it's true that a lot of young people do move Homes, and some have even left the Family because some adults wouldn't get off their backs, but instead tried to mold them into these perfect little creatures who are the same as the FGAs. It's really sad that some FGAs have been very self-righteous and condescending towards the young people. They haven't shown understanding and love. They've stopped listening and allowing the young folks to express their feelings. They haven't let the younger generation be themselves, do things differently, use their initiative, branch out, and be new bottles. That's saddens me.

231. By the same token, I know that there are many adults who have made the grade with the young people, who do work side by side with them, and allow them to spread their own wings and serve the Lord to the best of their ability, and have encouraged them to do so.

232. I think you need to realize, though, that not all young people who go from Home to Home do so in order to find a place to serve the Lord to the best of their ability and faith. Some move around because they're trying to find a Home where they can do what they want without any restrictions, and when they find that virtually every Home restricts them in some way, they move on from Home to Home in their never-ending search for a place where they can do as

they please. So while some FGAs and Homes need to lighten up a bit, it's good to remember that it's not always the FGAs' fault that young people "travel from Home to Home constantly."

233. If FGAs have a Home in which the young people are unhappy most of the time, and those older adults find that any young person who joins the Home wants to leave pretty quickly, then they should pray about it and see if they or their Home are being unrealistic in their expectations of the young people. On the other hand, if you as a young person constantly have to change Homes because the adults are always "too this or that," then you need to take a good, hard look in your spiritual mirror and ask the Lord what's wrong with you.

Does the SGA who goes out to the market in the morning, then changes, goes witnessing, comes back, works on the mail ministry, goes to his (System) private computer tutoring lessons, comes home, watches kids, cuts off, meets up with the other young people. Then goes out watches a movie that may have not been rated yet. Go to a pub, talk, laugh, have a great time, downs a couple shots then has a pint of beer, comes home, chats a bit on the Internet, plays a game and goes to bed ... is he a bad guy? Of course he is! He's, in fact, giving way to the "Devil's demons." I doubt he's a "bad guy," but one thing for sure, he's a busy guy! That's one big day!

See, nobody sees all the stuff he does do. They pick on the way that he unwinds once a week, the way he and his friends chill out.

234. I suppose, Daniel, that if this guy does so much that benefits the Home—going to the market, witnessing, mail ministry, and child-care—that the Home is pretty aware of the good things he does for the Home. When it comes to the things that he and his friends do to chill out, well, I guess it would depend on a couple of factors. According to you, this fellow is breaking a number of Charter rules, and it sounds like

he's doing it every week, and that's a problem. By the way, I don't see taking computer classes in the System as something that's either wrong or against the Charter. I already covered movies, music, Internet gaming, and drinking earlier. Some of those things aren't breaking the Charter rules, while an excess of others are. Basically, if he were to do some of these things once in a while, it would probably be overlooked; however, if he's breaking the Charter rules "consistently"—like every week—then there would be a problem.

All the broken rules. Alcohol, the music in the bar, the "bad" computer game, the "unnecessary" Internet use, the ungodly environment (pub), the computer lessons that he takes in a "system/ungodly" place. All the things that really are ways that young people relax. ...

235. We have nothing against kicking back and relaxing. More than any Christian religion I know of, we have a wide variety of freedom in this arena. But like I said earlier, we are disciples, and while we allow a great deal more liberty than other faiths, we also have some rules.

236. So much has to do with attitude, Daniel. If someone breaks a behavior rule or two every once in a while, I don't think the teamwork is going to (or should) jump all over his case. On the other hand, if the guy is breaking rules left and right, or he's breaking the same rule over and over, then he'll probably get some discipline.

237. As disciples we should do our best to stay within the boundaries the Lord has set. We should have conviction to do the things the Lord is asking of us. However, no one is perfect, and there are times when we all slip. But if we're constantly disobeying, if we're going out of our way to break the rules, or if some activity actually has a hold on us or we're addicted to it and refuse to stop, well, that's different; that's a problem and we need help. Receiving discipline is often part of that "help."

The amount of JETTs and junior teens that want to leave the Family as

soon as they turn 16 is startling. And it's because they feel that it's a drag. A place full of regimented rules and consequences.

238. I think it's sad that so many of our younger folks want to leave the Family when they turn 16. Now, according to you, they all want to leave because they think the Family is a place full of regimented rules and consequences.

239. Daniel, I have to say that I'm astounded by your vast wisdom; you somehow seem to know what everyone of a certain age group thinks. You know the reason that the JETTs and junior teens want to leave. Earlier you shared your wisdom of what a typical Family young person does. Somehow you know what all young people's musical tastes are. You must have some sort of amazing gift of knowing just what happened in situations even when you weren't there to witness them. You know the attitude of all adults, of SGAs, and now of JETTs and junior teens. What a gift! I think, though, that your gift needs a little honing, perhaps some practice or fine-tuning, as so far it's been rather skewed.

240. While some JETTs and juniors might feel what you describe, there are many other reasons why some of them want to leave the Family when they get older. Wouldn't you agree that many young ones want to leave because their older brothers and sisters have left? Sometimes those brothers and sisters communicate with their younger siblings and try to persuade them to leave. Sometimes they want to leave because they're bored. In other cases because they've gotten filled up with the world. Often they're just going through puberty and are experiencing the turmoil of that age. Sometimes they don't like their parents, shepherds, or the folks they live with. Others question their faith.

241. The list could go on and on, and the reasons are many, as opposed to your premise that they all want to leave because of the rules. Of course, you don't mention the fact that not all kids of that age want to leave the Family—many love the Family, they love being able to help others, and they love Jesus. Let's not forget those young people, okay, Daniel?

When my 13-year-old brother leaves Word time in a huff, refuses to do his chores, and basically makes everyone miserable, most adults want to punish him.

242. My guess would be that while some adults might want to punish him, most adults would want to help him. You might feel that if the adults don't let him do all the things he wants, that this constitutes punishment. But a 13-year-old who is "behaving like a little devil right now" (your quote below, not mine) does need to be helped, even if that help comes in the manner of discipline or "tough love."

Why can't they see that he's not a bad guy (even though he is behaving like a little devil right now).

243. Daniel, for the most part they probably don't see your 13-year-old brother as a bad guy, and if they do, maybe they need to be a little more understanding. Most probably see him as a kid who is at a difficult age, who is coming into adolescence, who is naturally rebelling against authority, who is seeking independence, who probably has some wrong attitudes, who wants to be his own boss, and who feels he should be treated as a responsible adult even though he doesn't act that way.

244. Did you know that teens all around the world, no matter what their religion, nationality, or location, both in and out of the Family, generally go through such a period in their life? It's difficult for the teen and it's difficult for the teen's parents too.

But he's sick and tired of being left out. Of being the only kid his age in the Home.

He's sick of having no friends. Of seeing the other kids down the street go to a regular school, have friends their age, go to the mall, listen to cool music, go to camp, have a day off.

245. Your 13-year-old brother may very well be sick of being left out or being the only kid his age in the Home, or of having no friends, etc. And if this is so, then your parents, you, and the others in the Home need to pray about his situation and do what you can to help make his life more full and exciting.

246. I want to ask you, Daniel, what have you done to help your little brother? How much have you been his friend? How much have you taken him under your wing to be his mentor, his coach, his companion? How much have you sacrificed to make his life better, less lonely, and more fun and challenging? What have you taught him lately? When was the last time you played sports with him? Do you remember the “Call to the Rescue” Letters where the Lord and Mama challenge you YAs and SGAs to be friends and role models to the JETTs? (See ML #3114–15, Lifelines 24.) How much more does the Lord expect you to be willing to be that for your own brother! Think about it!

247. One thing I’m pretty sure of—just letting your brother hang out with the kids down the street, go to public school, go to the mall, or listen to cool music, most likely isn’t going to make him any less difficult; in fact, there’s a good possibility that it may make him even more rebellious and unhappy.

248. Here again, Daniel, your solution to things seems to be to let people do whatever they want—no boundaries, no rules, no regulations. Everything goes. No one should have to do anything they don’t want to. That’s not only unrealistic, since everyone in every society has to adhere to some rules and restrictions, but more importantly, it’s not in accordance with God’s Word. Worldwide, minors are subject to their parents’ wishes and rules, so it’s not like the Family is unusual in this respect.

For God’s sake, do your kid a favor! Let him go outside and play basketball. Yes, he’ll be playing with “worldly” kids ... so what?

Please, buy him that Nintendo! It’s not going to kill his spirit! Who told you that?

249. I’m not sure who says Nintendo is going to kill a young person’s spirit, but I looked it up to see if Mama or I said it, and we didn’t. In fact, there is no GN I can find that talks about Nintendo machines and games. I have to honestly say that I don’t know much about Nintendo, so I’m not in a position to comment in detail. I did a bit of research on Nintendo, and it’s fairly obvious at a glance that there’s a lot of variety in the games. There are some that are obviously war and killing-type games, while others looked rather tame.

250. When it comes to things like this, there is usually good and bad, depending on how it’s used. That’s where the parents must pray and seek the Lord. Some parents may choose to let their child play some computer games, but that doesn’t mean that they should let them play all computer games or play them all the time. Just like movies, music, novels, etc., there is good and bad, and when you’re 13 you don’t always know the difference, which is why parents (both in the Family and in society at large) keep in touch with what their children do, and place restrictions and limitations on their activities and input. Remember, Daniel, parents in the Family aren’t the only ones in the world who don’t let their kids do anything and everything they want to.

Sure, take him out of the movie. It’s for junior teens, right? He’s only 13? Yeah, go ahead, pull him out of the movie, embarrass him and give him the underlining message that he’s too stupid and can’t take watching a PG-13 movie ... “sorry can’t watch” ... (?????????)

251. The fact is, Daniel, if his parents feel that the movie isn’t something they want their 13-year-old to watch, then they have the right to pull him out of the movie. Of course, it would be better to not let him go to the movie in the first place rather than have to pull him out after it’s begun. That would understandably be tough on the guy. Very embarrassing. I’m sorry about that.

252. We do have movies that are rated for junior teens and up, which means 14 and up.

Some of these movies might be listed by the System as PG-13, meaning that the System considers them okay for 13-year-olds. But just because the System says something's okay for 13-year-olds doesn't make it so.

253. It's the parents' responsibility to watch for their children's well-being until they are of age. A 13-year-old isn't of age. He or she is under the care and protection of their parents, and if the parents feel a movie is not good for their child to watch, then it's the parents' right and responsibility to not let them watch it. On the other hand, if a parent has watched a movie that's rated for junior teens and feels that it's okay for their 13-year-old to watch (hopefully they will have prayed about it), then they can let him or her watch it. The movie ratings are not "written in stone," as we have explained before. There is flexibility, according to the parents' discernment and the leading of the Lord. ("Home Life Rules," K, page 267.)

254. Daniel, I'm assuming from the things you've said in your letter that you aren't a parent; you don't know what it's like to have children that you're fully responsible for. When you have children, your views on some of these matters will likely change. Right now you're probably pretty carefree, and having fun with no restrictions is high on your priority list. But I venture to say that when you become a parent and your young teens begin to express attitudes similar to yours, you won't be letting them do whatever they want.

255. I don't fault you for this. You don't understand what it means to be a parent, or at least not the parent of a JETT or teen. That's natural. You'll grow into these realizations once you become a parent. But please understand that being a good parent isn't easy; at times you have to risk making your child angry with you in order to protect their well-being.

You're basically breeding a kid that will hate you.

256. Strong statement! On a recent trip I saw a television ad where one teenager after another said things addressed to their parents

like, "I couldn't stand it when you wouldn't let me hang out with some of my friends," "You were always sticking your nose in my business," "I hated you when you grounded me," "I was so angry when you made me stay home at night to study," etc. At the end of the ad they all said, "Thank you." The point being, when you're younger you see your parents as intrusive when they lay down the rules and make you toe the line. However, they're usually doing it because they love you and because they feel it's the right thing to do.—And as you grow older you begin to understand that they acted out of love, even if it was tough for you at the time.

I love my mom. She's the greatest. I have a lot of memories, but one of the things I remember the most was her buying me an ice cream real quick when nobody was looking. See, ice cream has sugar and ice, which is very bad for you. I had a lot of ice creams when I was little. Once my Home shepherd blew up at her for breaking "God's health rules" with me.

257. Well, like I said earlier, I don't think it's good for people to "blow up" at people; there's usually no need for it. Actually, I don't have any problem with parents buying their kids an ice cream once in a while. Of course, you say you had lots of ice cream when you were little, so who knows, maybe your mom went a bit overboard and thus was breaking the health rules. Like I said, the shepherd shouldn't have blown up over it, but perhaps some mention to your mother was warranted. While ice cream, or any other sweet, is nice as a treat once in a while and definitely fun for kids, eating those things regularly really isn't that healthy for you. And we're not the only ones who think so. Most advocates for healthy living will tell you the same thing.

258. But it's hard for me to believe that parents or Home members nowadays are really so legalistic about serving ice cream. I've traveled to a number of Family Homes, and what do you know ... ice cream was being served! We serve it for special occasions, and the parents

in our Home give their kids ice cream from time to time as well, in moderation. I don't think the overall Family population is so very strict on that point.

Well, I don't remember that guy. But I will forever love the mom that let me play with other kids, got me my own bike, bought me a ("demonic") gameboy. Basically stupid little things that actually are worthless physically, but go straight to the heart of a kid, telling him that you love him, and you trust him, and that he means more to you than anything.

259. I'm glad you love your mom, Daniel, and I'm sure she raised you with a lot of love. I imagine she did for you what she thought was best, but that doesn't mean it should be standard fare for every child. Parents need to make their own choices as to how to raise their kids, but if their choices go against the principles of our faith, and if parents refuse to accept and implement the united disciplinary standard of their Home, then the parents need to raise their kids outside of a CM Home.

I know for a fact that not all the blame for the Family's problems can be placed on the FGAs' shoulders, as that is also a two-way street. I couldn't agree with you more. But to me, the essence of freedom is the ability to make the wrong choice every now and again without it being a problem for the rest of your life. Isn't "love" what the Charter is supposed to be about? And I think that sometimes love can be shown by just letting people be people and not judging everyone all of the time. And that love includes not being overly strict, unbending, and sometimes just plain obstructive.

If you feel differently or even that I'm completely wrong, feel free to write me and set me straight.

Take care all...

260. I agree that it's important that every wrong choice someone makes shouldn't be held against them forever. Not even God does that. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). Everyone makes mistakes and wrong choices, so we should all see the need for forgiveness and understanding. I agree that love can be shown by letting people be people and not judging everyone all of the time. I don't want to be judged that way. I don't want people to be breathing down my neck all the time. I don't believe folks should be overly strict, unbending, or obstructive either.

261. By the same token, I don't feel that everything everyone does is good or right. I believe that man is born in sin, and that sin—doing wrong things—is part and parcel of human nature. Everyone sins, everyone does things that are wrong, even Christians, even disciples. The beauty of it is that we have forgiveness through Jesus. When we do those wrong things, when we sin, our sin can be blotted out by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. That's a wonderful thing. But that forgiveness does not mean that we shouldn't make the effort not to sin. It doesn't give us license to do what we want, whenever we want to, whether it's good for us or not. That doesn't mean that we can deliberately, knowingly, and willfully make wrong choices just as a testimony of our so-called "freedom." (Rom. 14:13–22).

262. As I said earlier, we are a religion, a faith. Within our faith we have rights, responsibilities, and rules. These are laid out clearly in the Charter. You're right, Daniel, love is what the Charter is supposed to be about. But that love works both ways. There is love, mercy, understanding, and flexibility within the Charter. There are also rules that we're expected to obey, though it's understood that from time to time we will break some of them (not the excommunicable ones) without repercussion. That flexibility is part of the love and understanding. But your willingness to obey those rules and to try your best to do so is also part of that love. That's part of your responsibility as a disciple.

263. You've made the case throughout your letter that the Family is a place full of rules and

regulations. You state that young people leave because of the rules, and that adults are often unbending and self-righteous. The general premise of your letter is that we need to do away with the rules, to allow people—especially young people—to basically do whatever they want to, especially when it comes to having fun. And the underlying argument is that if we do this, we will keep our young people and the Family will be a better place.

264. I've tried to explain why we need to have some rules—that, as a religion, we are much less strict and allow more freedom than virtually any Christian faith. But even so, because we are Christians, because we are disciples, there are spiritual standards which God expects us to keep, standards which He has set.

265. I've also tried to point out that some of our FGAs are too rigid. Some tend to put so much emphasis on adherence to the rules that they've forgotten about love and mercy. Some are rather impatient or easily frustrated, or they live a bit too much in the past, trying to cast our young people into an old mold instead of fully grasping that the Lord is constantly changing and moving in new ways. Some FGAs haven't fully understood what it means to work with young people, especially SGAs, in a partnership of mutual respect and consideration. Some FGAs act superior, as if they know best in all matters. In some cases, they act like the “boss,” and the young people the “employees” who have no say in the matter.

266. FGAs who are that way need to change. They need to pray for a fuller understanding of the Word and what God has said about the uniting of the generations; they need to grow beyond their present mindsets and realize just how valuable our younger generation is.

267. Of course, it's important to realize that when I'm talking about FGAs working in partnership with SGAs, I'm referring to young people who are committed and who want to work hard for the Lord, of which there are many. But if the SGAs aren't really serious for the Lord, if they aren't interested in progressing spiritually, or in witnessing and following up on souls, if their main concern in life is pleasure-seeking and

they're just trying to get as much out of our communal lifestyle as they can, then it's unlikely that any partnership will develop. FGAs who are working to make the Home fruitful and a good sample will not get along with SGAs who aren't on board. Making it work is a two-way street.

268. Most people—old and young alike—have some personality quirks that you just have to overlook. Rarely do you meet a person of any age that you just “click” with perfectly and you never have to let some things pass, overlooking and forgetting them out of love for that person. The same is true when the two generations are working together. You can't expect those of the other generation to be perfect. It just doesn't happen. So don't look for the FGAs to do all the changing and become exactly like you want them to be; that's unrealistic. If either generation has unrealistic expectations, you'll only end up in frustration and failure.

269. As Mama explained in “Overcoming the Generation Gap,” what brings unity between the generations in our Home—and the same principle would be true of any Home—is not the fun and games and worldly recreation that we engage in; it's the things of the spirit. When the FGAs and SGAs are on board and wanting to do their best for the Lord, they're willing to put the Lord first, are seeking the life of discipleship, and are willing to be obedient to the spirit of the Letters, then it works.

270. Daniel, maybe you've been in Homes where there have been an abundance of strict adults who you see as constantly correcting or judging you. On the other hand, maybe you caused some of the adults to be strict with you because you're constantly trying to apply your vision of what the Family should be, by continually trying to break the rules or push the envelope.

271. Sometimes young people bring the rules crashing around their heads because they're constantly trying to circumvent them. Adults who want to trust the young folks find that they can't because the young ones prove themselves untrustworthy by consistently going overboard or by flagrantly disregarding the rules. Once the adults feel this way, they then

feel it's necessary to apply the rules more strictly. It can be a sad but vicious cycle.

272. I guess the bottom line, Daniel, is discipleship. In reading your letter, written, as I understand it, after the “Conviction vs. Compromise” series, I wonder if you got the point of those Letters. The Lord spoke so much about basic discipleship, about our job as disciples, about our discipleship commitment, and yet so much of your letter had to do with having fun, pushing the things of the world. The Lord said recently that many of the children of David have become seekers of pleasures rather than soldiers of God. What are you, Daniel?

273. The Lord does want us to have fun. He does want us to enjoy ourselves and to have times of relaxation, but that's not our calling, that's not what we have committed ourselves to. We're disciples. We're professional Christians who take our work for God seriously. We've devoted our lives to His service, to reaching the world with His message, to living His Word, to being a sample of full-time discipleship, to preaching the meaty Endtime message of the Words of David, to loving Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, body, and strength. That's what being a disciple in the Family is about—not movies, music, sex, drinking, Internet use, computer games, food, entertainment, fashion, free time, money, hanging out, etc. As disciples we get to partake of those things, but that's not supposed to be the most important aspect of Family life.

274. My profession, like that of thousands and thousands of other Family members, is discipleship. That's what I do, that's what I am, that's what I live for, that's what I'll die for. If tomorrow the Lord sends me to a place where there's no videos, no Internet, no music, no pleasures of this life, then I'll still serve Him, because I love Him and because that's what I'm committed to.

275. Discipleship is a tough profession. It requires a high standard in spirit and behavior. It requires forsaking all, obedience, yieldedness, and willingness to do the job even if everything isn't to your liking—even if nothing is to your liking! As a disciple, sometimes you have to carry on when everything and everyone seems to be

against you, when you feel so down you don't see how you can last one more minute. On top of it, you have the Devil and his minions such as Lethargy, Pan, Bacchus, Selvegion and Apoth-eon (see ML #3400:169–187, GN 992) trying with all their might to convince you to give up, and if they can't get you to do that, then to compromise.

276. Discipleship is a hard profession. Not many take it up, and many of those who do, eventually give it up. Why? Because it's a difficult life. It's extremely rewarding, but at times extremely difficult. Even in Jesus' day, when the going got tough and the message got strong, “many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him” (John 6:66). When Jesus asked the 12 if they'd go too, Peter answered succinctly, with a powerful message as to why we are disciples, why we serve God every day, why we have chosen such a difficult profession: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68–69).

277. That's what we believe, Daniel. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He has called us to serve Him unconditionally as disciples at whatever price He asks. That's the commitment, that's the job, that's the profession.—And we're proud to do it because Jesus, Who is our King, Savior, Best Friend, and Husband, has asked it of us.

278. How about you, Daniel? Are you a disciple?



279. (Jesus speaking:) Calling all CM disciples! Where are you? Who will stand up and answer the call? The majority of you CM members have been in the Family for a long time now—some of that time you've been living as disciples, and some of the time simply as members living the “Family lifestyle.” Well, the CM Family is being redefined. The mission statement of Charter members is being clarified, and it's time once again to wake up, smell the coffee, and figure out where you're going—TODAY!

280. Today is a new day. It's a new time. It's a new era in the Family. It's the era of serious

understanding and commitment to the calling of CM disciples. If you are CM, then you need to once again take stock of your heart and soul, and make sure that your vision of being a Charter member disciple lines up with My vision. I've spelled out My vision and the requirements clearly in the CvsC series, and I'll clarify it once again here.

281. Charter membership means discipleship. That doesn't just mean "Family member." Yes, you're a member of the Family, but first and foremost, as a Charter member, you are a disciple. That is your code, your creed. That is your mission statement. As a disciple, you are among the elite troops of the Family. You have pledged and committed to take on any mission, to accept any challenge, to fight any battle, to receive any instructions and orders, to follow and obey, to love and to serve.

282. As a Charter member, you have said, "This is my chosen profession. This is my calling. This is my career. This is my life. I am a disciple and I'm proud of it." As a disciple, you're in it for the long haul. You're not serving a six-month term, a two-year term, or even a six-year term. You're committed for life, because you're convinced that being a disciple is what you want to give your life to. You're willing to train, you're willing to learn, you're willing to adapt, you're willing to progress. You look forward with excitement to what's ahead, knowing that all the training you receive will make you more skilled, trained, and better able to do your job.

283. As a disciple, you've agreed to give up certain things that would distract you or hinder you from doing your job. You've accepted that there will be sacrifices to make, and you're willing to make these sacrifices, even if they're difficult. You understand that you're making these sacrifices for Me, your Commander in Chief, for your loved ones, and for the lost souls that need your time, attention, prayer, focus, and love. You're willing to give up some of the treasures and pleasures of this life in order to gain the spiritual riches and rewards that I've promised you in the life to come.

284. As a disciple, you're banking on Me. You're trusting in My promises. You're letting

the material things of the world pass you by. You're not merely laying up for yourself treasures on earth or making efforts toward popularity and fame. You're living your life by faith, holding on to My promise that though you may suffer rejection, and though you may lack some of the trinkets and gadgets that are on display all around you, you're holding out for something better. You're holding out for the eternal riches of Heaven. You're holding out for the eternal glory. You're holding out for the gold and silver that will last forever.

285. In choosing discipleship as your profession, you've signed a most unusual contract. You've agreed to play in My game, which many others consider a foolish, losing game. But you signed up anyway, so you're now one of My discipleship players. You're not just a sub or a part-time player. You're playing professionally. This is what you do, day in and day out. You're on the team. You've signed on the dotted line.

286. Here's the professional's contract:

287. I (blank) willingly become a Charter member disciple. As such, I affirm that my choice of career is to be a professional disciple. I will strive, to the best of my ability, to follow the appropriate rules of discipleship conduct. I consent to taking orders from You, the Head Coach. I consent to being a team player, and I embrace my fellow disciples as my brothers and sisters. I acknowledge that there will be sacrifices to make, and I'm willing to make these in order to pursue this profession.

288. I accept the terms of payment. These are as follows:

- Reasonable supply of basic necessities (housing, clothing, food).
- Love and support of my fellow team members.
- Satisfaction of knowing that I'm helping others.
- Spiritual blessings (peace, joy, purpose in life, etc.).

289. I accept that I will not receive monetary payment or physical compensation for my every effort in this life. I am content to wait until the next life, where I will receive my pay-

ment and rewards in full for the service I have given. I give up the temptation toward the pleasures and treasures of the world around me, in favor of obtaining eternal riches and blessings that will never fade away.

290. In short, I commit to being a professional disciple, on whom You can count to play my part with faith, love, determination, and zeal.

Signed: _____, Charter member disciple

Witness: Jesus, Head Coach and Owner of the team

291. That was and is the contract of discipleship. It's a difficult life, the life of a disciple. It's not a highly praised life, nor is it envied. There are sacrifices, tests, and some sorrows. But there are joys. There are thrills of the spirit that are only known to those who heed My call, forsake everything, and come and follow Me.

Some give Me part of their lives and time. Some give Me all. Those who give Me all are professional disciples, career disciples. Are you one?

292. Can you affirm your discipleship contract with Me? Or does the pull of the world and its treasures and pleasures have too great a hold on you? Are you willing to sacrifice the pleasures of the world for a season, in order to reap eternal rewards in the life to come? Choose today what level of Family membership you will commit to. If you seek Charter member discipleship, then count the cost.

293. Are you willing to be a professional disciple? If so, the stakes are high. The rewards are even higher. You will not see them all in this life, but in the life to come, when you enter My Heavenly realm, you will see that the choice you made was the right one.

294. C'mon! Who's on the team? I need professionals! (*End of message from Jesus.*)

Liberated by the Rules

(SGA guy, South Africa:) I've had to do a lot of reading recently (going through the required reading course), and the Word is so much more alive. I find myself reading Letters that I'd previously struggled with or balked at. Now I agree wholeheartedly. Countless times throughout the Letters, Mama and Peter spell out the guidelines (which to some seem harsh at times—I most definitely was one of those who thought that way), but those who are serious about serving the Lord realize that there is no other way. Either you're gonna be here all the way, in which case rules are needed to keep you in line and on the right track, or you've gotta find somewhere else where you can be. No two ways about it.

I feel odd saying this, but it's like being liberated by the rules. I've been born again into this Family and I see all the wonderful fruit and the freedom we receive through closely following the Lord's Words given in the Letters, even when it seems like, "Oh, here's another rule." The Lord really blesses it, and in the end you realize it's for your own good.

For example, we have no TV, video machine, or anything of the sort—things which at one

time I considered absolute necessities. Because of not having these items, we spend a lot more time fellowshiping or getting other things done. Our unity level has been so much higher, and I believe the Lord has blessed us because of it.

For me to say this is really something, because I'm the kinda guy that can watch two to three movies a day easy (I was literally doing that, and sometimes as many as six a day when I was backslidden)! If there's a fleshly, carnal guy, it's me. But I've made a commitment. I'm here to serve the Lord, even if it means giving those things up totally.

There was a time I resented the Family for the way it had raised me, but now I can see it's given me the greatest gift in the world. I am eternally indebted to the Family for bringing me back from the life I was living and giving me a chance to once again find the will of God in my life, and to serve Him. I'm here to make a difference and to be all that I can be with the Lord's help.

Once again, my deepest gratitude and admiration goes to the Family and to those who have kept it what it is throughout the years, through thick and thin and the many battles and testings it's had.