



# Lively Stones | PETER 2:5

Holding forth the word of life

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## Editorial

In the past nine months, we have looked into the many though not exhaustive issues pertaining to building up a godly family. The editorial team hopes and prays that each issue has brought some word of encouragement and exhortation to you.

The family unit is very much being attacked by the many evils that the devil has planted and sadly, many professing Christian families are losing their effectiveness for the Lord.

Even as I write this editorial, I am sure there are parents reading this, hurting from rebellious teens and there are also those striving to keep balance between commitment and long hours at work and the list goes on.

Nevertheless, whatever struggles each family has to handle, our Sovereign God knows our burdens and He has allowed the trials to mould us to be more Christ-like. Each of us just has to keep His commandment and do what is pleasing in His sight as we walk *Coram Deo*, before the face of God every day.

Let us therefore "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called." (Ephesians 4:1)

JK

**Editorial Team:**  
Mrs Julia Koh,  
Mrs Selina Lee

## Cutting the Apron Strings

(Part 2)

By Elder Sherman Ong

***"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* (Proverbs 22:6)**

Biblical parenting is concerned with training our children to be skilled in the understanding and application of the Word of God. It is of paramount importance for all Christian parents to be equipped with the Word of God, and then to be in a position to be able to impart and train their own children in the Word of God. Our children must first be taught to understand God's Word, then to be able think independently on their own, based on biblical principles. No Christian child should be deprived of this blessing of parental guidance and mentorship.

King Solomon had benefited from his father King David's mentoring, and he wrote to affirm us to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). Children up to six or seven years old are most perceptive and receptive to their parents' teaching. This is a time when they would follow their parents and older siblings wherever they go. They picked up all the habits – good and bad from their seniors, and those around them. Hence, the issue on nature or nurture arises in many discussion

forums. Our focus is on how Christian children may grow and mature to a point when they are ready to cut the apron strings. The emphasis here is foundational and most fundamental. Our children are not ready to cut the apron strings if they are not well taught in the Lord!

***When is one ready to cut the apron strings?***

Biblically speaking, Abraham was there for Isaac up to a very senior age in comparison to our modern day context. Isaac got married at 40 years old! Sarah gave birth to Isaac when she was 90 years old (Genesis 17:17). She died when she was 127 years old (Genesis 23:1). Isaac got married to Rebekah three years after Sarah's death (Genesis 24:67) – that made Isaac 40 years old at marriage! He finally tied the nuptial knot and cut the apron strings from Abraham. In this case, the patriarch family continue to live together. Marriage did not actually signify a cut off of ties for them. Abraham went on to take another wife in his old age and married Keturah (Genesis 25:1) and continued to have six more children with her! The principle we can apply here is that God permits Christian families to stay together as

(Continued on BACK page)

# Cutting the Apron Strings (Part 2)

(Continued from FRONT page)

long as there is peace and harmony in the extended Christian home today. One should not be so adamant about leaving and cleaving for the sake of “cutting the apron strings”. There are blessings from a multi-tier family structure as advocated by the Singapore Government today. However, in many cases, it would seem prudent to just apply the “leave and cleave” and have separate homes in order to maintain a loving and cordial family tie. Cut the apron strings at a point when parents deem their children as matured enough to manage their resources and make godly and God-fearing decisions. Only then, can one decide to leave or cleave with their parents and loved ones.

Jacob had to leave his family soon after he won the birthright from Esau. There was a threat to his life as long as he stayed on in the family. His parents lovingly instructed him to leave and to start his own family. In our modern day context, some of our children may leave home for overseas studies. This could be one significant point when they have to cut the apron strings and become independent while studying and living overseas. Our children must be geared up for such needs in life. Other situations such as taking an overseas appointment or job attachment could be another significant point when our children will have to cut the apron strings and take ownership of their own conduct of life. In a foreign land where no kinsmen are around, it can be very challenging in every sense of the word. Our children must be prepared spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically for such detachment.

Another local situation is when our children stay away from home to live in the campus hostel. For short term stay as in the case of Raffles Institution students, it cannot be considered as cutting the apron strings. However, for a prolonged arrangement, and especially when they literally have to be on their own in the campus, it could be the start of a pseudo-cutting of apron strings. Many families may be confronted with such situations today. With the government introducing “thorough-train” curriculum in schools, and the International Baccalaureate program, one may need to start to cut the apron strings sooner than expected.

Now a word about Moses is necessitated in this article as promised in Part 1. Moses literally had to cut the apron string shortly after his birth! He had to be sent away to save his life from the massacre. While being sent away, God providentially led his mother Jochebed to be his nanny and thus, for a moment,

Moses was nursed and nurtured by his own mother. Moses had a comprehensive training program in Egypt for the first forty years of his life. Then, came to the big break for him to cut his apron strings! God called him to the wilderness of Midian. Here Moses had another forty years of comprehensive training under the Almighty God and he got his own family started by marrying Zipporah, Jethro’s daughter. God eventually called him and he answered the call to be the deliverer to his Hebrew people. Moses had to cut his apron strings another time to fulfil God’s calling. Cutting the apron strings must be in accordance to God’s timing, not ours.

## What is next after cutting the apron strings?

Is cutting the apron strings a point of no return? Can one return home and resume their family dependency after a short time of separation? Absolutely! As in the story of Jacob, while he was away from Isaac and Rebekah, he was living with his uncle Laban. In one sense, he had cut off the apron strings with his immediate family, but rejoined the apron strings with his uncle’s family. As the story unfolded, he eventually married both his cousins – Leah and Rachel, and became very much part of Laban’s family. In fact, he was running his uncle’s “family business”. The Lord blessed him richly while he was still dependent upon Laban until Joseph was born (Genesis 30:25). This time, it was for real. He cut the apron strings with his uncle and left the home to set up his own. The Lord continued to prosper him thereafter.

Cutting the apron strings does not mean permanent severance from your immediate family. As a good Christian testimony, one should continue to show respect and support to your own parents even though one has become independent from their parents. The Apostle Paul reminded us that we must “honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on earth” (Ephesians 6:2-3). Remember your parents constantly, and seek to bring peace and joy to them even if you are no more dependent upon them or living with them. The greatest reward for one is to see that our parents’ faiths in God are honoured by our well-being after we obtained our independence. The Apostle John wrote in his second epistle: “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (2 John 4). May the Lord help us to be faithful to Him and to our parents in whatever state of life we may be in. Amen.