

THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

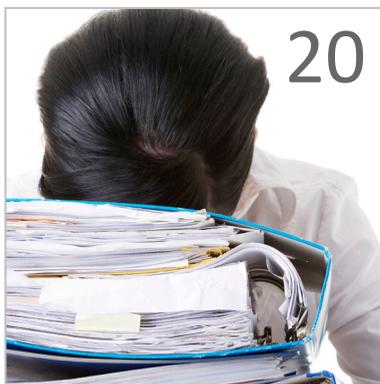
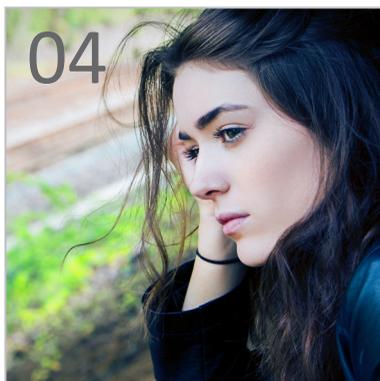
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HEARTBREAK:

WHEN ADULT CHILDREN LEAVE THE CHURCH





ON THE COVER

No role in life surpasses the importance of parenting, especially as it concerns our children's relationship with Jesus. And even when we strive to do "all the right things," the results don't always turn out as planned. So if our children stray from Christ, what should we do? Where can we turn? The articles in this issue may provide some answers.

| ARTICLES

- 04 HOW DO I TRUST GOD WHEN MY LOVED ONE IS MISSING?**
Learning to lean on God
Anne Peterson
- 06 THERE IS HOPE**
If we put our children into God's hands
Anonymous Author
- 10 TALITHA CUMI**
Letting God resurrect your heart
Dakota Morgan
- 14 THREE PREACHER'S KIDS**
And God's saving grace
Jerry Page
- 17 JANCY SHANKAR**
Saved from suicide
J. Tamilarasi
- 28 POWERFUL PROMISES FOR PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN**

| FEATURES

- 03 EDITORIAL**
"I Was Only Trying to Help!"
- 09 TIPS TO THRIVE**
When Your Child Doesn't Live Up to Your Dreams
- 12 GETTING REAL**
A Fighting Strategy: Showing Kindness
- 18 FAMILY MATTERS**
When Our Children "Take a Break" From Church
- 20 LIFESTYLE**
"I'm So Tired!"
- 23 KIDS**
Jesus' Special Prayer
- 27 DEAR DEBORAH**
Heartbroken
- 29 NEWS FROM THE FIELD**

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“I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP!”



ZAC, MY YOUNGER SON, and I were best buddies. It was pretty much just Zac and me because his older brother was off at boarding school, and his dad, a conference president, was working a lot away from home. I read to Zac for hours. I taught him how to ride a bike, and we would go sledding together in the snow.

I taught Zac how to cook and do his laundry. I took him mountain biking and snow skiing—although I was the one who came home with cuts and bruises. When he wanted to climb 14,000-foot mountains, I faithfully struggled with him to the top of 25 peaks. I taught him how to drive a car, change the oil, rotate the tires, put on snow chains, and drive in the snow.

From the time Zac was 10, it was often just the two of us for family worship. Our evening worships together were precious. Zac loved worship and prayer time.

Things began to change, however, after Zac got his driver’s license. School was a 45-minute drive from home. He would leave at 5:30 in the morning to be at sports practice by 6:30. I routinely prayed with him before he left, but soon he began trying to rush out the door before I could do that. I started asking God “Why?”

One evening as we were eating dinner, Zac suddenly blurted out, “Mom, I really don’t like your lecture-

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3, NKJV

manipulative prayers!” His words hurt. I was only trying to love him by praying for him. Fortunately, through experience, I had learned not to respond right away because anger does not build bridges. So I was quiet.

The next morning during my own worship, I asked God what was wrong. Then a realization of how I prayed came to my mind: “Father in heaven, please help Zac not to speed. He has had three speeding tickets; one more and he will lose his license.” “Dear God, help Zac not to drive too close to the car in front of him. He has already hit a car; if he has another accident we won’t be able to afford car insurance for him.” “Dear God, help Zac to study hard and make good grades or he won’t get scholarships for school.” And so on.

“Well, how am I supposed to pray for Zac?” I asked God. “I’m only trying to help him!” I started reading my Bible hoping for answers. God began showing me that I should pray prayers of blessings on Zac. “How do I do this?” I asked Him.

The next Sabbath Jerry and I were visiting a church, and a woman handed me a gift bag and said, “God told me to give this to you.” I was excited. Maybe it was money! But instead, it was a book about praying blessings over our children and spouses. I read the book, prayed for wisdom, and began to follow the counsel.

At first I had to physically grab Zac to pray with him before he shot out the door. I would then ask God to bless him spiritually, emotionally, and physically; I would also pray appropriate Bible verses of blessing.

One morning several weeks later I was delayed getting to the door and heard Zac yelling, “Mom, where are you? Are you going to come pray for me?” Now he wanted me to pray for him! My son’s attitude had totally changed.

God is merciful when we pray to Him about our children! He is not silent! When we spend time with Him, humble ourselves before Him, and read His Word, answers will come. This issue focuses on ways to cope with wayward children. We pray you will be blessed by the articles and that you will also share them with a friend. 1

Janet Page serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.



HOW DO I TRUST GOD WHEN MY LOVED ONE IS MISSING?

“THIS IS GOING TO SHOCK YOU, but I’m getting a divorce,” the letter read.

She was right; I was shocked. My sister and her husband had been married for 10 years, had three beautiful boys, and were on their third house. I hated that I would be talking to her long distance, but that didn’t stop me from calling.

“Hello, Peg?”

I barely got the words out when she started yelling, “I can’t talk now; he’s harassing me again!” I could hear Peggy’s husband in the background, taunting her. What was going on? My stomach started hurting.

Feeling helpless, I said, “I’ll pray,” and I hung up. The 2,000 miles between us felt like a million.

ANOTHER CALL

A couple days later I received another call. I ran to the phone, hoping it was my sister.

“Did you hear? Peggy’s gone!” my sister-in-law said. “No one knows where. Her husband says she just walked out.”

And that began our nightmare. But we knew one thing—Peggy never walked out.

You don’t walk out and leave your three precious children. You don’t walk out without picking up your last paycheck. You don’t walk out in a suburb of Chicago and not take your car.

But we never saw her again.

LONG ENOUGH

Peggy’s missing person case was changed to a possible homicide, and we had 10 days in court—22 years after her disappearance! They were 10 very grueling days. Not very long, but long enough.

Long enough to let the whole thing rip us apart again. Long enough to hear even more things that made us hurt. Long enough to hear the judge pronounce her husband “not guilty.”

And what happened then? We sat in silence and watched while the other side of the courtroom erupted in cheers, giving Peggy’s husband high fives and slapping him on the back.

HOW DO YOU TRUST GOD?

A couple of weeks after the trial we held a memorial service. We stood on Peggy’s empty grave.

So how do you trust God when you have no answers, when you don’t understand the losses you’ve endured? The only way is to lean into what you know to be true.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

This means God knows everything. He was not surprised when Peggy sent me that letter. Nor was He surprised when she disappeared. God knows exactly what happened September 12, 1982. Peggy has been missing to us, but never to Him.

The Bible says in Psalm 34:18 that God is near the brokenhearted. I'm sure that as Peggy's heart was broken, God was near.

DAYS OF TORMENT

I'm not going to lie and tell you that all I had to do was trust God and the whole thing was easy. It was hellish. There were times I'd be driving home from my support group for those affected by homicide when I would pull off the road and scream at the top of my voice, letting my tears fall. My heart shattered into a million pieces.

I remember one day in particular when I was being tormented by what Peggy's last moments must have been like. It was then I heard God gently say, "Anne, I was *with* her."

It says in Philippians 4:7 that God will give us peace. His peace is unlike any other. There was no way I should have been able to rest under those circumstances. And yet, I felt surrounded by a calm. It didn't make sense. It had to be God.

LEANING INTO GOD

Whenever we feel as if we're all alone, we need to lean into God, to trust in what we know to be true no matter how we feel. Feelings cannot be trusted. We can learn to lean, just like He tells us in Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (NKJV).

The problem is that we often lean on what we understand instead of leaning on God. It takes trust to stop trying to figure things out. Even if we don't understand something, it is enough that God does. If we put our faith in Him, we can know it is in capable hands.

TRUSTING DESPITE THE PAIN

One day as a young mom I was rushing around and accidentally closed the car door on my 3-year-old son's finger. Nathan looked up at me with his giant brown eyes, tears running down his face. "Why did you *do* that, Mom?"

He couldn't believe I would hurt him. I took him in my arms, hugged him, and explained it was an accident. As he settled down I could feel him totally relax. He still had the pain, but he trusted me again.

NOT KNOWING

Some people have told me they would never be able to rest if they did not know where their loved one's body was. And I understand that, because that's how I felt for a while. But when God gave me peace, it changed everything.

I don't know everything, but God does. And His knowing is enough.

WE CAN HANDLE IT WITH HIM

Christians sometimes tell those who are hurting, "God will never give us more than we can handle." But if God gave us only what we ourselves could handle, we wouldn't need Him. When we say that to someone who is hurting, they might wonder, *What's wrong with me? Why can't I handle this?*

God gives us what we'll be able to handle *with* Him.

In John 15:5, Jesus talks about His being the vine and we the branches. He adds, however, that apart from Him we can do nothing. The longer I know Him, the more I'm aware of how much I need Him. He has promised that He will never leave me or forsake me (Deuteronomy 31:6), and He has kept that promise.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Whatever is going on in your life, be assured that God knows all about it as well. And He cares. He truly does.

Trust in Him. Lean on Him. He will see you through. J

Anne Peterson is a poet, speaker, and published author of 14 books, including her memoir, Broken: A Story of Abuse, Survival, and Hope. Anne has published over 40 Bible studies and articles with Christianity Today and Today's Christian Woman. She is a regular contributor to Crosswalk.com as well as medium.com. Connect with Anne on Facebook or on her website (annepeterson.com). Sign up for her newsletter and receive her free eBook, Helping Someone in Grief: 17 Things You Need to Know. This article originally appeared on crosswalk.com, April 23, 2018.



THERE IS HOPE

WALKING ALONGSIDE YOUR GROWN CHILDREN

I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT TRIGGERED my son's fury that day. All I recall is the angry pain that glared down at me, the stream of foul language that enveloped me. For years he had lived beyond my mothering. Now I sensed he was even beyond my help.

Was I facing a pastoral family's shame? Or was this an ambush of the enemy? Was I feeling the grip of failure or the grace of God enveloping me? I couldn't tell.

IT WON'T ALWAYS BE THIS WAY

Suddenly a thought so odd shot through my mind that I knew it wasn't mine: *It won't always be this way.* Strange. You mean he could find peace someday? Would he really trust life again? Would his heart someday know God's love? My mind riveted onto the

possibilities as I studied his glare. The sharp edge of his voice drifted past me. I felt at peace.

I felt assured God was on task, fully engaged. I didn't need to fix things. I didn't need to see every crisis as determinative or every poor decision as final. I could trust that God was working within long time frames. He would accept small steps. He was willing to walk slowly, follow detours, pause at failures. He would never give up. I didn't need to either.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME

When a 3-year-old becomes hysterical on an escalator, Mom gets "the looks." When a 10-year-old punches a classmate, Dad gets the call. When a teenager is suspended, the parents get summoned to the principal's office. But our children grow up and move outside our supervision, beyond our accountability. They build a world of their own making.

“God’s interest isn’t reserved for obedient children only. If it were, what hope would any of us have?”

If my parental heart is strong enough to accept the journey as their own, what happens in their lives is not about me. It’s about them. What do they need the most right now? What can I pray for? What access does God have to them—through me?

I’m not in their lives anymore to tell them how they should live, to make up for the past, or to nurse my parenting wounds. I’m there to understand what concerns them, to be interested in what absorbs them, to laugh with their joy and stand by them in their sorrow. God’s interest isn’t reserved for obedient children only. If it were, what hope would any of us have? (See Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100.)

HE NEEDS A LIFETIME

I remember listening patiently as an anxious mother explained her family’s impending move. “If we don’t move to the country, we’re going to lose our boy.” I didn’t ask what “country” meant to a family already living in a quiet, one-stoplight town; I was more distracted by what that might mean for a mischievous 10-year-old. “Lose him? What might happen to him?” Her voice dropped, as if speaking out loud would make it more real. “He might leave the church.”

I caught my breath as I tried to picture what that meant to her. “But he’ll still be part of your family, right?” She mumbled a response. I wanted to ask more, but she probably wouldn’t understand: *You’ll still be his mother, won’t you? You’ll still love him? You’ll still pray for him, enjoy him, treasure him, encourage him? He doesn’t risk losing you, does he?*

Yes, there can be loss in parenting, high loss. Lost dreams, lost innocence, lost potential, lost trust. *But my child is never lost to my heart.* God never disowns His love. Neither will I.

LET HIM TAKE OVER

A parent’s prospects can be messy. Eve raised both Cain and Abel (see Genesis 4:8). Manoa and his wife reaped some heartbreaking results even after an angel told them how to raise Samson (see Judges 13:8). Hannah left little Samuel with Eli, a notoriously indulgent father (see 1 Samuel 1:28).

The hazards are sobering; free choice creates high-risk parenting. Regardless of how faithful I am or how conscientious, I’m facing great odds. With all my best efforts, I still miss opportunities and pass on weaknesses. I make serious mistakes. To add to my limitations, my life only overlaps with my children’s. I need to let God take over as completely as possible; He’s a far better parent.

God is more consistent, more present, and far more effective than I am. He can dialogue with my children’s memories, interact with their emotions, answer when they’re not asking, go where they think they’re hiding. He is always available to comfort, rejoice, protect, and plead when I’m miles away or next door and don’t know what’s in their hearts. Even when I’m gone, He will still be with them. He has died for the right to step into the battle for their souls. He is prepared to stand by them for a lifetime—even to the last moment of breath—and appeal to them to let Him claim them forever as His.

THERE IS HOPE

To trust God with the process of our child’s salvation is an act of faith.

An ice storm had encased every surface of the woods around our house with a layer of glass. Even the road. I slipped into the night with my faithful dog panting clouds of fog beside me. The intense cold threatened to freeze my tears as I wept for my child. My grown child. “Oh, God! What is wrong? Is there help? Is he facing a lifetime of chaos and trouble? God, what is ahead?”



Nothing in the night answered me. Everything was frozen. The click of the dog's nails on ice was my only accompaniment as I slipped and cried, slipped and cried. Suddenly, in a flash I could hardly register, the darkness evaporated. A soundless, dazzling firework filled the sky over me. I wiped my face. The shimmering light didn't fizzle like the common firecracker but, instead, hung silently in the air.

Every icy twig of a bare but perfectly sculpted cherry tree had caught the beam of a neighbor's barn light across the field. I didn't want to move. I didn't want to breathe. I only wanted to think. If something so humble, so simple, could pierce the tearful blackness and create such wonder—there is hope.

Without thinking I spoke out loud. "There . . . Is . . . Hope." Through the darkness came the echo off the icy surfaces. "There . . . Is . . . Hope." I was startled. Was this a conversation? Was God answering me? I said it again, with emphasis. "There is *hope!*" The emphatic answer returned, "There is *hope!*" I repeated myself, anxious to hear more. Again and again, back and forth. The volley warmed my heart, dried my tears. I sang the words, and the melody rang back. I whispered them, and assurance whispered back. I cried tears of joy. There *is* hope! And God cried with me. There *is* hope!

With such comfort, I couldn't be so shallow as to think the words were a guarantee of results. Even better, they were to me the guarantee of His heart.

As long as He accompanies me, there is hope. As long as He is working in my life, He has special access to my children. As long as He is pleading for their hearts, they have choice. He will knock on every door and work in every circumstance. He loves them too much to force their will. He loves them too deeply to leave them to the enemy's traps without an escape. He loves. And He will never stop loving.

I pray—oh, do I pray—but my hope is not in praying harder. I choose my words carefully, but my hope is not in saying the right thing. I ask for wisdom, but my hope is not in relating to complex issues flawlessly.

My hope is in God. I rest my case in Him; I trust my children to Him. Only He knows the silent dialogue that He is carrying on with each of them. Only He understands the real reasons for the intensity of their struggles. Only He can fill the empty corners of their hearts. Only He is equipped to win the battle for their souls.

When I feel my helplessness in the face of my children's great need, He is enough. He loves them even more than I do. He is at work. I rejoice!

Anonymous Author. *Even though parenting is a shared journey for ministerial couples, it is also a very private experience, a personal faith walk. The author and her husband share the joy of loving their large family through the ups and downs of parenting and family life, but this story is a personal one and a testimony of how God Himself is the author's peace.*

TIPS TO SURVIVE

THRIVE

WHEN YOUR CHILD DOESN'T LIVE UP TO YOUR DREAMS

Since our greatest goal in life is to have our children saved in God's kingdom, their "straying" in any way is our greatest grief. But do not lose faith in God's power. The most important thing is to pray earnestly for them every day—many times a day. Repeat God's promises to yourself often.

Always show them love and acceptance and try not to show rejection of any kind—that would not be unconditional love. If our love is like God's, it will never change, even with their wrong decisions and actions. Remind them of your love frequently.

Keep communication open. If they are willing to talk, communicate as often as they want to. Some children don't want to communicate, but if you know where they are, send texts, notes, pictures, quotes, or interesting articles—but beware of sending anything "preachy" or condemning.

Keep a positive attitude about their lives. Ask God to help you keep your faith in them (and in Him) strong. It may take a long time, but God's timeclock is far better than ours!

Remember to pray, pray, pray, and keep claiming God's promises. Here are a few texts to ponder: Isaiah 49:24, 25 and 54:13; Jeremiah 24:7 and 31:16, 17; 1 John 5:14; Luke 1:17; Romans 4:20, 21; Matthew 12:20; Philippians 1:6; Numbers 23:19.

Have a survival tip that someone shared with you once upon a time, or that you have learned along the way? Send it in to share here: spouses@ministerialassociation.org.

Special Quotes

It is impossible to estimate the power of a praying mother's influence. She acknowledges God in all her ways. She takes her children before the throne of grace and presents them to Jesus, pleading for His blessing upon them.

The influence of those prayers is to those children as "a wellspring of life." These prayers, offered in faith, are the support and strength of the Christian mother. To neglect the duty of praying with our children is to lose one of the greatest blessings within our reach, one of the greatest helps amid the perplexities, cares, and burdens of our lifework.

—*The Adventist Home*, p. 266

Study the life of Christ, and strive to follow the pattern He has given you. Ask yourselves if you have done your whole duty to the church in your own house, and your duty to your neighbors. Have you been faithful in teaching your children lessons of Christian politeness? Are there not many opportunities for improvement in the government of your home? Do not neglect your children. Learn how to discipline yourselves, that you may be worthy of the respect of your children and your neighbors. If Christ is not abiding in your hearts, how can you teach others the lessons of patience and kindness that must be manifest in the life of every Christian? Be sure that you are keeping the way of the Lord, and then teach the truth to those around you.

—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 496, 497

Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first. In the day of final reckoning God will inquire what he did to win to Christ those whom he took the responsibility of bringing into the world. Great good done for others cannot cancel the debt that he owes to God to care for his own children.

—*The Adventist Home*, p. 353

Talitha Cumi

SCREAMS JUST PAST THE CLOSED DOOR enrage the senses. Her airy, linen clothes cling to her body as the sticky afternoon heat settles; even the slight breezes have left alone the sands of the street below. Anguish mixed with despair threatens to spill out of the compound.

Then, He enters. Stirring up the street sand, He strides through the corridors, every footstep echoing hope, the antithesis of despair. As the door to her room swings open, light illuminates the dim space, and eyes are drawn to her motionless body. She appears asleep, except for the lack of breath exiting her lips.

“*Talitha cumi*,” He whispers commandingly.

How often lately have you felt so overwhelmed that even though you’re accomplishing the tasks necessary for survival, your soul is shriveling and your heart is rotting? You may get up, feed the kids, go to work, feed yourself (maybe), come home, and go to bed despairing—but too weary to even cry.

Your focus is nonexistent; you can’t even sit through a 20-minute sermon without your mind wandering. You used to feel things: joy, hurt, anger, excitement. Now you feel nothing; you completely lack emotion. If you could muster up the motivation to actually care, you’d realize that feeling *something*—even if it is a broken feeling—is better than this toxic *nothingness*. It’s been so long since you felt like love was made for you that if you tried it on, it might not even fit anymore.

You self-medicate with even more mind-numbing habits, unconsciously flinging yourself further into this blank desert of nonexistence.

You appear at peace to those around you, but the struggle for life hides just under your superficial calm. You’re not ready to die, but you’ve forgotten how to live.

Then, He enters. “*Talitha cumi*,” He whispers commandingly. A language you don’t know, words long forgotten, but the way He says it makes your throat tickle and your fingertips tingle.

“Little girl, I say to you, arise.”



“Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy; yes, with utter destruction.”

Quietly, her eyes pop open. Her mother’s breath catches. She pulls herself up to sit on the side of the bed, color flooding her youthful cheeks. The event is not accompanied with a loud, earth-shattering noise or camera flashes or Facebook announcements. The wailing outside fades. She glances around the room, confused, then rubs her stomach with the sudden realization that it’s been a long time since she felt this hungry. “Feed her!” He bids, grinning at her family.

“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord” (Lamentations 2:19, NKJV).

“Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy; yes, with utter destruction” (Micah 2:10, NKJV).

“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!” (Song of Solomon 2:13, NKJV).

“Shake yourself from the dust, arise; sit down. . . . Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!” (Isaiah 52:2, NKJV).

“Little girl, I say to you, *arise*.” He sees the little girl trapped in your heart, dear one. He knows the numbness you feel. He comprehends how hungry you are for understanding, for a life of meaning, for love. And in this beautiful love letter to *you*, He has said, “Pour out your heart like

water” to Me! “Arise and depart: *for this is not your rest*.”

He knows that even when you sleep, you’re not getting the rest you need. He sees how tired your heart is. He calls you “my love” and “my fair one.” When was the last time you truly felt like His fair one? This is how He really sees you. “Shake yourself from the dust. . . . Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck.” He wants nothing more than for you to be *free*. Free to *feel*, free to *hope*, free to *love* as freely as He loves you, despite the broken, lost love of your past.

He is ready to resurrect your heart, sweet mama. His words to you, then and now, continue to be, “*Talitha cumi*. Little girl, arise.” 

Dakota Morgan is originally from a small town in Washington State. Dakota and her husband serve a three-church district in the Midwestern United States.



A FIGHTING STRATEGY: SHOWING KINDNESS



SOMETIMES I THINK the greatest struggles I have are with myself. These battles seem so hard because the issues and challenges involve things over which I have little control.

Pastors and their spouses struggle perhaps even harder because we know what we and our families are “supposed” to look like and how we are to behave. Some things spin out of our control—our best-laid Sabbath plans, our children’s choices or behaviors, our spouse’s schedule, or maybe even our spouse’s latest and greatest ministry opportunity—yet they all press into our lives affecting who we are and how we will react.

I read Galatians 5:22, 23 about the fruit of the Spirit, and I became inclined to study more fully the attribute of “kindness”—something I thought might help me to react with grace and dignity and help me gain control of what at times felt like chaos and defeat.

I felt the need for a deeper understanding of others—to really shift my focus. Rather than feeling overcome by how the people around me were acting and feeding my out-of-control spin—or rather than responding in a negative way to my disappointment of failed expectations—I would change my “fighting” tactics. I began to think that maybe life’s unexpected challenges and battles with others could best be won with kindness!

As I studied deeper I came across Shaunti Feldhahn’s book *The Kindness Challenge*, which taught me a few tips on how to develop kindness.

Shaunti suggests taking a 30-day challenge that involves treating with kindness in three ways each day the person who may often be responsible for those unplanned “spins.” To do this she suggests the following:

- Nixing negativity
- Practicing praise
- Carrying out kindness

It is her third point I will focus on. The following story of the power of kindness, taken from the book *Jumping Through Fires* by David Nasser, happened in a little town in Alabama, and the kindness shown was instrumental in converting one of the teenage friends to Christianity.

“A few weeks before Christmas seven of us jammed into our friend Larry’s car after Sunday night church and went out to eat. It was late; none of us were really that hungry, and we were a bunch of teenagers being louder than we needed to be in a restaurant. Our waitress was not happy. She rolled her eyes, took our order with a grumpy attitude, and gave us service that was mediocre at best. She was tired and in no mood to deal with a bunch of high-maintenance, dessert-only kids. We finished our food and left. As they always did, somebody paid for my food. These nights out never cost me a dime.

“When we piled back into Larry’s car, I ended up sitting on two people, scrunched against the backseat window on the driver’s side. As Larry started backing out of the parking space, I heard a loud tap-tap-tap an inch from my left ear. I turned toward the sound and saw our waitress right in my face at the window, our noses separated only by the thickness of the glass. Larry slammed on the brakes, rolled down my window, and then craned his neck around to look at the waitress. Because of the car next to us, she couldn’t get to his front door to talk to him, so she poked her head

through my window, as Larry twisted around to face her. Now our three noses were almost touching.

“‘Get out of the car!’ she yelled. If only she’d been that energetic when she was waiting on us. ‘Get out of the car!’ she repeated, short of breath from her run outside.

“ ‘What is it?’ Larry asked.

“She said she’d just been chewed out by her boss for not stopping us. We’d made a big mistake and overpaid—by a lot. The bill was \$30, and we had left more than \$130. She held up a wad of bills.

“Larry smiled. ‘Ma’am, that wasn’t a mistake. We know it’s nearly Christmas, and we know you’re working hard. We got you at the end of a long and tiring day. We just wanted to bless you, so we emptied out our pockets. If we’d had more, we’d have given you more. And we’ll be back next week.’

“The waitress yelled right in my ear, ‘Make sure you get my table!’ Big tears welled up in her eyes and rolled down her face. I looked at Larry, that massive hulk of a linebacker, and he was crying too. Everybody in the car was crying. I was crying! I couldn’t help it.”

This story dramatically illustrates the power of kindness and grace—my new “fighting” strategy!

Although it may not be until heaven that we will see the power and results of little kindnesses, I’m sure there will be eternal benefits. Do you want to join me on a 30-day challenge? Share your stories on our Facebook group ([facebook.com/groups/ministerialspouses](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ministerialspouses)) as you implement being more kind to all those around you, including those sitting in your church pews. 7

Malinda Haley is a pastor’s wife, the mother of three grown children, a maternal/infant care nurse, and—above all—His humble servant. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Steve, who is president of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.



THREE PREACHER'S KIDS AND GOD'S SAVING GRACE

I WAS ATTENDING MY OLDER BROTHER'S memorial service, and I was in tears! Testimonies abounded from his two divorced wives, two loving daughters, many extended family relatives, partying friends, work associates, and church friends from the later years of his life. The power of prayer and God's grace were brought into such clear focus that we all left praising the Lord!

Alan had been wild and was separated from the Lord and the church most of his life, but Jesus had found a way to save him in the last few years before his death. Our parents, who had previously passed away, will be so happy at the resurrection! A life lived mostly in rebellion to God's principles was redeemed just in time, like the thief on the cross.

Alan died of a massive stroke. The previous week he had attended small-group Bible studies, a diabetes recovery seminar, and a Friday evening evangelistic series where he had again reaffirmed his decision to totally surrender to God and accept His gift of eternal life.

In the fall of 2010 my young pastor son, Zac, and his wife, Leah, decided to make Alan one of seven people to focus on for intense intercessory prayer during 40 days of prayer and fasting at Andrews University. About that time I, too, felt impressed to strongly plead for his salvation.

Major traumas began to happen to Alan. His second wife left him, and his diabetes grew worse, leading to the amputation of a leg. But amid these trials and others,

“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Isaiah 43:5, 6, NKJV

while lying in a hospital bed, Alan finally said yes to Jesus. He still struggled with challenges and temptations, but he was now in the family of God and covered by His righteousness. With support of loved ones and a caring, active church family, he continued to grow in Christ throughout the rest of his life.

Are you praying for someone who hasn't yet accepted Jesus? If so, don't give up! It took more than 70 years of prayer for Alan. My older sister, Carol, was 55 before she returned to God and was rebaptized. The last years of her life were spent helping young people at an Adventist college and growing her own personal relationship with Jesus.

I was raised in an ordained preacher's home with my brother and sister (7 and 14 years older than I). My mom was a church school teacher, and my dad was a publishing director. We were three preacher's kids (PKs) who had broken our parents' hearts. They had cried out to God in desperation for their family for many years.

My dad traveled a lot for his job, and Mom took us to church. We all also attended Adventist schools. Although my mother eventually developed a close relationship with Jesus, at the time she did not have a living experience with the Lord or assurance of her own salvation. To her the Christian life was more about behavior and following the doctrines and rules of the church. She often expressed her own doubts that she was good enough to be saved, but also urged us

to try to obey and said that we “probably” could make it to heaven. This had an unintentional effect on my siblings and me and contributed, in part, to our not developing a personal saving relationship with Jesus for ourselves. Our parents also failed to engage us in mission and outreach, and I, too, rebelled against God and the church. I grew more and more resistant to spiritual things and more and more interested in worldly temptations.

I was expelled from three of our academies, began using alcohol and drugs, and became involved in various dangerous activities. By the time I went to college, I wanted out of the church with all its rules and restrictions. I wanted to be “free,” to have “fun.” So I moved out of our home and in with friends who were negative influences on me. I was taking pre-law and making good money at a part-time job, but my friends and I were living an unhealthful and non-Christian lifestyle—to the point where our lives could have been destroyed. But even when one friend, the son of a conference treasurer, was killed in a drug deal, we just longed for more excitement and adventure.

At this point my parents did something very, very right. They called all the literature evangelists and other friends to pray for their boy Jerry. They did not hide my rebellion but asked everyone they could to claim Bible promises for my deliverance and salvation. They put their hand on such texts as Isaiah 42:7, 16, Isaiah 49:25, and Proverbs 22:6, because they knew that God's Word is powerful and unleashes His power in the war behind the scenes.

And God answered those many united intercessory prayers! The people prayed me miserable! Instead of enjoying my lifestyle, I grew worried and depressed, and my relationships began to fall apart. Young people who have believing, faithful Christian parents and friends can't get away from the love of Jesus and the drawing of the Holy Spirit! God loves with an everlasting love, and when we intensely join together in prayer and claim His promises, He works in miraculous ways.

One night some years later, after a bad drug trip, my girlfriend and I were sitting in our apartment feeling depressed and asking, "Why aren't we happy? We are free of church rules and can do what we want, but we're not enjoying our lives. What will make us happy?" Thankfully, the Holy Spirit was there to guide our minds.

We began to think of everyone who had treated us with love when we were so mean to them: the woman from the Adventist church who had brought us food to our apartment; our parents, who had continued to love us unconditionally; and the Bible worker who himself was a recovering alcoholic that my dad had sent to our door to try to help us. We treated him meanly and slammed the door in his face. Even though he was angry at first, he later came back, put his business card into my pocket, and said, "Someday you are going to need me. When you do, call me."

Finally, that night we said, "Maybe what we are really looking for is love." We remembered from our training that "God is love," so we decided to give Jesus a chance and called the Bible worker—even though it was in the middle of the night. He came regularly to study the Word with us and two of our friends. He also encouraged us to attend a small Adventist church in West Denver, Colorado, that was on fire with the love of Jesus. The members surrounded us in love even though we were coming out of the rock music and drug culture. Their acceptance was unconditional, and if we didn't attend the Friday night study group or missed church, they called us, asking, "Where were you? We missed you!" Although Satan in many different ways tried to pull us back to our previous lifestyle, we were rebaptized about six

months later. My dear father, with tears in his eyes, had the privilege of rebaptizing me and three of my friends.

Soon I felt God calling me to full-time ministry, and the following fall I enrolled at Andrews University to complete my undergraduate degree in theology. The first day I walked onto the campus, the young man in charge of Christian ministries met me on the sidewalk. As we talked, he asked if I would help lead out in coordinating small groups of students who would be planning for evangelistic outreach meetings in small area churches in the spring. I said yes, and it turned out to be a wonderful experience that helped to ground me in my walk with Jesus.

The members of my small Bible-study group became my nurturing friends and outreach partners. We praised, prayed, studied the Word, and encouraged one another into a major revival of godliness and joy. We are still friends, and many of us are currently leaders in the church. God is so good!

So keep praying for those wayward loved ones! We are told that "ministering angels are waiting about the throne to instantly obey the mandate of Jesus Christ to answer every prayer offered in earnest, living faith" (see Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 377). Also, "fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5, 6, NKJV). Praise God, for He is able! 7

Jerry Page is the secretary for the Ministerial Association at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.



Jancy Shankar

SAVED FROM SUICIDE

WHILE AT HOME ONE AFTERNOON during the summer of 2016, I felt a strong conviction to visit a house that was only a short distance away. I had seen a family living in that house, but I didn't know who they were. So I went and knocked on their door.

No one answered at first, so I continued to knock. Eventually a young woman unlocked and opened the door. She was sobbing. I asked if I could come inside. She said, "Please, come in."

I sat with her in the front room and asked why she was crying. At first she would not answer me, but as I continued to inquire, she finally poured out her story.

She said her name was Jancy. Although born and raised in a Christian family, she was now married to her uncle's son, who was a drunkard. She had two little children—a girl, 6, and a boy, 3. Her husband was working for a private finance company where he authorized loans. Unfortunately, he authorized a large loan for a woman who didn't pay it back, and he was unable to locate her. As a result, he lost his job and was being held accountable to pay the finance company the enormous amount due for the loan.

Now Jancy's family was experiencing a severe financial crisis. They had no income, the whole family was starving, and Jancy didn't know what to do. She didn't want to share her problem with her parents and cause them stress. Finally, in despair, she had decided to commit suicide that

day. No one was at home at the time. She said, "I was formulating a plan to hang myself. If you had come a few minutes later, you would have found only my body without life."

I comforted Jancy with verses from Scripture. I spent more than an hour showing her many promises from the Bible. She became convinced that God loved her, and she said that she would never attempt to end her life again; instead, she would pray to Jesus for deliverance in times of struggle. I could see peace in her face. Then I prayed with her and went home.

I continued to visit Jancy and her husband. I told her husband that drinking is evil and showed several verses from Scripture about how to trust God and overcome temptations. He accepted that and promised to give his life to Jesus.

Jancy's husband has since found a new job and has given up drinking alcohol. Jancy and her children have been faithfully attending our church in Manamadurai, Tamil Nadu, India. After hearing her testimony and seeing her faithfulness, the principal of the Seventh-day Adventist secondary school in Manamadurai gave her a job at the school so her children could attend.

Jancy and her husband are now waiting to be baptized. May the good Lord bless this family! ■

J. Tamilarasi and her husband serve the Lord in India.



WHEN OUR CHILDREN “TAKE A BREAK” FROM CHURCH

WHEN OUR CHILDREN ARE YOUNG we can find masses of books, articles, websites, and parenting seminars to help us whenever we don't know what to do. Once our children become adults, all this helpful support seems to evaporate. But sometimes parenting adult children can be even more complex when they make challenging choices about faith, relationships, and lifestyles. Fortunately, the Bible is a useful GPS system to help us navigate this unpredictable and sometimes hostile territory.

THEY'RE IN GOD'S HANDS

Whenever we're relating to our adult children we need to remember they will always be God's children too. They may make unwise choices and wander around in the wilderness for many years, but He still loves them and watches over them. Some children need to leave the church to find God, and sometimes they discover God in amazing and unexpected places. We have all taken wrong turns and wandered through various deserts. But He keeps leading and guiding all of us. He can use our wanderings to bring us into a closer relationship with Him.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide them, in His way, into God's purpose for their lives. Let the Holy Spirit prompt you when to speak, what to say, and when to stay silent. Our children will experience more of God's love and grace through our loving silence than through our critical words. Make each word a gift (Ephesians 4:29).

LOVE FIRST

Our adult children need to know, without a shadow of a doubt, that we will never stop loving them and being there for them, whatever choices they make. Jesus accepted people who were struggling because of their poor life choices. He lifted them up and showed them His love and forgiveness. His incredible love inspired them to turn their lives around and follow Him.

According to Paul, love never fails, and it starts with our patience toward those who are not growing as fast as we want them to. God is continually patient with us, slow to anger, and abounding in love (Psalm 103:8). We can be more patient with our adult children when we reflect on God's patience with us. As we read through 1 Corinthians

13:4-8 we can find plenty of good advice for experiencing a loving relationship with our adult children: be humble, be respectful, don't keep score of wrongs, delight in the good, always protect, always hope, and always persevere.

NOTICE WHERE GOD IS AT WORK

Christian parents struggle with a deep sense of loss, shame, inadequacy, and hopelessness when their children take a break from church and make other challenging lifestyle choices. We are not God. It is not our responsibility to save our children; instead, it is our responsibility to love them and take away their aloneness (Genesis 2:18). We can help them experience the rich dimensions of God's grace and love. We can teach them what we know about God. Then the choice is theirs.

If our children sense our sadness and anxiety, or feel that we are critical of their lives, it can deeply hurt our relationship with them. Alternatively, we can focus on their positive values and character strengths and see this as evidence that God is at work in their lives (Philippians 4:8). If they are loving, joyful, peaceful, kind, patient, good, gentle, generous, and humble, then they are showing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). We can look for the effects of His Spirit blowing through their lives and thank God.

NURTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Stay connected with your adult children through their favorite means of communication. Accept them with open arms, especially when their lives are messy, and offer help and support when they're struggling. Respect their choices and beliefs.

Reflect on each interaction and ask yourself: "Did this strengthen my relationship with my adult child or weaken it?" Let your children know that nothing could ever weaken your love for them.

BE CREATIVELY GENEROUS

Our heavenly Father blesses all His children with sunshine and rain whether they follow Him or not. His love inspires us to keep blessing our children as fairly and generously as possible. Surprise them with little gifts and treats to brighten up their days. The surprises don't have to be expensive. Kathy sends fully stamped loyalty cards to her children. Adam saves points on his airline card and uses them to buy plane

tickets for his sons. Pop some money into their bank accounts when they're going through a tough time. These little expressions of love and generosity can speak powerfully to their hearts.

RESPOND COMPASSIONATELY

Be generously compassionate with parents whose children are taking a break from church. Most people who choose to leave the church do so because they haven't experienced the love and care that they needed, especially in a time of crisis. We don't know all the complex and painful stories behind other people's choices. We need to check that we are not carrying an attitude of self-righteousness because our children are still choosing to come to an Adventist church, or an attitude of judgment that they must have been less spiritual parents. Don't add to their pain and grief. Listen compassionately and encourage them. Pray for them and their children and show loving acceptance to the whole family.

REFLECT SPIRITUALLY

Revisit the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) and the parable of the two sons (Matthew 21:28-32). Both tell stories of "obedient" sons who didn't have a positive attitude toward their father, and "disobedient" sons who understood their father's love and responded positively in the end. The parables of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), and the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) also have powerful and encouraging messages from God that can comfort the hearts of hurting parents if we dig deep into their treasures.

PRAYER AND LOVE SAVES (PALS)

Why not start a PALS group in your local church? This is a resource for parents whose children are taking a break from church and encourages parents to pray together with their children and find fresh ways to love them. It was created by Dorothy Eaton Watts and is available through your local Women's Ministries department or from AdventSource (<https://www.adventsource.org>). 

Karen Holford is director of Family Ministries for the Trans-European Division.



"I'M SO TIRED!"

WHEN I SAW MY FRIEND SHERRY* arrive at our church-operated community service food bank that morning, I knew something was not right. She looked pale, exhausted, and withdrawn. Even her voice sounded tired as she answered, "I'm OK" upon my inquiry.

EVERYONE GETS TIRED, RIGHT?

It's normal to feel exhausted at the end of a busy day, after a good exercise workout, after helping with a strenuous project, or even as a result of jet lag. Ongoing episodes of fatigue, however, can lower functionality and decrease quality of life.

Feeling tired is the most common complaint physicians hear. Diagnosing the cause can be challenging, as there are a number of possible contributing factors. A good medical history, a physical examination, and possible additional tests performed by medical personnel will likely be recommended in order to pinpoint the cause and initiate treatment. One thing is for sure, though: feeling tired most of the time is not normal, and a doctor's visit may help get your life back on track.

YOUR BODY MAY BE TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.

1. You are not getting enough sleep.

Many people are too stressed and too busy, which makes it difficult to slow down and get enough sleep. Adults need up to eight hours of sleep per night. Routinely getting less than that can result in a buildup of sleep debt. Symptoms of sleep debt can include chronic fatigue, lack of motivation and concentration, memory loss, increased anxiety, and depression. Look for ways to help yourself get your best rest, such as regular hours for sleep, getting some exercise every day, eating only light foods in the evening, having a comfortable sleeping environment, resisting checking e-mail or social media accounts just before bedtime, and making adequate, restful sleep a top priority.

2. It could be sleep apnea.

Loud snoring, pauses in breathing, or shallow breathing lasting anywhere from a few seconds to a minute while a person is sleeping are symptoms of sleep apnea. Breathing usually returns to normal with a snort, a choking sound, or a loud cough, and can cause

disruption to good sleep. Other symptoms of sleep apnea can be tiredness, morning headaches, memory problems, poor concentration, irritability, depression, and a sore throat upon waking. Your doctor will recommend a sleep study to analyze the presence and severity of sleep apnea and then advise helpful treatment. Untreated sleep apnea can lead to heart disease, stroke, or even sudden death.



3. Your environment is cluttered.

Disorganization and clutter, whether at work or at home, can be mentally exhausting. The mere sight of it can restrict your ability to focus on any one task. On the other hand, an organized, neat space will give you the feeling of efficiency, decrease your stress, and help you keep your energy level steady.

4. You may be anemic.

A simple blood test at your doctor's office will show if you are suffering from anemia. With anemia your body has fewer red blood cells, which means there isn't enough hemoglobin, the substance that gives blood cells their red color. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of the body. Too little hemoglobin, or a low red blood cell count, translates to less oxygen available for the body, resulting in symptoms of fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, and headaches.

5. Your thyroid is slowing down.

Anyone can have problems with their thyroid gland, but most people (especially women) find their thyroid function decreasing with age. Hypothyroidism (a slow thyroid) is a condition in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough of the hormone needed to maintain the body's normal metabolism needs. When thyroid hormone levels are low the metabolism can slow down, resulting in various symptoms that can include tiredness, weight gain, and feeling cold. Hypothyroidism can be diagnosed by a simple blood test, followed by recommended treatment.

6. You might be depressed.

Symptoms of depression can include feeling sad and empty, a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, tiredness, changes in appetite, a lack of motivation, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty sleeping, and even thoughts of death or suicide. If you feel

like you may be depressed, speak with your doctor. Some routine blood tests may be ordered, including a thyroid test. One symptom of hypothyroidism can be feelings of depression. Your doctor may also recommend that you see a professional therapist who can guide you in working through your feelings.

7. Your heart may be the problem.

Heart failure can cause you to feel tired, especially with physical exertion. When the heart is not working normally, it is less effective in pumping that important oxygenated blood throughout the body to muscles and other important tissues. Daily activities such as walking, cleaning the house, keeping up with work at the office, and carrying groceries to the car can become challenging. Other symptoms of heart disease can include chest pain, palpitations, dizziness, fainting, and shortness of breath. Since heart symptoms can differ between women and men, fatigue may be the primary



symptom instead of chest pain for women. In order to receive the best treatment possible, it's very important to talk to your doctor sooner rather than later about *all* your symptoms, including a history of your family's past medical conditions.

8. You may have chronic fatigue syndrome.

Fatigue that does not improve with rest and may even worsen with physical or mental exertion is known as chronic fatigue syndrome. Other symptoms can include short-term memory impairment, lack of concentration, muscle and joint pain, headaches, tender lymph nodes, and frequent sore throat. Although the causes of chronic fatigue syndrome are under ongoing scientific study, it is important to see your doctor, who can suggest some helpful treatments.

9. You've been skipping your workout sessions.

Failing to exercise on a regular basis can lead to symptoms of fatigue, low energy, and sluggishness.

About 20 to 30 minutes a day of heart-

pumping physical activity is a good way to boost your energy levels and get those feel-good endorphins working for you.

Choose activities you enjoy and make exercise a daily routine. Your body will run more efficiently, and you may not feel so tired as often. However, do not work out just before bedtime, as this has the



potential to disrupt and delay restful sleep. And be sure to check with your doctor first about what exercises will be best for you.

10. You are not drinking enough water.

Dehydration causes the heart to pump blood less efficiently, which decreases oxygen and nutrient flow throughout the body. It’s a sure recipe for fatigue and lack of energy. Make sure to get those eight-plus glasses of water daily (or the amount your doctor recommends).



11. Your eating habits are working against you.

Skipping breakfast and snacking on empty calories are two eating habits that can sabotage your energy level and overall general health. Give your body the fuel it needs at the beginning of the day to get you through the morning. Making sure to get good nutrition at the start of the day will decrease the temptation to snack on junk foods later on, which can cause blood sugar to spike and then crash, leaving you really tired. If you must snack, reach instead for nutritious fiber-rich foods such as fruit or veggie finger-foods, which can help keep you on track until your next nutritious meal. Skip the sugar-loaded sodas and fruit juices too, and keep that water bottle nearby for handy use.

12. You may be too sweet.

Diabetes can cause fatigue when sugar levels run too high or too low. An enormous portion of the population worldwide is affected by type 2 diabetes, which is a condition related to lifestyle and heredity. Many individuals with elevated blood sugars are unaware that they are either diabetic or pre-diabetic. The cause of type 2 diabetes is the body’s failure to use insulin effectively, or maybe not at all. Sugar then remains in the bloodstream instead of entering the cells, where it could have been used as an energy source for the body. The result is tiredness and sluggishness. Your doctor will help you determine if you have a sugar-related problem, and then advise you regarding diet, exercise, and appropriate medications as needed.

13. You are just bored.

Our mental attitude has a direct effect on our physiological response. Feeling tired can be caused by dissatisfaction, lack of challenge, or a lack of interest in what we are doing. Take time to analyze yourself. Is it the job that is boring? If so, think of creative ways to improve your situation. How can you make what you do more enjoyable, more productive, more satisfying? How can you improve your skills? There’s no guarantee your wages will increase, and you may not be promoted, but the result can be less fatigue, much more zest for life, and increased satisfaction *for you!*

SUMMARY

The causes of fatigue listed here are fairly common. Numerous medical conditions can cause fatigue. My friend Sherry (mentioned previously) suffers from a chronic, slowly debilitating disease, which periodically seriously affects her gastrointestinal tract. During those episodes she is unable to sleep more than a couple hours at night. A trip to the emergency department of a local hospital provides her with the medical help she needs.

If you feel your tiredness is out of the ordinary and you aren’t just missing out on the sleep you need to feel rested, make an appointment to see your doctor. Finding a reason for your fatigue could result not only in an improved outcome but also help detect conditions that should be diagnosed for other reasons as well. 7

“OUR SAVIOR’S WORDS, ‘COME UNTO ME . . . AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST’ (MATTHEW 11:28), ARE A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HEALING OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL ILLS.”

THE MINISTRY OF HEALING,
ELLEN G. WHITE, P. 115

*Name changed

Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading.





JESUS' SPECIAL Prayer



JESUS GAVE US AN AMAZING PRAYER (see Matthew 6:9-13)! When I was a child people said this prayer in a very boring way, and I didn't realize how wonderful it was until I was grown up. Now I really like saying it quietly to myself and thinking about the special meaning in each line. Here are a few things you can do to explore Jesus' special prayer.



Discover more about God's fatherly love. Read Psalm 23, Psalm 103, and 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and discover some of the many ways God loves you. Ask your family for their favorite verses about God's love too. God loves us in more ways than we can imagine. See how many you can find!

ALL ABOUT GOD'S LOVE

Jesus prayed His special prayer to help us understand how much God loves us.

Below you will find the lines of the prayer on the left and what they tell us about God's love on the right. But the right side has been jumbled up! Sort them out again by drawing lines between the words of the prayer and what they tell us about God's love.

JESUS' SPECIAL PRAYER (NKJV)

Our Father in heaven
 Hallowed be Your name
 Your kingdom come
 Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
 Give us this day our daily bread
 And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
 And do not lead us into temptation
 But deliver us from the evil one
 For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever

WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT GOD'S LOVE

God wants to be our King today and forever.
 God lovingly forgives us when we make mistakes, and we need to forgive others too.
 God lovingly helps us to make good choices when we are tempted to make bad ones.
 God lovingly protects us from Satan and his tricks.
 God loves us like the best Father ever.
 It's important for us to do what God knows is best for us, just like the angels do in heaven.
 God is holy, so we worship His name.
 God will always be our strong, glorious, and loving King.
 God lovingly provides everything we need.



A FATHER'S LOVE!

Make a simple card for your father, grandfather, or someone else you love.

Fold a piece of heavy paper or cardstock to make a card. Cut out a heart shape to fit on the front.

Make a horizontal fold across the heart just below the central dip in the top of the heart. Spread a thin layer of glue over the top section of the heart. Stick the top of the heart to the front of the card.

When the glue is dry, write on the front of the heart: "You show me God's love when you . . ." Then lift up the lower half of the heart and write something your father or grandfather does to show you God's love, such as "help me" or "forgive me" or "are kind to me."

Make sure your writing will be covered by the heart when you fold it down again. You can draw a very faint pencil line around the very edges of the paper heart to help you stay inside the shape. Erase the lines after you have written your message.

Write your name and a greeting inside the card. Then give it to the person as a surprise. You could make one for your mother or grandmother too!



HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

God has so many names! How many can you find? Write the letters of the alphabet down one side of a sheet of paper and see if you can discover at least one name of God beginning with each letter of the alphabet. If you can't find a name for one of the letters, find a word that describes God instead. Examples: A—Almighty, B—Bridegroom, C—Creator.

YOUR KINGDOM COME

Imagine a place where God is the King! In what ways would our world be different if everyone lived in a kingdom of peace and love and joy? Draw a picture or write the story of your day in a world where God is King and everything is perfect.

We want Jesus to come soon! Write a letter to Jesus telling Him why you want Him to come back soon. Or cut out a white paper cloud shape. Cut strips of paper in the colors of a rainbow and stick them to the back of the cloud so that the colored strips radiate out from the cloud. On each strip of paper write a Bible verse about Jesus coming back to take us to heaven.





YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

It's God's will that we love Him and love each other (Matthew 22:37, 38). Cut out a big paper heart. On one side write three ways that you could show God how much you love Him. On the other side write three ways that you could show lovingkindness to another person today. Do all the things you wrote down. Next to each thing you did, draw a face (emoticon) to show how you felt after each activity. How do you think God felt when you did these lovely things? And how do you think the people felt?



GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Think about everything you have eaten in the past 24 hours and thank God for each thing you ate. Pray for the people who planted and harvested the food, packaged it, transported it, and sold it. Hundreds of people help to feed us every day!

Help make some bread, crackers, healthful muffins, or biscuits. Take them to someone you know, and you will help God to provide their daily bread. Or make a food parcel with all the food a family needs for a whole day and leave it on the doorstep of a needy family.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

God leads us away from temptation! Draw a signpost on a sheet of paper. Draw the tall post on the left side of the paper, and draw four to six arrows pointing to the right side, like a signpost on the road. What are some of your temptations? On each arrow write a Bible promise or verse that will help you to be strong when you are tempted. Ask your parents to help you find the verses. Then choose a few of these verses to memorize. Whenever you feel tempted, say one of these verses instead. That's exactly what Jesus did when Satan came to tempt Him in the wilderness.



FORGIVE US OUR SINS

Take a large, deep baking pan and half fill it with salt or very dry sand. Write what you have done wrong in the salt or sand, and then pray for God's forgiveness. Shake the pan from side to side as you pray or wipe your hand over the salt. When you open your eyes the sin will have disappeared into the salt and no one can ever find it again. Thank God for His amazing forgiveness!



PUT IT INTO ACTION!

Create actions for every line of Jesus' special prayer. He loves you so much, and He always wants to welcome you with open arms! Start your prayer by giving yourself a big hug from God as you say the words "Our Father," then point to heaven and just keep going. Teach your action prayer to your whole family. Watch me say this prayer with the actions our family uses. Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Hugging the Lord's Prayer with Karen Holford."



SCRAPBOOK YOUR PRAYER!

Make a scrapbook of Jesus' special prayer. This can be a fun Sabbath project for your whole family. Write each line of the prayer on a different page and decorate the page with pictures and words. You could stick pictures of children and fathers on the page that says "Our Father." Find pictures of food for "Give us this day our daily bread." Make the book in order to help your younger siblings learn the prayer. Or use it to journal your thoughts and ideas about this special prayer. 



Karen Holford loves having real fun with her three young grandchildren.

Dear Deborah,

My heart is so heavy, and my tears are nonstop. For years we have invested spiritually in our children's lives, but our oldest son has denounced our faith. We have done everything "by the

book"—or at least we thought we had. We were shocked when he told us that he was through with our religion, and that he wasn't even sure he believed in God anymore.

We probably have not handled this situation correctly, and

we're desperately searching for answers. We're also concerned about how this will affect our younger children. How do we move forward as a family amid this bombshell?

*Sincerely,
Heartbroken*

Dear Heartbroken,

My heart breaks with yours—and with the hearts of many others—because this unfortunate scenario is shared by way too many families. The statistics showing the high number of young people hemorrhaging from our faith and from other denominations are staggering. Our heavenly Father, however, cares for these children with an unfathomable love, and He is capable of providing restoration! Thankfully, I see many families claim victory as their children return to God.

The following points can be helpful when reaching out to our children:

1. **Do not use force.** Begging and pleading with your son or daughter to return to church will only push them further away. However, do not be passive either. In other words, don't neglect to invite your child to events, programs, or activities they might find interesting. If they decline, move on in prayer without making them feel guilty.
2. **Avoid criticism.** There is likely a deeper issue. The sources of our children's struggles may include doubt, alternative lifestyles, guilt, anger, etc. A denouncement of faith usually indicates that something has changed significantly in their lives. It is crucial to not make demands or accusations against their moral choices. Saying things such as, "Stop doing that" or "You better end that relationship immediately" will result in your child "tuning out." Instead, your goal is to draw your child back into a thriving relationship with Jesus and healthy spiritual

connections. "Bite the tongue" and refrain from strong rebuke. Correction may be necessary, but probably not best right off the bat in a fresh situation.

3. **Don't nag.** Nagging simply doesn't work. Usually it has the opposite effect. Sadly, many young adults and older adults have purposely steered away from church and religion because of parents constantly harping on the issue of church. Questions like, "When are you going to stop being so stubborn and come back to church?" or "Why are you doing this to us?" simply waste a parent's energy; your child can never possibly know how much your heart aches over their poor decisions.

Successful restoration happens without nagging or forcing. Instead, respectful and gentle invitations to church and other events, warm conversations, persevering prayer, and unconditional love are far more superior options.

John 14:1 is a great reminder to not let our hearts be troubled, and 1 Peter 5:10 gives us great assurance: "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (NIV).

Continue in faith, and exalt Jesus. Your younger children will inevitably have some questions and concerns, but as they watch you and your family pray and trust God completely, their faith will grow and mature as well.

Blessings and Prayer,
Deborah

POWERFUL PROMISES FOR PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN



“Parents have a great and responsible work to do, and they may well inquire: ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ But God has promised to give wisdom to those that ask in faith, and He will do just as He said He would. *He is pleased with the faith that takes Him at His word.* The mother of Augustine prayed for her son’s conversion. She saw no evidence that the Spirit of God was impressing his heart, but she was not discouraged. She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting before God His own words, and pleaded as only a mother can. Her deep humiliation, her earnest importunities, her unwavering faith, prevailed, and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart. Today He is just as ready to listen to the petitions of His people. His ‘hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear;’ and if Christian parents seek Him earnestly, He will fill their mouths with arguments and for His name’s sake will work mightily in their behalf in the conversion of their children.”

—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 322

BIBLE PROMISES TO CLAIM

ISAIAH 49:25

“For I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.”

ISAIAH 44:3

“I will pour My spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring.”

ISAIAH 54:13

“All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.”

PSALM 72:4

“He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.”

JEREMIAH 31:16, 17

“Thus says the Lord: refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border.”

JEREMIAH 29:11, 12

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.”

3 JOHN 4

“I have no greater joy than to hear that My children walk in truth.”

All texts taken from New King James Version.

FROM THE FIELD

Annual Council 2018

More than 100 spouses met in Battle Creek, Michigan, during Annual Council in October. Meetings focused on church history and how pioneers led the church. Vicki Griffin, Health Ministries director for the Michigan Conference, presented several informative, useful seminars for the spouses. They spent time in prayer, learning, and fellowship.



Nancy Wilson (right) prays with Vicki Griffin before Vicki speaks at spouse meetings in Battle Creek, Michigan.



Spouses meet for prayer time during Annual Council.



The Wilson family dressed in the style of early Adventist pioneers.

East-Central Africa Division

In April, the West Kenya Union Conference held a four-day Shepherdess congress at the University of Eastern Africa in Baraton. About 450 Shepherdesses gathered to share challenges and victories in mission, pray together, and encourage those just starting ministry.



Shepherdesses from West Kenya sing together.



About 450 attend a Shepherdess congress in West Kenya.

The Northern Tanzania Union recently held a Shepherdess retreat for the Mara Conference. Younger Shepherdesses, less experienced in ministry, gained valuable encouragement from retired and widowed ministry wives. Please continue to pray for this group.



Retirees pose with Shepherdess leaders in Northern Tanzania.

FROM THE FIELD



Shepherdesses from Mara Conference gather in Northern Tanzania.

Inter-European Division

An annual retreat for pastors' wives in Bulgaria supplies enough inspiration and support to last all year. Approximately 35 pastors' wives, including retired colleagues, recently gathered in picturesque Dobromirka to enjoy time together.

Elvira Wanitschek, Shepherdess director at the Inter-European Division, and Ventsislav Panayotov, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bulgaria, were the weekend presenters. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, the women shared difficulties and successes and once again felt the power of God's Word building unity among them.



Pastors' spouses meet in Dobromirka.

Pastors' children (PKs) in Bulgaria recently spent several days together in Sofia. Three church departments—Youth, Children's Ministries, and the Ministerial Association—sponsored the event. Thirty children up to 18 years of age attended the retreat. Rainer Wanitschek, Ministerial Association and Family Ministries director for the Inter-European Division, with his wife, Elvira, presented an exciting program filled with interactive studies of God's Word, discussions, profound spiritual insights, and sharing.

For a service project the youth made cards to raise funds for a seriously ill person needing an expensive medical treatment. They also hiked Vitosha Mountain.

Meetings like this prove once again that although there are many means of communication today, nothing can replace live interaction and building real-life friendships.



Pastors' children enjoy a retreat in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Early this spring, Sabah Mission leaders held a marriage enrichment retreat for pastors and their wives at Kundasang Retreat Centre in Malaysia. Key presenters were Debbie Chan, Family/Women's Ministries director for the Southeast Asia Union Mission (SAUM); her husband, Mark

Chan, a retired pastor; and Kozel Malim, Sabah Mission Family Ministries director. Seminars covered topics such as communication, family finance, resolving conflict, and forgiveness.



Couples pray together, recommitting their lives to each other and to God.



Pastors and wives sign a recommitment covenant on the last day of the program.

The SAUM has intentionally held basic training seminars for district Shepherdesses in the Sabah Mission this year, dividing them by region. They learned through seminars and sharing what it means to be a pastor's spouse and how to handle the challenges of ministry. These retreats also provided opportunities for families to spend time together.



Shepherdesses from Sabah Mission, regions 5–9, receive training to equip them in ministry with their husbands.



Ministry families from Sabah Mission, regions 1-4.

Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission (BAUM) recently held a Shepherdess and Women's Ministries retreat for the West Bangladesh Mission region. BAUM Shepherdess/Women's Ministries director, Mahuya Roy, and Reva Chowdhury, Women's Ministries director for Dhaka church, organized this retreat. More than 41 women gathered for the event, titled "Reflections of His Love." On Sabbath they went to Bangla Hope to visit with and encourage more than 200 orphans.



Retreat attendees gather after the church service in Bangladesh.

