

**Servants of God: Last for Ever**  
**Servants of God: Live for Others**  
**Servants of God: Look like Christ**  
**What was Christ's Final Action on Earth**  
**New Testament Ministry of Blessing Others**

In the New Testament a "blessing" we offer to a loved one is basically a prayer of encouragement for them.

**2127 eulogeo is a verb used 44 times in the New Testament that means:** "to praise [your loved one], to celebrate [them] with praises [that] invoke [God's] blessings and consecrate [your loved one] with solemn prayers [that] ask God's blessing on [your loved one] to cause [them] to prosper, to make [them] happy, to bestow blessings [that they be] favored by God." [1]

### **Old Testament Blessings**

One of the key descriptions of how God wanted His people blessed comes from the instructions to the priests. In the Jewish community the priests were the public servants, they inspected for disease, they protected the food supply, housing, dealt with domestic issues, and of course represented the people to God. In the New Testament we are to all be priests, and in a real sense, we are called like them to bless those around us.

### **GET BIBLE NOTES**

**Numbers 6:23-27** (NIV) "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.'" "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

**Numbers 6:23-27** (NKJV) "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."' "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

This idea of the blessing of the people was so woven into the fabric of the life of God's chosen people of promise the Jews that they began to make a specific verbal blessing time to be part of the private family Sabbath meal.

One of the most moving Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) traditions is the blessing over the children given on Friday night. There are many variations on how the blessing is made. The most common custom is for the father to put his hands on the child's head and recite the blessing. In some homes the blessing is followed by a kiss, and in other homes it is followed by personal words of praise as the father walks around the table and blesses each seated child.

Why should we learn to share a blessing with our families? Because a blessing shared, and the whole expression of love that it gives helps those we love know in a visible way that we love them. Blessing those we love is a memorable way they can remember feeling and hearing our love.

Do you ever remember your father telling you out loud, in a clear and loving voice that he loved you and admired some qualities he had seen in your life? Those words just stay in our

hearts for a lifetime. My own dad has often told me how much he sees the Lord's Hand in my life and what great things he believes God will do in my life—and has been saying that for a quarter-of-a-century!

### **How to Bless Your Wife, Your Husband, or Your Children[2]**

Do your loved ones in your family *feel* your love?

Many husbands think that their wives admire other men more than them as they relate how, “So-and-so’s husband does this and that with his children or for his wife...”. Those **men do not feel the respect and admiration** of their wives.

Many wives feel that their husbands think other women are either better at caring for their husbands, prettier, or better at caring for their families than they are. Those **women do not feel the love** of their husbands.

Many kids hurt because they sense that their parents don’t even *like* them.

- A struggling student watches his parents gloat about his sister’s straight A’s.
- A boy strikes out in a softball game and notices his father’s disappointment.
- An overweight daughter is told, “Stop snacking so much if you even *care* about your looks.”

This absence of marriage partner or parental approval, or *family blessing*, can lead to untold pain; whereas loved ones who feel approval and love face the daily challenges in their world with eagerness and confidence.

### **Paul Blessed Timothy**

One of the most beautiful testimonies to the power of encouragement (or blessing) in the New Testament is in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul explained to Timothy that he was:

- “A true son” ([I Timothy 1:2](#));
- he told Timothy he was “an example to the flock” ([I Timothy 4:12](#));
- that he “had a gift” and needed to “stir it up” ([I Timothy 4:14](#); [II Timothy 1:6](#));
- and he reminded him of his incredible spiritual heritage “and that from a child” ([II Timothy 3:15](#)).

So Paul “blessed” Timothy, and used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy. He doesn’t belittle him for his weaknesses and tears. Paul also told Timothy he had a “treasure” entrusted him ([I Timothy 6:20](#)); and that he was “gifted”; and that God was “going to use him”. These exhortations were tenderly given to a struggling man.

These type of “blessings” when seen in God’s Word often involve several elements: **Meaningful touches with** (like Jesus blessing the children) ... **Spoken words that have** (like Jesus when He left for Heaven) ... **Expressions of high value** (like Paul’s for Timothy and Epaphroditus) **and ...Point to a Blessed Future** (like Christ’s and Paul’s for those they disciplined) **with... Your personal commitment to be a part of their life and growth towards that goal.** (“Lo I am with you” Jesus said. Paul said he labored in prayer daily for ALL the churches.)

Make sure your loved ones in your family receive your blessing. To help them receive and be touched by your love, we can try to use those several key ingredients that we see above, which always help us to communicate blessings and encouragement.

- **Use meaningful touches with them.** That is what Jesus did ([Mark 10:16](#)) when he blessed the children, He was always touching those He ministered to. He could have healed them with a word, eight times in Mark alone Jesus touches those He served. So should we! The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth and affirmation. It is even essential to physical health. Be generous with your hugs.

- **Prepare special words for them.** Paul used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy. He doesn't belittle him for his weaknesses and tears. We should always remember that hugs aren't enough. Tell your loved ones how you feel about them! Those who are left to fill in the blanks often feel worthless and insecure. At best, only confusion can come from silence. Far too many of us are really not that encouraging. It's not that we have a critical spirit. Rather, we just say nothing. Our loved ones are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner, loving and admiring them silently. They need to hear it! Make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."
- **Attach high value to them.** Paul also told Timothy he had a "treasure" entrusted him; and that he was "gifted"; and that God was "going to use him". So should we also tell the ones we love about the qualities you admire in them. One of the best ways to do this with children is to liken them to a physical object (like calling your daughter a "pearl" or "precious jewel"). With your husband this is communicated by saying your husband is such a "wonderful dad, husband, friend" or such a "faithful leader, provider, diligent, hard working, thoughtful, etc.". With your wife this comes in the form of "you are so beautiful I think about you all day long; I can't wait to see you; I know how hard you work all day and can't wait to get home to help you; there are so many things I want to talk over with you; I'd rather spend an evening walking and talking with you than anything else even sports, friends, golf, etc."
- **Picture a bright future for them.** Paul told Timothy about a "crown" that was awaiting him as he ran the "race" set before him; and that the Lord was going to "reward" him. So we also should express what God can do with them as they follow Him in their life. How they can shape the lives of the children (wife), launch wonderful children into life through their faithful example (husbands), or become the greatest servant of the Lord in what ever field God has gifted them (children). Explain why you think their gifts and character traits will be useful throughout their lives. Avoid negative admonitions; inspire self-confidence.
- **Make a commitment to walk through life with them.** Stand by your loved one through the months and years ahead to help make your words of blessing become a reality. Express ways you want to be a deeper part of their life (monthly dates, weekly prayer studies, nightly prayer times, on going shared prayer list, etc.) Don't quit as soon as you miss a scheduled time because of a conflict or your loved one hurts or discourages you, or your child fails in some area.

### **What are The Benefits of Meaningful Touch[3]**

Hold your wife's hand and look into her eyes smiling. Put your arm around your husband, run your hand through his hair (whatever he has any left) and stand close to him for a bit. Tousele your son's hair or wrestle playfully with him. Pat your daughter on the back. Give everyone in your family (even the reluctant 7th-grader) a quick hug when you come home. Such meaningful touch, given appropriately, makes people feel loved and appreciated. Touch offers:

**Symbolic meaning.** It sends a message both to the person touched and to anyone who witnesses it.

- A father rests his hand on his son's shoulders and draws him close under the umbrella while they wait for the school bus in the rain.

**Physical health.** Many studies have shown that touch provides a significant physiological benefit.

- Premature infants who are massaged gain weight faster.
- Elderly people in nursing homes who are given a pet to touch live longer.
- Blood pressure decreases among people who get appropriate touch.

**Emotional comfort.** Touch is the easiest way to communicate love and acceptance.

- What about when a doctor touches your shoulder as he explains his diagnosis?
- What difference does it make when a friend offers a handshake?

**Protection.** When children get loving touches from their parents, they are less likely to seek touch from harmful sources later in life.

- Women with repeated unwanted pregnancies have told researchers that they just wanted to be cuddled and held.

The Bible affirms this concept too. It relates this incident about Jesus:

*People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)*

One study has shown that it takes eight to ten meaningful touches each day to maintain emotional and physical health. If you can find ways to do that, your wife, husband, and children will be blessed.

#### **Picturing a Bright Future[4]**

Communicating a special future to a child is such an important part of giving a blessing. When a person feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude on life.

In this way we are providing our children a clear light for their path in life. Instead of leaving a child to head into a dark unknown, words that picture a special future can illumine a pathway lined with hope and purpose.

Children begin to take steps down the positive pathway pictured for them when they hear words like these:

**“God has given you such a sensitive heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up helping a great many people when you grow older.”** or

**“You are such a good helper. When you grow up and marry someday, you’re going to be such a help to your wife (or husband) and family.”**

On the other hand, if children hear only words that predict relationship problems or personal inadequacies, they may travel down a hurtful path that has been pictured for them. This can happen if they hear statements like:

**“You’d better hope you can find someone who can take care of you when you’re older. You’re so irresponsible, you’ll never be able to do anything for yourself.”**

During the years we have children in our home, the words we speak to them can wrap around them like a cocoon. What we say shapes and develops their thoughts and thinking patterns, making it possible someday for them to emerge as beautiful butterflies.

Two practical pointers, though, are in order.

- First, we must look at our past words and behavior to see if we are honoring the various commitment we made to our kids. Only with such a track record will words of a special future find their mark and extend a blessing.
- Second, we must honor our commitments to our children in the present. One of the most important ways to do that is to keep your commitment to your spouse strong and intact. It is so much harder (though not impossible) for a child to feel blessed when he has lost a parent due to divorce.

### **Make an Active Commitment to Invest in their Life[5]**

Words of blessing for our children are not enough. They need to be backed by the commitment of parents who work to see the blessing come to pass. Here are some steps:

- **Commit your loved one to God**, and let them know you've done so. Start a life-long prayer list with specific areas that you have learned from them need prayer, and then PRAY. Ask for updates. Celebrate answers. Pray together. We need all the help we can get, and much of what happens to us or to our children in this life is beyond our control.
- **Next, commit your life to investing yourself in your loved one's best interest.** This means time, energy and resources. As you do this:
- **Realize that each of us has our own unique set of needs.** It's possible to live under the same roof and still not know someone. Do you really understand each of your children's own thoughts, dreams and desires?
- **Be willing to do what is best for your loved one.** With your husband or wife that may mean sharing when you think they are overloaded or impatient—but in such a loving way that you share in their struggle. With children that may include appropriate discipline, which can seem painful for everyone. Dare to love your children enough to train and correct them rather than leave them at the mercy of their own willfulness.
- **Become a student of the one you wish to bless.** Watch them, share their ups and downs; know where they are in their spiritual life, their school life, work life, home life. Find out who they are close to and who they are not close to—and why.
- **Take an interest in whatever seems to interest them.** Get into his or her world.
- **Be lovingly persistent in communicating with him.** That is, keep trying to set up times when meaningful communication can occur.
- **Share activities.** Go to the grocery store, try a family time camping together, or even just ask them to do what you are doing with you (cooking, yard work, running errands). It is always loving to want them, include them, and ask for them to spend time with you.
- **Take the initiative in asking questions.** Have an endless learning time asking about what they think, what they feel, what they like or don't like—and why. Learn their favorite flavor, favorite food, favorite activity, dreamed of place to go, and so much more. Write it down afterward to see what you remembered, and ask again until you do remember. Then surprise them with something they like!
- **Listen with full attention.** Let her see your eyes light up when they talk to you.

### **Ten Attitudes that Make You a Blessing your Children[6]**

1. *Love them anyway.* Yes I know you love them. Most of us parents adore our children — most of the time. Yet, some parents have a way of regularly communicating to their children that they do not measure up. I'm thinking now about the young girl who grew up in a family where she was seen as the dunce. Now as a young woman, she continues to

experience the same from her family. Children need parents who will believe in them and no matter what will love them anyway.

2. *Prepare them for the battleground, not the playground.* Some parents constantly buy their children toys, gadgets, candy, McDonalds, etc. The kids then get into their high school years and the pampering continues. Only now, the toys are much more expensive. What does that communicate to these children? Meanwhile, other parents prepare their children for life on the battleground where a spiritual battle is taking place. These parents realize that children need more than toys. They need to be equipped for life so that they will survive the difficulties and trials they will face.

3. *Deal with your issues.* There are no perfect human beings. Yet, if you don't deal with your own issues (your sins, your insecurities, your feelings of inadequacy, etc.), these can impact your children. They may end up having to deal with some of the very issues you would never grapple with.

4. *Take every opportunity to remind them of who they are in Christ.* They will, most likely, receive many false messages about their identity. They will be told that their worth is based upon their academic record, their physical attractiveness, their charm, their ability to make money, etc. You bless your children when you help them grow up with a sense of their real identity.

5. *Bless your children by giving them you.* There is no substitute for your presence in their lives. Your regular, consistent, emotional and physical presence means so much. I have known a few parents who seem to see their child as one more activity on the list of things to be done for the day. Yet one senses there is no real connection between parent and child. Being attentive and giving one-on-one time are priceless gifts to children.

6. *Say only what communicates value, respect, and love.* Choose to never say or do anything that will humiliate. Sometimes, families will tell embarrassing, humiliating, stories about their children. The child is embarrassed at this but then the parent says, "I'm just kidding." (In other words, "Since I think this is funny, you shouldn't let this bother you.") Listen, we all do things in our families that are silly, stupid, mindless, careless, etc. I have found that it is much better for me to tell about something silly or stupid that I did — not my children. Children need to know that homes are safe places where one's mistakes are not announced to the world.

7. *Be your child's greatest encourager.* Far too many parents are really not that encouraging. It's not that they have a critical spirit. Rather, they just say nothing. Children are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner. They need to hear it! Make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."

8. *Pray for your children.* If you are not praying for them each day, who is? Regardless of the age, they need you to lift them up before the Lord in prayer each day. Think about their day. Think about their setting. Think about the people they will be with. Pray about these situations.

9. *Give them what they need not what they want.* Many of us are very busy people. We have a lot going on. So often, parents will feel guilty about how busy they are and so decide to give them a new "toy." Yet, we do our children no favors when we give them most everything they want. The point is this: Too many children grow up getting all the things they want while little attention is given to what they really need. Think about what your children really *need* if they are going to make it in this difficult world as obedient children of a loving God.

10. Give your children something to look forward to when they come home. Give them a beautiful home to look forward to. That's home — not house. Anyone with enough money can build a beautiful house. Our children need beautiful homes. Homes that are filled with warmth, laughter, and love. Beautiful homes are places where children can catch a glimpse of the loving God in the love of their parents. These homes remind kids that no matter how bad the day is at school or with friends, they can always come *home*.

### **Servants of God: Live for Spiritual Assets**

A servant of God has their heart set on spiritual treasures and measures life by the acquisition of spiritual assets rather than merely physical assets. Do you keep track of your ***Spiritual Assets***? Often we know our house value, our retirement investment value, the worth of our collections and treasures—but do you keep an inventory of spiritual assets? What are some of our spiritual assets?

These are things like:

- Knowing ***where your kid's are reading in God's Word*** so they remember when they grow up and leave home that you always cared how they were doing spiritually.
- Asking your husband or wife each week ***what they are finding in God's Word*** that is helping them to make it through the day. And, actually remembering what they said the last time because you care. This is a spiritual treasure because it forges a strong bond in your hearts of a shared spiritual walk.
- Finding and learning scripture ***memory verses that you share in common with your loved ones*** are a spiritual treasure. Not hundreds or even dozens, but a handful that you all have learned and share in common. What a treasure to quote them around the living room when the power goes out, or an ice storm cancels church, or when you are traveling, to have this body of Scripture that you together as a couple and a family learned is a true spiritual treasure. Some of the more valuable passages are Psalm 23, the love chapter--I Corinthians 13, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, and key verses on the tongue and faith in James.
- Collecting ***testimonies of salvation*** is a record of each person's greatest treasure, isn't it? The only thing that lasts forever from this world will be people and whatever we send up to Heaven before we leave. So, who are you taking to Heaven with you? Have you heard, understood, and savored the testimonies of your family? Can you tell your husband's or wife's testimony? How about your children? What an incredible treasure is our salvation. Take a spiritual inventory of the status of each soul around you in those you love.
- Recording and remembering those ***spiritual milestones***, have you started on this spiritual asset yet? Do you record your loved ones salvation date, baptism date, when they started the habit of personal devotional quiet times, what they are doing in that QT? Have you started yet to celebrate each other's spiritual birthdays? Do you keep a record of, share and celebrate any souls led to Christ by you or by loved ones, and then uphold them by prayer? Who can your family say that you as a family are "taking to Heaven"?
- Finally, one of the great spiritual treasures is a ***lifelong prayer journal***. Even if you've never started, it is never too late to start watching God at work through prayer. Any type of list will do, just date it, hold onto it, and be specific enough in your requests—and there you have it—an actual record of the God of Heaven moving in and through your life by prayer. A list of family needs, specific challenges, hurdles, obstacles, great goals, and so on are all prayed over. As well the verses for Christ's formation in the lives of those you love are always such a tool. Just a sheet



of paper, dated, written out and prayed over faithfully until it wears out and then a new one started will harvest great spiritual gains and treasures.

What did those who spent the most time with Jesus on earth remember about Him?

When He had returned to heaven, and His disciples were left to get the message out, they all confessed to the method they had learned, and had made the focus of their lives.

Please open there with me to their confession in [Acts 6:4](#)

*“We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”*

Don't miss the point Christ's disciples were making. There is a simple starting point when you face the greatest task imaginable. (For the disciples, it was evangelizing the whole world; for us it is raising a godly family.) That starting point is to let the Word fill your heart, mind—and **prayers!**

There it is: the simplest and most powerful truth of ministry, of marriage and of parenting—Word-filled husbands and wives, Word-filled mothers and fathers, Word-filled men and women of prayer.

After over two decades as a couple and as parents, our philosophy of a great marriage and family can be summed up in just one sentence: you encourage a godly marriage and family “one prayer at a time.” Faithful prayer, in step with God's plan in His Word, is God's most powerful key to unlock our partner's and our children's hearts as we disciple them for Christ.

The **Word-filled home** is built upon the foundation of a **Word-filled life**, or personal spiritual life in daily touch with the Lord.

Then we can have a **Word-filled marriage** where we share the ultimate partnership possible in this world with the one He chose to complete our life. From those two streams flow the **Word-filled prayers** of godly husbands and wives, moms and dads. There is no greater power on earth that can ever be unleashed than the prayers of two hearts united with a holy passion for God, and the family that He has given to them.

What we pray about reflects what fills our hearts. When God fills us, His Word spills out in our prayers. The more we reflect on what His Word says we are to believe and do, the more we meditate upon it, and the more it becomes our constant prayerful ministry. Then parenting isn't a struggle to force God into their lives—it is a joyous relationship with the Lord in our lives that overflows onto them.

I hope you will pause and affirm to the Lord that you will also be starting anew today by giving yourself continually to prayer.

Back in [Acts 6:4](#), the Greek word used for “give ourselves continually” literally means “to adhere, persevere, and be in constant readiness” and actually is a form of the Greek word *kratos*, which is a New Testament word for “power.” It is a verb in the future indicative tense, so it means—

*“from now on we will constantly be going to the real source of power which is prayer and the serving of God's Word”* (author's translation).

That is what the Fathers of the church, the apostles, concluded was the only way to “raise” the family of God. As the fathers and mothers God has raised up for our families, we need to commit to that also.



I keep a prayer card—with key verses from the next four chapters— in my car over the visor, in my Bible, in my DayTimer, and in my wallet. No matter where I find myself with a few moments—as I drive, wait for an appointment, sit on an airplane, or just wait in the car for my wife or family—I pull this card out and make a progression in prayer through each point and the verses.

My goal in Word-filled praying is to pray through this card once a day for my family.

I would commend this simple habit to any and all of you who desire to see Christ reflected in your family, your marriage, and through your children. These areas are what we will learn to pray about. (They are the content of the final 5 chapters of the book).

To encourage you to the greatest power of all, let's review what God's Word guides us to pray for in the lives of those we love and serve in our homes, marriages, families, and ministries.

### 1. Praying they experience reality in their spiritual lives:

- **By Saving Faith**—“Open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” ([Acts 26:18](#)).
- **By Loving God's Word**—“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food” ([Job 23:12](#)).
- **By Living Victoriously**—“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ... Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” ([John 8:32](#), 36).
- **By Thinking of Heaven**—“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on earth” ([Colossians 3:1-2](#)).
- **By Hating Sin**—“I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin” ([Psalm 38:18](#)).
- **By Staying Tender Toward God**—“The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit, A broken and contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise” ([Psalm 51:17](#)).

### 2. Praying for integrity in their personal lives:

- **By Maintaining a Clear Conscience**—“The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, [from] a good conscience, and [from] sincere faith” ([1 Timothy 1:5](#)).
- **By Learning to Stand Alone**—“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue” ([2 Peter 1:3](#)).
- **By Seeking to Stay Pure in Mind and Body**—“Beloved, I beg [you] as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul ...” ([1 Peter 2:11](#)).
- **By Evidencing a Servant's Heart**—“Whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” ([Mark 10:44-45](#)).
- **By Not Being Bitter in Trials**—“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” ([Ephesians 4:30-32](#)).

### 3. Praying they reflect Christ's love in their relationships:

- **By Cultivating Love for Others**—“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” ([1 John 4:7-8](#)).
- **By Trusting God When Troubles Come**—“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” ([1 Samuel 15:23a](#)).
- **By Loving God’s Plan for Their Lives**—“I will praise You, for I am fearfully [and] wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And [that] my soul knows very well” ([Psalm 139:14](#)).
- **By Waiting for God’s Chosen Partner**—“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” ([2 Corinthians 6:14](#)).

#### 4. Praying they are living for heaven:

- **By Choosing a Life of Contentment**—“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound” ([Philippians 4:11-13](#)).
- **By Choosing a Life of Consecration**—“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” ([Matthew 16:24](#)).
- **By Choosing a Life of Commitment**—“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” ([Luke 9:62](#)).
- **By Giving Their Life Back to God**—“Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever” ([1 Chronicles 28:9](#)).

What Can Prayers Accomplish?

An amazing testimony to the power of prayer may be seen in the life of a quiet man from Bristol, England. This man read the Bible through 200 times during his lifetime! Born in the early nineteenth century, George Mueller lived an exemplary life of powerful praying for “his children.” In his lifetime, Mueller personally fed, clothed, educated, and disciplined 120,000 orphans and poor children in the five orphan homes he built plus the seventy-two day schools he maintained in England and three other countries. And he did so *solely by secret prayer!*

Through extensive diaries that he kept during his remarkable life of 93 years, a picture of powerful praying can be pieced together. In summary, by prayer alone, this man raised 7.2 million nineteenth-century dollars, or \$111.6 million dollars in today’s currency—all without mass mailings, television ads, internet blitzes, or a huge financial machine behind him.

Without ever asking a soul for even one penny, Mueller’s prayers touched the finances of countless individuals who were led by God to give him staggering sums of money freely. For over 60 years, day after day, the exact amount of money to supply thousands of orphans a home, food, clothing, and an education flowed into George Mueller’s office. He diligently studied God’s Word and then prayed, telling only the Lord his requests. As a result of his simple faith, people all over the world were drawn to send or bring him gifts at an incredible, miraculous rate.

Mueller’s testimony bears repeating because it so clearly reveals the secret of his success:

*To one who asked him the secret of his service, Mr. George Mueller replied: “There was a day when I died, utterly died to George Mueller ... to his opinions, preferences, tastes, and*

*will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends. Since then I have studied to show myself approved only unto God.”* a Mueller’s fruitful life is living proof of the truth of [John 15:7-8](#): “*But if you make yourselves at home with me and **my words are at home in you**, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples”* (*The Message*, Emphasis added). The key to unleashing prayers that God always answers is to have them flowing from a Word-filled life! Jesus spoke His Word so that it would stay with us, live with us, walk with us, talk to us, meet with us, travel with us. He intends His Word to fill our hearts, fill our minds, fill our days, and all our ways. Prayers that flow from a Word-filled life are simple, direct, and biblical. If we seek to pray simply, directly, and biblically, it will harmonize our prayers to the Lord, His will, His Spirit, and we will experience the power of a Word-filled life.

## **Appendix C:**

### *How Should a Believing Parent Respond to a Wayward Child?*

One of the greatest challenges in life is raising children. After years of combing through every verse of the Bible dozens of times, I still haven’t found the perfect family—a family with a godly dad, a godly mom, and children who are submissive their entire time at home, and grow up to move on into godly marriages and homes. **This just isn’t recorded in the Bible.**

What we do find in God’s Word are some godly parents who have both godly and ungodly children; we also find some ungodly parents who have all ungodly children, while other ungodly parents end up with some godly children. **There just doesn’t seem to be a parenting pattern that always works.**

So what is the answer for us as we parent? When God blesses us with children, He asks us to give them back to Him in dedication. That is what Christ’s parents did way back in [Luke 2:22](#). That is also what godly parents have done through the centuries.

But what happens when we dedicate them and they don’t turn out as we had hoped and planned? To answer that very relevant question, look with me again at the entire process of child rearing: Christian parenting and our stewardship of the precious lives of our children.

When we as parents present our children in dedication back to the Lord, we are declaring: “These children belong to You, Lord.” Dedication is our public acknowledgement of God’s ownership of them ([Psalm 127:3](#)). We can then rest in the joyful reality of being stewards of the promises of God’s Word. The Bible repeatedly records godly men and women with less than godly children. That is because godliness is a choice; it is an obedient response to the Lord. Godly children can not be made; nor can godliness be forced upon them. They grow that way, by God’s grace, with—or sometimes even without—godly parenting.

The bottom line of Scripture is that **God never holds us responsible for how our children turn out—only for how we raised them.**

So let me remind you again of the truths parents affirm when they hold up their precious children to the Lord in dedication of themselves to godly parenting as stewards of their children for the Lord: **I will raise the children God gives me for His glory; I will surrender them back to Him; I will have His peace** when it is hard, and when they are making their own choices that will shape their future lives; **I will always pray for them**, always love them, and no matter what happens—**I will have God’s peace because I gave them to Him**—and raised them for Him as best as I knew how and could do.

Whatever place you are in your parenting— anticipating children, in the midst of raising children, sorrowing over a wayward child, or looking back over wonderful (or not so wonderful) years of parenting—why not go over these dedication truths in your own hearts as parents? If you have surrendered your children to the Lord already, then reaffirm in your heart these five simple truths:

- **I raised the children You gave me as my very own;**
- **I surrendered them back to You;**
- **I will have Your peace** when it is hard, and when they are making their own choices that will shape their future lives;
- **I will always pray for them,** always love them, never give up on them or You; and no matter what happens—
- **I will have Your peace because I gave them to You,** and raised them for You as best as I knew how and could do. If you are a believing parent, and your child has gone astray from the Lord, **how should you respond to a wayward child?** What comfort is there for parents when this happens? What hope can we have after all the years we loved them, earnestly prayed for them, read God’s Word to them, nurtured them in the ways of the Lord, and sought to guide them as best we could? Here are some truths that comfort our hearts—and the hearts of the many parents we have encouraged over the years:

A Wayward Child . . .

1. A wayward child *is no surprise to God*. Every day of our life (Psalm 139) was written in His book—even the darkest of days!
2. A wayward child *is an opportunity for God to see our response*. Our response is what matters to God most. He is watching and waiting for what we will do, to whom we will turn—and when we turn to Him, our Lord is glorified.
3. A wayward child *drives us to pray* for what we may think is impossible—their return to the Lord and us.
4. A wayward child *opens to us a situation where only God can encourage us* in times like this ([1 Samuel 30:6b](#))!
5. A wayward child *fills us with hope* as we remember that God isn’t ever through with us as long as we live—and neither is He ever through with our wayward child.
6. A wayward child *reminds us* we have a perfect heavenly Father as we see our own imperfections reflected by our children.
7. A wayward child *humbles us* as we remember how often we also have failed our children ([Psalm 130:3](#)), and failed to respond correctly to our perfect Father.
8. A wayward child *rebukes us* because we expected so much obedience from our imperfect parenting, yet we ourselves gave our heavenly Father such imperfect obedience—even though His parenting was perfect!
9. A wayward child *makes us believe* more and more each day that God is able to do that which we could never do: touch their hearts, soften their hearts, and turn their hearts back to Him ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#))—and to us.
10. A wayward child *shows us God’s never ending grace* as each wave of fear and sorrow rolls over us, but we find our feet firmly planted on the Solid Rock ([Psalm 40:1-2](#))!
11. A wayward child *challenges us to never give up* on him or her. In one of the darkest hours in my job as a dad, I sat with one of my children watching a movie. One line, which was clearly stated twice by Alfred the butler to Master Bruce, will always stay etched in my mind: “So you haven’t given up on me yet?” To which the butler answered resoundingly,

“NEVER!” I challenge you to say the same in your own heart, to your partner, and by your actions toward a wayward child all your life—*Never will I give up on you, for God will never give up on me!*

I hope that these truths will give you strength when the parenting path gets rough—whether for a moment, or a few weeks or months, or even for the rest of your life. Beloved, God is faithful, so never stop trusting Him—and never cease waiting upon Him! Remember: Faithful prayer, in step with God’s plan in His Word, is God’s most powerful key to unlock children’s hearts as we disciple them for Christ. The battle for our children’s souls is won “one prayer at a time”—“Is anything too hard for the Lord? . . .” ([Genesis 18:14a](#))!

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[1] *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

[2] These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

[3] These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

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[5] These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

[6] Posted by Jim Martin at January 16th, 2007 online at <http://www.godhungry.org/?p=592>