

July 2017

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource



COURSE CORRECTION



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PLACE OF WORSHIP!

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TRY OUR SIMPLE, FUN,
AND MEANINGFUL
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DID YOU KNOW YOU
CAN PURCHASE **1**
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CHILDREN IN NEED?



“ We believe that the Holy Spirit is God’s chosen teacher. It is He who causes spiritual growth and formation when and as He chooses. As such, we have articulated 10 distinct environments to create in your home. We desire to create spiritual space, which we refer to as an environment, in which God’s Spirit can move freely. ”

This month we’re looking at the environment of COURSE CORRECTION. This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline encompasses a season of pain, a building up in love, and a vision for a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

This may sound like a painful process. And it can be! **When we find ourselves “off course” in life, sometimes just the realization that we’re wrong can be painful.** Sometimes the consequences of our decisions can be painful. However, God has a way of using our mistakes and missteps to make us beautiful and powerful examples of His love. We pray your family will experience the healing and restoration God brings to His children.



Michelle Anthony
Executive Pastor: Family Ministries | New Life Church
Twitter @TruInspiration

OUR MISSION



INSPIRE parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.



EQUIP parents to become the spiritual leaders of God’s truth in their own households.



SUPPORT families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.

Design and layout by Avery Anton | avery@homefrontmag.com

Backdrops and woodwork by Reclaimed Projects | Facebook: ReclaimedProjectsTX

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INSPIRE, EQUIP, SUPPORT



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Each of us has experienced a season where our course needed some correcting. Romans tells us "all have sinned and fall short," which means we ALL have times when we need to get back on the right path (3:23). But how do we hear from God in the roar of everyday life? Where do we find the time to seek Him and listen when our schedules are overloaded?

Sometimes God makes **COURSE CORRECTION** loud and clear, but often He uses a gentle whisper like He did with Elijah. You can read this story in **GOD'S WORD** (page 24). Elijah waited to hear from God, but He did not speak in the fierce wind or the shaking of the earth or even the fire—no, God's precious words were held in a faint whisper. I recently read this statement: "You can't hear someone whisper when he is across the room." We can't hear God's whisper if we are not close to Him. This is what Steve Carter realized and shares with us in the **EVERYDAY DAD BLOG** (page 38). Steve recognized he needed to start each day with time close to God, time spent listening for His words.

Our **PRAYER** article (page 22) offers ways to practice being still and listening for God's voice. Our friends from UnhurriedLiving.com share with us how to create an unhurried marriage in **MARRIAGE** (page 42). They explain that hearing from God as individuals can

strengthen us as couples.

We can rest in the fact that God wants nothing more than to bring healing and wholeness as He lovingly corrects our course. **Our prayer is for this issue of HomeFront to help you learn ways to be still and listen!**

Debbie Guinn
Editor in Chief | New Life Church
debbie@homefrontmag.com

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Things you won't want to miss:

- Parent blogs to inspire you
- Mobile-friendly format
- Lots of downloadable giveaways
- Marketplace to purchase article bundles and more!

The website is filled with fresh ideas and creative resources to help you spiritually parent your children.

FAMILY VERSE

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words who transforms. We come to know God more when we're willing to open our hearts and listen to His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with this verse, and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit the verse to memory.



Consider purchasing an 8" x 10" frame to hold your family memory verse each month!

LET'S BE SOCIAL!



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He says,

**“BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM
GOD; I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG
THE NATIONS, I WILL BE EXALTED
IN THE EARTH.”**

PSALM 46:10

GARDEN WIND CATCHER



CAPTURING THE SEASON

Scripture is filled with passages that remind us that God is in control of the wind. Psalm 78:26 reveals that God “let loose the east wind from the heavens and by his power made the south wind blow,” and Mark 4:39 shows us Jesus’ power as He rebukes the wind and it obeys Him and becomes still.

The wind can be a great reminder for us that God is in control of our lives as well. He wants to direct our paths, and whether that is done in the quiet whisper of a soft breeze or the roar of a wild wind, He will be faithful to correct our courses and keep us on track—all we need to do is listen!

Allow this Garden Wind Catcher to serve as a reminder that God controls the wind just as He controls our paths. A great thing about this wind catcher is that after you make a base of ribbon and fabric, you can add other colors for the different seasons of the year. God is with us through all the seasons of our lives!

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- garden flagpole
- scissors
- ribbon
- fabric torn in strips
- embellishments (optional)



by Debbie Guinn

Debbie is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront magazine. She has more than 25 years of experience working in children’s and family ministries. She is passionate about equipping parents to become leaders of God’s truth in their own households. She is a recent transplant to Austin, TX, where she spends her free time enjoying her four grandchildren and perusing antique stores.

 Instagram @homefrontsp

 Twitter @homefrontsp

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Gather as much ribbon as you have or purchase small amounts of ribbon and/or fabric in the colors you choose.
2. Measure the height of your garden flagpole from the top to about four inches from the bottom—then double that amount. (Our pole measured 37 inches from the bar across the top to the piece that inserts into the ground. So we cut our ribbon and fabric into 66-inch strips.)
3. Begin by folding the ribbon or fabric in half over the top of the flagpole. Then, tie the ribbon or fabric with a single loop knot onto the metal bar.
4. Make a base of neutral color and then add the colors you want to reflect the current season. (We added red and blue for the Fourth of July and used embellishments to represent the stars on a flag.)
5. Place your wind catcher in a spot where you can watch the fabric and ribbon blow when the wind blows!

FAMILY TIME
WORSHIP



“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.”

Romans 12:1 MSG

ROAD WORSHIP

If your life is the slightest bit like mine, you spend a good amount of time driving from place to place on a daily basis. We drive kids to school and sports; we drive to work, church, stores, and events. If I am honest, I spend more time driving than I do spending time alone with God at home. And for whatever reason (maybe because we live such hurried lives), the task of driving and sharing the road with other drivers has the potential to turn the gentlest, kindest Christian into the angriest, most frustrated heathen. Ashamedly, I am someone who has spent sweet time in worship only to find myself, moments later, driving impatiently and judgmentally, with a strong sense of road entitlement. We worship and draw near to God in our churches and in our homes; but what if we turned our actual modes of transportation, our vehicles, into worship centers? God has been gently course correcting me and has been showing me that even my car should be an intentional place of worship.

I like how The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:1 puts it—that even our “going-to-work,” our traveling, should be an act of worship, an offering to God. The Israelites traveled with their worship center, the tabernacle, and Moses encouraged the Israelites to continually engage in worshipful family talk as they traveled. They were instructed to talk to each other about God’s goodness wherever they would go and as they were going.

“Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your dashboards and on your steering wheels ...” (Deuteronomy 11:19–20, my paraphrase).

What if every time we got into our mobile worship centers, our vehicles, we drove as if it were our

ministry? It has not been easy, but I have been attempting this. Often I drive alone and will drive in silence as I listen to God, but some of my best times of driving (now ministering and worshipping) have been with my family. As the worship leader and pastor of my mobile ministry (haha), I encourage my full-capacity congregation of five to intentionally look for people to pray for. We worship the Lord with singing, and we take advantage of our close proximity to each other and engage in meaningful conversation. I also teach them about God while we drive.

Rather than being a typical defensive driver, I aim to be a humble road servant who is willing to sacrifice for others, yield, brake, slow down, kindly let people change lanes in front of me, gladly give up my parking space, or even pull over and stop to help someone. I seek to drive with a greater purpose than simply traveling from place to place as quickly as possible. I look for opportunities to minister the love of Jesus to others on the road, and I teach my children to do the same. By ministering like Jesus, even by the way we drive in and out of our neighborhoods, we allow for the opportunity to share the gospel with others. I’m trying hard to travel in such a way that if I were to park next to someone who had been watching me drive, that person would want to listen to what I have to say.

As we seek to live Spirit-filled lives, we must be willing to ask ourselves if we drive with the fruit of the Spirit engaged. Do I drive with love? Do I drive with joy? Do I drive with peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? As challenging as it is, let’s live lives of sacrificial worship even while driving and allow our Navigator, our GPS, the Holy Spirit, to correct our course when we steer off in the wrong spiritual direction.

by Trent Armstrong

Trent lives in Southern California with his wife and four children. Trent studied organizational leadership and holds a bachelor of science degree from Biola University. He currently serves at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA, as a drummer on the worship team and has been involved in music ministry for more than 25 years.



DISCIPLINE VS. COURSE CORRECTION

“Watch out! Mom is trying to get you in trouble!” This warning burst from my son’s mouth in response to my voiced concern about the tone of conversation between my three children. In the days that followed, my son met me with this phrase again and again as his siblings tested boundaries and displayed outright disobedience. Of course, tantrums, sneaking candy, and the occasional “kid lie” (the kind you see right through) are familiar terrain with my elementary-aged children. What was new to the landscape was the perception that my desire to address their behavior was a trick—that I wanted my kids to get in trouble. I realized that I had missed an important part of the discipline process: sharing the why. The very heart of Course Correction is helping children form the vision of a corrected path that leads them to God. This is a path of freedom: to be fully who He has created them to be and to walk securely in the identity that they are His. My son’s commentary awakened me to be consistent in telling them the why behind the discipline and to walk through the process of it together. Only the Holy Spirit can change their hearts, but it is my job to create an environment for them to hear and recognize His voice.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 ESV

Engage your children in conversation this month in an appropriate quiet moment. Whether you create the quiet space with a blanket on the couch or you crawl into bed with them before they go to sleep, allow the physical environment help to communicate love and connected relationship as you discuss the questions below.

GET YOUR CHILDREN TALKING

- When you hear the word discipline, what do you think of? What does it mean?
- Why do you think there are consequences for our words and actions? Are consequences always bad?
- Are there any rules in our home that you have questions about or that don’t make sense to you?
- Do you think course correction will or should look the same for each child in this family? Why?
- What do you think the path that God has you on looks like? How does it feel to be on that path? How does it feel to be off it?
- You are uniquely and wonderfully made by God! Let’s take turns listing off how God has made you to be special!
- Let me tell you about a time that I remember being disciplined and how God brought healing through it.

by Kelli Coltman

Kelli and her husband, Chad, have been married for 10 years and have three elementary-aged children. She serves as a community pastor and lay counselor at ROCKHARBOR Church in Orange County, CA.

TIME-IN

Some weeks our schedules can feel so full: T-ball practice, Muffins with Mom at school, a birthday party, occupational therapy, and the dog needs to go to the vet. Sometimes the entire month can feel that way. I have noticed in those times when I am constantly surrounded with noise and distraction I can quickly get off course in my relationship with God, my husband, and my children.

I am also very aware that in busy seasons, my four-year-old son can become very unregulated. Throw in a change of schedule and you might as well drive my car right off a cliff. Some days in busy seasons can be particularly difficult with tantrums, stubbornness, and more tantrums. On those days, my flesh wants to push my son away: “You are too much right now.” “Stop screaming!” “I can’t deal with you anymore.”

But as most parents know, our child’s behavior is typically trying to communicate something to us. It could be something simple: “I am hungry” or “I am tired.” It could be more complex though: “I’m afraid,” “I don’t know what is happening,” or “I don’t feel safe.” While we still definitely employ time-outs (Mommy needs a three-minute break some days too, right?), we have a tradition in our home to follow up especially difficult days with some “time-in” together. With our son, this special time together typically

happens at bedtime. We finish our normal routine of brushing teeth, reading a story, and saying our prayers, and instead of tucking him in, I grab his favorite blanket, wrap him up tight (just like he likes it), sit in the rocking chair, and rock my big boy to sleep.

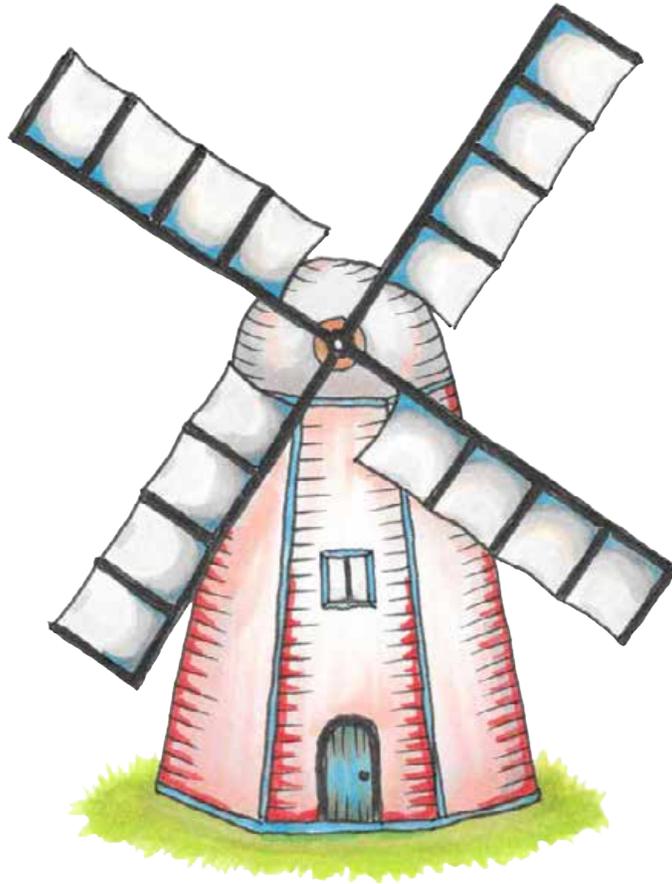
At first I had to fake some of these nights together. My flesh would scream that this was MY time for a break. I selfishly only did this because it was what his body needed. I knew he would fall asleep more quickly if I just rocked him; however, over time, I have grown to cherish these moments with my little boy. It’s quiet, it’s calm—two words that I can’t typically use to describe our time together. He reaches up to rub my ears, and pretty soon I start to feel his breathing get heavy as the weight of his little body sinks into me. Sometimes I put him in bed at this point, but some nights I just keep rocking.

In this time-in of stillness, I hear God speaking to me: *Do you feel how easily frustrated you get when he has a rough day? That’s how I feel when you try to do life, especially the busy seasons, on your own. Yet, do you feel how much you love him? I love you so much more. In that moment, there is healing. As much as I enjoy this close, intimate time with my son, I quickly realize that my Father craves this same relationship with me even more.*

by Samantha Fugate

Samantha is the Special Needs Coordinator at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She grew up in East Texas but is loving the mountain life. She and her husband, Joseph, are former elementary teachers turned foster parents. Some of their favorite things to do with kids include playing outside, taking the dogs for a walk, and exploring the local hiking trails.

LOUD AND CLEAR



Just like he did every morning, Jacob woke up as the sun was beginning to rise. Living on a Kansas farm in the 1800s meant getting up very early every day. There was much to do! Jacob's ma and pa, little sister Sara, and Grandpa George dressed, listened to a Bible lesson from Pa, prayed together, and ate a quick breakfast of porridge before hurrying off to start their chores.

STORYTELLING

Pa went straight to the fields where he would be busy all day. At this time of year he kept a careful eye on the corn and potato crops. He also had fences to fix and wood to chop.

At five years old, Sara mostly stayed with Ma, helping to prepare meals and manage the garden. She was also learning to sew with a needle and thread, use a washboard, and make soap.

Grandpa George couldn't walk very well anymore, not since he got sick a few years back, but every morning he went with Jacob to feed and water the chickens, pigs, and horses. As soon as the animals saw Jacob and Grandpa coming, they started to stir. Feverishly, the chickens clucked, the pigs squealed, and the horses whinnied and neighed.

Life was sure loud on a farm. Sometimes the sound of the animals was so noisy it seemed that Jacob could hardly hear anything else.

A little while later, Jacob and Grandpa George loaded the wagon with baskets of grain and headed for the mill. At this time of year, the wheat had already been harvested and dried, the stalks had been bundled, and the grain had been stored. Now the grain had to be brought to the windmill so it could be ground into flour. Ma would use some of the flour to make bread, and the rest would be sold in town. The rusty iron wheels of the wagon squeaked brashly as they turned, carrying the rickety wooden wagon down the bumpy dirt road.

Life was sure loud on a farm. Sometimes the sound of the wagon wheels was so noisy Jacob could hardly hear anything else.

When they finally got to the mill, the wind was howling. Built on the top of a small hill at the end of Jacob's farmland, the mill was as tall as the tallest tree, and the blades on the top were like the sails of a boat. Around and around they went; the stronger the wind,

the faster they spun. As the blades spun, levers inside the mill turned, which caused two huge, flat stones to scrape against one another. Jacob and his grandfather carefully set the grain between the two stones so it could be ground into flour.

Life was sure loud on a farm. Sometimes the sound of the wind, the blades, the levers, and the stones was so noisy that Jacob could hardly hear anything else.

Once the grain was ground, Jacob and Grandpa George scooped the flour into large cloth sacks, placed them on the wagon, and climbed up onto the wooden seat. The wind had stopped. The old horse was grazing on some nearby grass. Grandpa George looked up at a clear blue sky.

"Can you hear that, Jacob?" he asked his grandson.

"Hear what, Grandpa? I don't hear anything," Jacob looked up.

"That," he leaned in close to Jacob. "The quiet," he whispered. Then Grandpa George whispered, "Be still ... and know that I am God."

"What's that mean, Grandpa?" he asked.

"It's a very important verse in the Bible. One that my grandpa taught me when I was just about your age. Psalm 46:10."

"Be still?" Jacob asked.

"We're very busy on the farm," Grandpa George explained. "We work hard, and that's good. We have lots of chores to do, and that's important. But most of the time we're surrounded with noisy animals, squeaky tools, and whistling wind. This verse reminds us to take time to stop. To be very still. To find the quiet. And remember God and His love."

Jacob looked up at the clear blue sky and closed his eyes. It was very, very quiet. "I hear it," he told his grandfather. "I hear it loud and clear."

by Kathryn O'Brien

Kathryn O'Brien writes books for kids and has a heart for moms. She's published five children's picture books, including her latest series, Sit for a Bit, which teaches Bible verses to little ones in a fun and lasting way! Kathryn loves writing about faith and family for several publications and online blogs.



Website kathobrien.com



Facebook [iamkathobrien](https://www.facebook.com/iamkathobrien)



Instagram [@sit4abit](https://www.instagram.com/sit4abit)



WIND CHIMES

When I hear wind chimes, I often stop and listen. I pause to focus on the wind and the unique sounds of the chimes. Wind chimes are a beautiful reminder that the wind is at work even when I can't see it.

This month create your own family wind chimes. Once you hang them, take a moment to listen as a family. Any time you hear these chimes, think about the fact that God's voice is often like the gentle whisper of wind. We can't see it, but His still, small voice offers encouragement and helps us course correct. Hebrews 3:15 says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." God wants us to pause when we hear His voice and to think about His words, just as we pause to listen to the sounds of the wind blowing through these chimes.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 3 terra-cotta pots (3 different sizes work best)
- paint and paintbrushes
- strong outdoor string or cord (about 36" long)
- decorative weighted object
- tape
- large beads

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Begin by painting the clay pots. Work together on the design or give a pot to each person to design. After painting, set the pots aside to dry.



2. Once the clay pots are dry, begin assembling your wind chime. Loop or tie your cord through or around your decorative weighted object so that the object hangs in the middle of your cord.
3. Slide both ends of the cord through the first bead. It should sit just at the top of your weighted object.
4. Then take your smallest clay pot and put both ends of the cord through the hole in the bottom of the pot.
5. Tie a knot in the string a few inches above the first pot. (This will hold the second pot, so make it as far from or as close to the first as you would like.)
6. Slide both ends of the string through a second bead; it should stop at the tied knot.
7. Place both ends of the string through the hole in the second pot and slide it down the string until it rests on the bead.
8. Tie another knot a few inches above this pot, and slide on another bead and the third pot.
9. Lastly, tie the ends of the string together, making a large loop. Hook the loop onto a shepherd's hook or on a tree branch, and wait for the breeze to blow through your new wind chimes.

by Krista Heinen

Krista is the NextGen Associate Pastor at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, WI. Krista helps equip and support the families at Elmbrook through resources, events, and conversations.

 Twitter @KristaHeinen



GAME TIME

WATER BALLOON TOSS

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- water balloons
- large bucket
- water
- regular balloons (optional)

BEFORE YOU START

Fill the large bucket with cold water and set aside. Fill up roughly five water balloons per pair in your family (and maybe a few extras to throw around for fun after the game). As you fill up the balloons, place them in the bucket of water to keep them from popping.

TIME TO PLAY!

Encourage your family to throw on their bathing suits, and invite them outside! Have everyone split into pairs.

Explain that this first round is played like a typical water balloon toss. Have partners stand facing each other with a one-foot distance in between. Pick which line of partners will start the toss, and hand each of them a balloon. When you say, "Go," the partners holding the balloons will carefully toss the balloons to their partners. Once all balloons have been tossed, everyone takes one step backward. The people holding the balloons at this point should then toss the balloons back to their partners.

Continue this pattern by having everyone take a step back after each toss. If a pair drops their balloon, they are out. The last people in are the winners.



LET'S ADD A TWIST!

All of these rounds should be played the same as the first round with the the following changes:

Second round: Players must catch the balloons with one hand only.

Third round: The person tossing the balloon must turn around and face away from his partner. He will then toss the balloon over his head for his partner to try to catch.

Fourth round: Similar to the second round, the person tossing the balloon must turn around and face away from her partner, except this time she will hike the water balloon like a football.

Fifth round: Everyone must sit cross-legged on the ground for the duration of the round. Everyone can scoot backwards when it's time to do so.

REMEMBER

Remind your children that during the water balloon toss, the farther away they got from their partners the harder the game became. This can also be true of our ability to hear God. Sometimes we fall off track and find ourselves on a different path than what God would like for us. When we turn to God and listen to Him, He will always offer us a path of healing. However, if we are distant and disconnected from Him, it may be harder for us to see what that correct path is. Encourage your children, no matter how loud the world may be, to quiet their hearts and remain close to the Lord so they can continually hear His gentle guidance in their lives.

by Heather DePartee

Heather has been in children's ministry for seven years and is currently working at The Well Community Church in Fresno, CA, as the Kids Ministry Director for one of their three campuses. She has gone back to school for a degree in early childhood development and is loving every second! She is married to Adam and is crazy about pretty houseplants.

FAMILY TIME RECIPE

SUMMER PASTA

Prep Time: 10 min. Cook Time: 20 min. Yields: 4-6 servings

* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for "metric kitchen."

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 12 asparagus spears, cut into 1" pieces, woody ends discarded
- 1 (14 ounce) can quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 3 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 3 gloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cup frozen peas
- 8 ounces farfalle pasta or pasta of your choice (whole wheat or gluten-free works well too)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour (can use gluten-free flour)
- 2 cups low-fat milk or unsweetened almond milk
- zest of 1 large lemon
- juice of 1 large lemon
- 4 lemon slices
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
- Parmesan cheese for garnish

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat.
2. Add the shallot, asparagus pieces, artichoke hearts, spinach, garlic, and frozen peas.
3. Cook until vegetables are tender and spinach is wilted, about 5 minutes.
4. Pour the vegetables into a large bowl and set aside while you cook the pasta and sauce.
5. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt generously. Cook pasta according to package instructions.
6. While the pasta is cooking, place the large skillet you used to cook the vegetables back on the stove and melt the butter.
7. Whisk in the flour, whisking until you don't have any clumps. Slowly pour in the milk, about 1/2 cup at a time, whisking vigorously.
8. Add the lemon zest and keep whisking until the sauce comes to a boil.
9. Reduce heat to low and whisk occasionally until the sauce thickens. Add in the lemon juice and sliced lemons. Season the sauce with salt and pepper, to taste.
10. Drain the pasta and add it to the thickened lemon sauce.
11. Stir in the cooked vegetables and combine until the pasta and vegetables are well coated with the creamy lemon sauce.
12. Remove the lemon slices with tongs or a spoon.
13. Garnish with fresh basil and Parmesan cheese. Serve warm.

by Debbie Guinn

THIS LIGHT AND CREAMY LEMON PASTA IS FILLED WITH LOTS OF GREEN VEGGIES AND MAKES A GREAT ONE-BOWL SUMMER MEAL. IT CAN BE ON THE DINNER TABLE IN 30 MINUTES, WHICH LEAVES YOU TIME TO SPEND WITH YOUR FAMILY!



These Crispy Treat Pops will be a fun addition to your summer menu! Your kids will have a blast helping you make and decorate these by following this easy recipe.



CRISPY TREAT POPS

Cook Time: 30 min. Yields: 12 pops

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1/4 cup butter (1/2 stick)
- 10-11 ounces mini marshmallows
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 6 cups crispy rice cereal
- candy melts—in your desired colors
- lollipop sticks or paper straws
- sprinkles (if desired)
- wax or parchment paper

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Spray a 9" x 13" pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Melt butter and marshmallows in a large pan over low heat. Stir frequently.
3. Remove from heat.
4. Stir in vanilla.
5. Add rice cereal. Mix well.
6. Press into pan evenly.
7. Let cool.
8. Cut into desired shapes. We cut 2" x 4" rectangles. You can also use cookie cutters to create fun shapes.
9. Carefully place a lollipop stick or paper straw into every crispy rice treat.
10. Follow the package directions to melt the candy melts in the microwave.
11. Dip crispy rice treat pops into the melted candy until the pops are half coated.
12. Tap any excess coating off, add a few sprinkles, and let the treats sit on wax or parchment paper until the chocolate completely sets.
13. If you need your chocolate to set faster, you can place your treats in the refrigerator. Otherwise they should take about 30-60 minutes to set depending on humidity and temperature.

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

The environment of Course Correction raises the question “How do I know if I’m off course?” Sometimes it’s obvious when we’re not following the path God has for us, but other times we may only be off by a degree or two and won’t know it until, over time, we wander far from where God desires us to be. Prayer is essential in Course Correction. When we take the time to quiet ourselves and listen to God’s voice, we provide Him with an opportunity to gently correct us when we’ve veered off course.

Set aside 20 or 30 minutes to do a reflective prayer exercise with your family. Find a quiet space where you won’t be distracted. First, have your family members stand up and get their wiggles out.

Then, invite everyone to spread out around the room and find a space to sit down or kneel. Give each family member a piece of paper and something to write or draw with. Have everyone take a few deep breaths in and out, and then begin guiding them through the following four questions. (This is not a time to share answers out loud but is instead a time to process these questions with the Lord.)

Ask: “What are you thinking about? Is there anything currently distracting you or running through your mind?” Give a couple minutes to write or draw. Then say, “I encourage you to let go of those thoughts and distractions for the rest of our prayer time. If you find your mind wandering, ask God to help you focus back on Him.”

Ask: “What are you feeling right now? Are you anxious? Sad? Angry? Excited? Something else?” Give a

couple minutes to write or draw. Then say, “I encourage you to tell God how you’re feeling.”

Ask: “What do you want to say to God today?” Give a couple minutes to write or draw. Then say, “God cares about the things that are on your heart, and He loves it when you talk to Him.”

Ask: “What do you think God might want to say to you today?” Give a couple minutes to write or draw. Then say, “The more time we spend stopping and listening for God’s voice, the better we’ll get at knowing what He wants to say to us.”

Gather everyone back together and ask, “What was it like to quiet yourself before God?” Was it awkward? Relaxing? Hard to focus? Fun?” Acknowledge that this experience will be different for each person and that it gets more comfortable with practice. Then ask, “Would anyone like to share what God said to you?” and discuss anything that comes up.

Consider making this a regular rhythm in your home. When we take time to listen to God’s voice, we can rest assured that He is with us and will lovingly guide us back to Himself in the areas where we’re off course.

by Emily Schulz

Emily is the Family and Women’s Ministries Director at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. She has her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University and her MDiv from Denver Seminary. Emily loves seasonal activities; date nights with her husband, Phil; cooking; playing games; spontaneous song and dance; and creating space for people to be known and loved.



LISTEN FOR THE WHISPER

Elijah crumpled to the ground in sheer exhaustion. He had been running for his life for 40 days—40 fear-filled days of looking over his shoulder for the enemy, of not knowing whether “today” would be his last. He lay limp on the rocky ground of the dark cave. Then, in the stillness, God spoke to Elijah.

God told Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain because He was going to pass by. Elijah lay there, listening to the loud thumping of his heart. He had finally reached the safety and security of this cave, and now God was asking him to come out of it. He was terrified!

Just then, the fiercest wind you can imagine whipped along the mountainside. The sound was deafening! Outside the cave, bushes were uprooted, and rocks were being pulverized into dust. Elijah shut his eyes tight and covered his ears. Then the wind died down, but the earth below Elijah started to shake. The whole mountain shook. Elijah thought the earthquake would bring the cave ceiling crashing down on him, but he was frozen with fear. Then the ground quit rumbling. But the roar of a blazing fire filled the air. Elijah lifted his head to look out of the cave and the heat beat against his face like a furnace. Finally the fire stopped, and there was silence. Elijah waited—listening.

And then, outside the cave, he heard a faint whisper. A gentle whisper. Elijah's breathing slowed and his muscles relaxed. Somehow, Elijah knew that this tender voice was the voice of God. He got up and made his way out of the cave. And there the powerful and mighty, yet gentle and tender, God of the universe spoke to him. God gave Elijah direction, encouragement, and empowerment. God calmed his fears, corrected his misunderstandings, and gave him marching orders for the next step of his journey. But Elijah would have missed out on all of this had he not been listening.

Maybe God is whispering to you too. Are you listening?

HEAR IT

Read 1 Kings 19:1-21 to your family, and then retell the story by paraphrasing it in your own words or by reading the version included here out loud. Ask your family a few questions about the story to stimulate imagination, conversation, and possibly more questions. Here are some examples:

1. How you would have felt if you had been Elijah in the cave?
2. What was the most interesting part of the conversation between God and Elijah?
3. Which do you think most accurately represents God: wind, an earthquake, fire, or a whisper? All of them equally? Why?

DO IT

Most of us live in a busy, loud, distracting world. Amidst traffic, television, smartphones, social media, etc., our lives can get very noisy. Rather than expecting God to shout to us above all the noise, what would happen if we quieted ourselves and listened for the God who may have been whispering to us for a long time?

Read Psalm 46:10 to your family.

After reading the verse, sit quietly and listen to God together as a family. You may want to close your eyes, and hold your hands out in front of you, palms up, in a receiving position. Simply tell God, out loud, that you are listening for His gentle whisper. Then wait and listen. You may want to wait for one minute or a few minutes. When the time is over, share with each other what you experienced. Did you hear anything? Did God speak to you through words or maybe through pictures in your mind? Encourage your family members, as they go through the day and week, to be still and listen for God's whisper.

by Jason Kliewer

Jason is a husband, a dad of two daughters, and a Community Pastor at ROCKHARBOR Church in Costa Mesa, CA. He has a Master's in biblical studies from Grace University in Omaha, NE.



TOT TIME RHYME

(AGES 3 & UNDER)

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you **SIT AT HOME** and when you walk **ALONG THE ROAD**, when you **LIE DOWN** and when you **GET UP**.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7



SIT AT HOME

This month while you are sitting at home, set aside a quiet time to teach your little one this rhyme to the tune of "How Great Thou Art."

I will be still
 And know my God's with me
 He is near
 He is near
 I'll listen
 He will whisper to me
 How He loves me
 How He loves me

by Sophie Shambrook

Sophie grew up in California in a family of musicians. She currently attends Hillsong International Leadership College in Australia where she studies Ministry and Music. She loves being refreshed by adventuring and spending time in the ocean!



Get the audio recording of this song at bit.ly/julytottime

BLESSING

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. BLESSINGS CAN BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

I don't like to say I'm sorry. I never have. It doesn't feel good to admit when I've blown it. And I don't like to be corrected. Not many of us would pursue these things apart from the Holy Spirit. But here's what my King has taught me in my walk with Him. If I stay close to His heart, I choose repentance and I embrace correction because what He has to offer me on the other side is so much better than anything I could try to find on my own.

When I get too busy or too focused on myself I unknowingly allow myself to get distracted by the noise of life. But in the midst of noise a voice of truth speaks. A voice calling me back to the correct path. And that same voice is calling your children. The greater the level of repentance I cultivate in my own life, the easier it will be to lead my children in this. When I look my children in the eyes and ask them for forgiveness, there is a shift in our relationship. Everyone feels it. Let's teach our children that we are still working through the same process.

READ Psalm 139:1-6 over your child:

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

BLESS

(Child's name), God's love is pursuing you. May you always have a heart to receive God's loving correction. May His kindness always lead you to repentance. Still your heart and embrace the path He offers you to walk in spiritual health and wholeness. Surely His love and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

by Renae Craig

Renae is the Families Pastor at ROCKHARBOR Mission Viejo in California and a mother of two. Her desire is to see families pursuing Jesus together and experiencing His kingdom here and now.

TAKING ACTION

HALF UNITED



OUR STORY

An internship with TOMS Shoes. A bag of discarded bullet casings. A \$200 start-up investment. A vision for helping children in need. The HALF UNITED story could begin at any number of starting points. But ask brother-sister founders Christian and Carmin Black where it really starts, and it always goes back to their parents and an upbringing that nurtured a passion for people, design, charity, and entrepreneurship.

With a mother who owned restaurants and designed merchandising concepts for major fashion brands and a father who ministered in churches around the globe, the seemingly opposite worlds of fashion and philanthropy converged in their home, serving as a constant inspiration to the siblings. So in 2009, when Carmin left a promising job in journalism and Christian wrapped up high school, they began working together to create a brand that combined these two loves. Fashion and giving—two halves that, united, can make a difference. The vision of HALF UNITED was born.

BUT WHY THE NAME "HALF UNITED"?

Our supporters are doing their HALF by UNITING together to make a lasting change in the lives of children around the globe. United we stand but divided we fall!

WHY THE BULLET?

Broke but full of passion, Carmin and Christian Black set out to launch a social enterprise that followed the “give back” model that Carmin had discovered while participating in the “Vagabond” program with TOMS Shoes. Meeting daily at a local coffee shop, they were looking for a symbol of their fight against hunger, but it wasn’t until a friend donated a bag of discarded bullet casings that their vision became clear. “We were sitting in my living room, holding these recycled casings, when it all clicked,” says Carmin. “These casings will be a representation of our fight against hunger! Every time a customer purchases a ‘Fighting Hunger’ necklace, they are peacefully fighting hunger all over the world by providing seven meals for a child in need.” Now, eight years later, the perfectly named “Fighting Hunger Bullet Necklace” remains a bestseller and has become an iconic piece in the ever-growing HALF UNITED collection.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

At HALF UNITED, we unite our two passions—fashion and giving—to see lives changed and to empower YOU with the opportunity to join us in the global fight against hunger. This is why we have built relationships with organizations that actively impact impoverished and marginalized communities, bringing hope and restoration through the use of sustainable programs that directly affect the lives of children. For every HALF UNITED product you purchase, you provide seven meals for a child in need. Together with funds from our giving partners, your purchases fund feeding programs in the USA, Fiji, Cambodia, and Haiti. To date, we have provided over 650,000 meals, and we project that through your support, we will be able to give one million meals by year’s end.

TAKING ACTION



In Labasa, Fiji, you can rest assured that the money from your purchases supports sustainable and thriving feeding projects at the NCTC primary school. During our six-year partnership we have funded sweet potato farms, student garden projects, honeybee farms, chicken coops, and more.



From implementing Farm to School programs to packing meals for the hungry, even planting and maintaining community gardens, we at HALF UNITED are consistently identifying the specific needs of children in the communities in which they live and then working with their communities to solve issues and improve lives.



In an effort to help improve the lives of children in this part of the world, HALF UNITED has teamed up with the EAI orphanage in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. EAI focuses on empowering children emotionally, physically, and spiritually.



In Haiti, we work not only with children but with their families as well, empowering parents by providing them with the jobs they need to provide for their children.



To learn more and discover ways you can partner with HALF UNITED:

-  halfunited.com
-  www.facebook.com/halfunited
-  [@halfunited](https://www.instagram.com/halfunited)
-  [@halfunited](https://twitter.com/halfunited)

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS ...

FIJI?

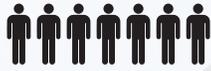
Fiji is a Melanesian island group located in the South Pacific. The islands are about 1,100 miles north of New Zealand. The group comprises 332 volcanic islands scattered in a horseshoe across an area of ocean some 370 miles across. Fiji has a total land area of 7,054 square miles. Its two largest islands, Vanua Levu and Viti Levu, occupy 87 percent of that area. Fiji has more land mass and people than all the other Melanesian islands put together.



GLOBAL

Awakening a compassionate heart and a global mind-set in children for people beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhoods.

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE IN THE WORLD FIJI IS, LET'S MEET AND GREET ITS PEOPLE.



POPULATION

901,986



LANGUAGE

ENGLISH/FIJIAN



RELIGION

CHRISTIAN 57%
HINDU 37%
MUSLIM 20%



There are almost one million people who call Fiji their home.



If you went to church in Fiji, you would most likely go to a Christian church.



To talk to your friends in Fiji you would speak English or Fijian.



To say, "Hello" in Fijian you would say, "Bula." (pronounced boo-lah).



If you lived in Fiji you would eat a lot of sweet potatoes, *taro* (a yam-like root vegetable), rice, cassava, coconut, and fish. The primary cooking methods are either over an open fire or underground.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The art of walking barefoot on hot stones originated about 500 years ago in the Sawau tribe on Bega Island off the coast of the main island. The natives still practice this fire-walking ceremony, which has been passed through generations.
- Strange but true: it is possible to be in two different time zones at the same time when on the island of Taveuni due to the fact that Fiji is spread across the international dateline. You can actually jump from today to tomorrow and then back again!
- Native Fiji tribes have a long history of warfare and cannibalism. Apparently, Christianity put an end to that practice. Nowadays, Fijians are peaceful, friendly, and kind towards visitors.

POVERTY FACTS FROM FIJI

250,000

More than 250,000 people live in poverty.

1 IN 4

That means that 1 in every 4 people are struggling to put food on the table.

50%

Only 50% of the population has access to safe drinking water, and even fewer have access to sanitation.

HALF UNITED IN FIJI

In Labasa, Fiji, HALF UNITED supports sustainable and thriving feeding projects at the NCTC primary school. Children there are taught how to raise chickens, plant gardens, care for beehives, and even prepare meals for their families at home. More than just teaching children about healthy eating, NCTC is instilling in these children invaluable life skills they can use as adults, such as the importance of teamwork and how to believe in one's own abilities. After more than five years of partnership, this organization has grown five times over. HALF UNITED is committed to expanding in this part of the world, and is thankful for the amazing staff they get to work alongside everyday!

To learn more about HALF UNITED and the work they are doing in Fiji and all over the world check out this month's Taking Action article on pages 28-29.

THAT LOOK

You know the look—when your son (or daughter) is about to do something he knows isn't what you want him to do. The look says, "Should I be doing this, Mom? I'm about to do this, and I'm pretty sure I've heard no in the past, but what are you gonna do?" Sometimes the smirk is there; usually the eyes are questioning as they meet yours, but always the hand is reaching for the forbidden thing—and the face is there. That look!

Now your precious child is a middle school student, and he still gives the look—only this time he's a bit older, a bit taller, and has a lot more responsibility than the little-kid version of himself.

But what do you do when he actually chooses to do the thing you have asked him not to do?

Middle school students are wildly unique as they are in a physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental overhaul, walking through the throes of puberty and the beginning of adolescence.

Part child and part teenager, the typical middle school student is attempting to figure out his or her identity in regards to family, friend groups, and the opposite gender. The decisions they make, both good and bad, might baffle you, but their developmental stage might shed some light on why they do what they do.

From a scientific standpoint, the frontal lobe of the brain is responsible for rational decision-making. This part of the brain is not even close to being fully developed for middle school students; this doesn't happen until the student is in his mid-twenties, and even then it still has some growing and learning to do.

And that's exactly what you as a parent get to continue to do: foster growth and learning for your middle schooler in the midst of the negative (and positive!) choices he makes.

But how?!

When your son or daughter makes a choice that is outside of what you desire for him or her, instead of moving directly into discussing "punishment," consider these biblical principles when it comes to course correction:

1. **Be still and know that God is God (Psalm 46:10).** God is God—He loves your child more than you do, and He has her best interests in mind as well as yours. Take a moment to be still before Him, take a breath, and listen to what He might want to do or how He might inspire you in the moment to course correct your child.
2. **Begin an open dialogue (Luke 15:20).** Your child has made a negative choice, and you now have the opportunity to explore her thought process leading to that choice. Ask questions, and come to a place of understanding and listening before moving into the reality of consequences. Your child might not even know why she made the choice she did, and she needs someone to help her consider what could have or should have happened. When we get off track, God offers a path of healing. You have the opportunity to do the same for your student.

- 
3. **Speak identity over your child (Ephesians 2:10).** In positive ways, who do you see your child to be? Who has he always been? These words of life will remind him of who he is and will speak to the reality that his choices were out of sync with his identity and who God is forming him to be. This is one of the most powerful things parents can do for their children!
 4. **Give an opportunity to grow (Hebrews 12:11).** Help your child think through ways to make things “right.” Whom does she need to apologize to? What actions need to be taken? As the parent, set a plan in place and hold your child accountable. As you help her think through this process, you are helping that frontal lobe develop in powerful ways!

Don't be intimidated by or afraid of the attitude your middle school children might toss your way; it is completely normal, and you are most likely doing a wonderful job. Continue to love them deeply with the love of Jesus, and you will set a foundation for them for the rest of their life.

by *Kate Johnson*

Kate Johnson loves Jesus and serves as the Student Ministries Pastor at ROCKHARBOR Mission Viejo. She is married to Aaron, and they have a one-year-old son and love to go to the beach as a family! Kate speaks and writes about God's faithful hand and His desire for every person to step into who He has created them to be.

 @thekatejnsn

 @katejnsn

 katejnsn.com



STAY ON THE PATH

When I was in high school, our youth ministry planned a backpacking trip every summer.

Groups of five leaders and twenty students would put all of our essentials on our backs. We would head into the wilderness for a week to connect with God and each other. The preparation for our trip consisted of shopping for freeze-dried foods and figuring out how to keep our pack weight to a minimum; it was crucial to travel light. Once we began hiking, we consistently looked for trail markers and landmarks that matched the map to keep us on track.

At home, it was so easy to look on the map, see the lines, and feel confident in what we were doing and where we were going. It was a different story when we were boots on the ground (literally). You could easily hike for hours believing that you were on the right path, only to find out that somewhere along the trail a signpost had been removed or the marker was just not as clear as you had believed. One little decision could get you way off course and compromise your trip and potentially even your safety.

Fortunately, along the path stood these small man-made monuments called cairns. Each cairn consisted of at least three rocks piled on top of each other and indicated the correct path. However, if you didn't know what to look for or if you weren't paying attention, it was easy for these simple messages to look meaningless or even to be ignored.

As I mature in my faith, I consistently want to know if I am in the center of God's will.

Another way to say it is, "Am I on the right path?" Though God can choose to interact with humanity any way He sees fit, I have seen through Scripture and my life that His interactions aren't typically the grand gestures I would hope them to be.

The LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-12 NLT)

Could it be that God speaks in the gentle affirmation of a parent or the quiet accountability from a friend over coffee? What if our students are totally missing the faithful correction of the Holy Spirit reminding them that they are loved because life is just too loud? The life of a teenager is noisy, and it sometimes takes the wisdom of parents and mentors to show them how to turn down the volume. The beautiful part is you aren't telling them what to do; you are pointing out the signs you see as you seek God in your own life. You don't have to know exactly where the path is; you get to discover that with your children and your family. We see in His Word that God moves and corrects in unexpected ways. Our job is to be aware of His guidance in our lives and point that out to others so we all stay on track.

by Jeff Bachman

Jeff has been in youth ministry for 25 years and is currently working as the High School Pastor at Mariners Church in Mission Viejo, CA. He is passionate about getting a glimpse of the eternal through the lives of the people he works with. Jeff communicates with thousands of students and young adults through preaching and teaching at his own church, speaking regularly at Hume Lake and other camps and equipping events, and student ministry training events such as National Youth Workers Convention. Jeff has his Master's degree from Western Seminary in evangelism and equipping. He and his wife of 16 years, Shara, have three children: Jackson (11), Isabella (9), and Charlotte (7). He loves music, cooking, traveling, comic books, and sitting over conversation with a beverage.



The Escape Plan

Bekah Bowen

I was sitting at a red light, so I quickly clicked on my notifications to see what I might be missing or need to know. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed the light turn green, so I took my foot off the brake to slowly roll forward while I clicked my phone off and put it away. After all, I don't text and drive. *Whooop whooop* rang in my ear, a quick blip of a siren. I looked in my rearview mirror and realized, to my dismay, it was intended for me. I sighed and my shoulders slumped as I pressed on the gas, turned through the light, and pulled over. I noted the time. Yep, my son would be late to school today. And then began the pleasant conversation one has with a police officer after being pulled over. You know, the one where he asks what business you had on your phone that you needed to do it while behind the wheel of a vehicle in drive. Ugh. Nothing important, and it was just plain stupid. I pulled away with an extra piece of paper when we

were done. No tears spilled, although they were close, but my ego took a big hit. All day I contemplated this experience that started off a sunny, beautiful Thursday. I dropped my son off at school, jumped back in the car (feeling a bit grouchy about it all), and drove home. I pulled up to a red light and sat there for a moment. Automatically my hand reached for my phone! I caught myself just before turning it on and threw it back in my bag, appalled at my lack of control.

I had to drive that same exact trek six times that day. You'd better believe my phone stayed inside my purse, but my mind went crazy. I made a couple phone calls on one of the trips (using hands-free Bluetooth, of course!). During the others, I turned on the radio. I started to worry about my inability to sit in the quiet.

In all my driving that day, on my final trip home, it hit me. I'm always looking for an escape plan.

The quiet is scary for me. The undistracted can be an emotional abyss that looks dark and looming. So I look for an escape—one that takes me someplace artificial so I don't have to deal in the real and vulnerable. It can become a bit obsessive. My mind pleads for a break. It's begging to run from pain. This is my daily struggle. Oh, how I grow tired of it. Even when I'm caught up in the act of distraction, my heart grows weary of it, and yet I don't stop. What might be on the other side if I do?

I feel the jerk of my heart beating like it's reminding me how very alive I am and how gone from this earth my six-year-old son is. There is that sensor! Distract! Distract! But I want to say, so what? That is a momma's heart; each heartbeat is a heart-bleed because I loved and still love big. But instead of clotting off that heart-bleed with distraction, I must let it run. For it is Jesus' blood that first ran to give us freedom in His love and grace. It is His broken body that made us whole. And it is my broken heart, bleeding all red and love, that is finding healing.

I am reminded that in Jesus' most broken state, all things were made new and He was beautiful. He did not get distracted from His mission. A mission to rescue His most dearly beloved—you and me. So, I breathe thanks for this gentle, albeit expensive, course correction from the Holy Spirit. I'm going to put down the phone—yes, even at red lights. I'm going to get comfortable with silence. I'm going to walk into brokenness knowing I'll want to run. And I'll run to Him who is faithful to remind me that grace and redemption are here and are for everyone. I certainly don't want to miss that.



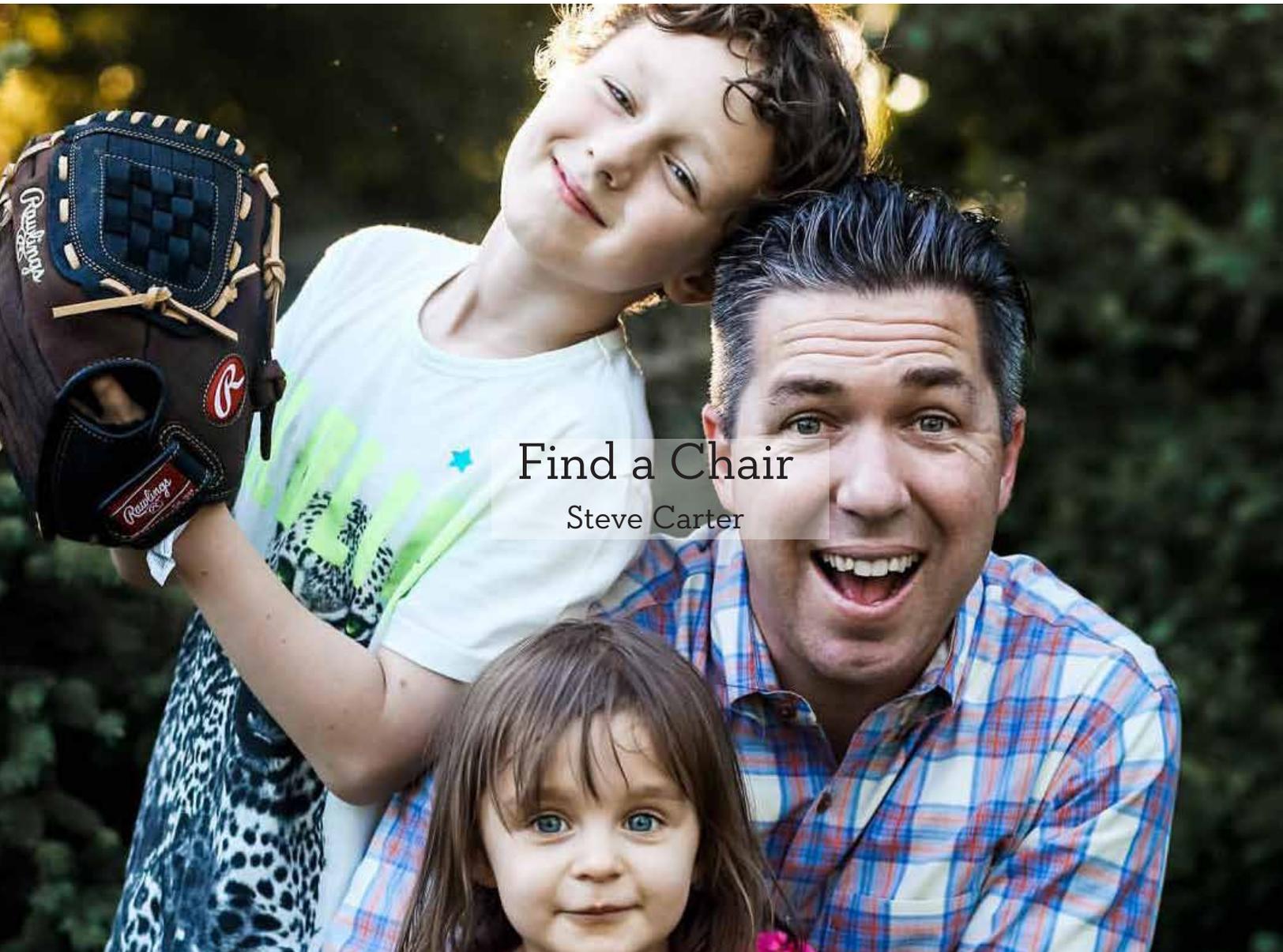
Bekah resides in Irvine, CA, with her husband, Danny, and is mom to two boys, both diagnosed with a fatal disease. Ely is three. Titus, six, is living life big with Jesus.



www.youcantstealmyjoy.com



facebook.com/Team4TitusEly



Find a Chair

Steve Carter

Being a dad in today's world is challenging. So much is coming at us, from so many angles, all the time. Navigating our life responsibilities in a God-honoring way can be overwhelming.

Let's say, hypothetically, that your average week holds some of the following responsibilities: work meetings, project deadlines, budget planning, replying to emails, yard work, school carpool, volunteering at church, time with your small group, connecting with aging parents, bussing kids to baseball practice, family dinners, time with your spouse. Of course, there are hundreds of other little things we encounter and manage every day, too many to list here.

Do you get the sense that there is never enough time? Life can start to feel like a checklist and we're just checking off tasks, hoping and praying nothing goes wrong because we honestly don't have the margin in our day to handle that.

A few years back, a mentor of mine came barging into my office. He looked me square in the eyes and said, "You make time for what you value. Your daily schedule is living proof of what you believe is most important!" Then he

walked over to my desk and flipped open my laptop saying, “Let’s take a look at your calendar right now. Let’s see what your actual life declares as most valuable to you.”

Can you imagine? It was a humbling experience for me, because I suddenly had to face this new brokenness in me—the brokenness of “busy.” I realized how much my life resembled a tumbleweed, just being blown around by the wind. As my mentor scanned my calendar, what surprisingly stood out most to him were the things that were missing.

He pulled out his monthly calendar and said that formulating a schedule is one of the most mission-critical decisions a leader can make. He declared it to be a divine act of trust and an act of defiance toward our go-go-go culture.

I asked him, “What do you schedule first?”

Without skipping a beat, he replied, “The most crucial things are often the first to go. Yet they are the foundation to a flourishing life. With all that is on my shoulders, I am in dire need of wisdom for my marriage, wisdom for my kids, wisdom for my work. I need wisdom, so I start each day in my chair with God.”

I came to learn that every morning he makes his coffee, grabs his Bible and journal, and sits in his living room to spend time with God. Even when he travels, he doesn’t make an exception but rather wakes early and makes time to experience God’s presence.

This simple practice had transformed him from a person who was scattered, stressed, and tired into someone who hears God’s whispers and embodies the fruit of the Spirit.

This conversation with a trusted mentor 10 years ago made me take an actual audit of what I truly valued. Looking over my schedule, it became clear that intimacy with Christ wasn’t as high of a value as I thought it was.

What about for you?

If my mentor barged into your office and scanned your schedule, what would it declare as most valuable to you?

Over the last decade I’ve come to depend on this daily time with God. It’s slowed my RPMs, opened my eyes to what matters most to God, cultivated more joy, peace, and patience in my life. And recently, it’s begun a new legacy within my family.

On an early Tuesday morning, my nine-year-old son was eating breakfast before school. Sitting together at the table, he saw that I was reading a chapter in the Bible. Curious, he asked, “Dad, what are you doing reading the Bible so early?”

It led to a fascinating conversation about the value of time with God. We came up with a plan: we’d practice doing this together. So in the mornings, I read three chapters of a book and take time to reflect, pray, and journal. And at bedtime each night, we read the same three chapters together. I’ll ask him some questions, and we reflect

on our day and end by praying together. It has become one of the most important parts of my day. And to think I almost missed it. If my mentor hadn’t taken the time to teach me, and if I hadn’t been committed to changing my time values to meet Jesus every day, I most certainly wouldn’t be able to enjoy this unhurried tradition with my son.

We make time for what we value.

What do you value most?

This week, may you declare what you value most and find a chair to meet with God. May those times in God’s Word and in prayer allow you to encounter a God who is with you and for you. And may you have the time to connect with those you love more deeply and wholly.



Steve is a teaching pastor for Willow Creek Community Church located in a suburb of Chicago, IL. He is a founding member of both ROCKHARBOR Fullerton Church and Solidarity and currently serves on the Solidarity board. Steve lives with his wife, Sarah, and their two children near Chicago. Steve recently wrote This Invitational Life: Risking Yourself to Align with God’s Heartbeat for Humanity. You can find his book on Amazon.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

I had the biggest event of my life to execute and I was determined to come out like a rock star. Big names from our state were coming: the governor, mayor, city officials, war veterans, and countless residents from around the area. They were coming to experience something great happening at our church, and I was not going to let them leave disappointed.

The day of the event, after the morning service released, I made my way into the auditorium to prepare the reserved seating for my important guests. As I approached, I noticed there were still church attendees praying at the altar. Under my breath I said, “Come on, people. I’ve got things to do in here and I need you to get out.” (Cue the shocked emojis. All of them.) I stood embarrassed, processing what I had just said. God was quick to bring Luke 10, the story of Mary and Martha, to my attention. My big head found this event more valuable than the conversations that were taking place with God! In my hurried and stressed preparation, I failed to follow these prayer warriors’ examples and invite God to His own gathering.

Often, I am guilty of doing this in my own home. I engage my Martha spirit more often than I want to admit. When Martha asked Jesus to tell her sister Mary to get up and come help with stressful dinner preparations, His response was, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42 NLT).

Mary focused on the most important thing that needed to be done: spending time with Jesus. Everything else could wait. So many times, I have

been derailed by the lack of coffee, small children to keep alive, and the chaos of laundry. Things must get done! Yet I have discovered my home is most susceptible to relational strain when I neglect my heavenly Father.

My husband and I lead the course that our family follows. We make a conscious daily choice to allow the Holy Spirit into our day. We ask our kids: “What kind of day is today?” and the response is “A good day!” Because of Jesus, they know it’s a good day. When I discern that stress wants to take hold in my day I ask myself, “Is this something I need to be stressed about?” The answer is always no because God gives me a sound mind. He is the giver of my peace. He is the one who invites us to cast all our burdens on Him!

When my kids come home from school, my husband and I want it to be a stress-free zone. Do we always succeed? No way! But that’s where Jesus fills our gaps because we have invited Him into our home. We give Him first seat and voice. I desire for my home to be a place our kids want to return to when they are grown with children of their own. For that to happen, I must daily invite Jesus into the home He gave us and choose to sit at His feet and allow Him to correct my course!

by Lindsey Snider

Lindsey currently serves as a Creative Specialist for the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Discipleship Ministries Headquarters in Oklahoma City, OK. She has served as a Community Outreach Pastor, Kids Pastor, and Media Pastor across Oklahoma and Texas. Lindsey and her husband, Jared, have a daughter, Brooklyn, and a son, Jack. They love to travel, try new foods, cheer on the Texas Rangers, and cuddle with their dog, Frisco.



AN UNHURRIED MARRIAGE

A New Testament prayer that rises as one of our favorites after 30-plus years of marriage is found in Ephesians 3.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)



MARRIAGE

We see three main requests in this prayer. They don't form the usual wish list for a happy marriage (enough money, good communication, healthy traditions, obedient children, work/life balance, or a great sex life). These are, of course, critical issues to address. However, we'd like to address marriage at an even deeper level—at the level of the soul.

Two questions we ask ourselves as a couple when we reflect on this prayer: “What would it look like if this prayer were answered in our lives and in our marriage? How would we recognize if God had richly answered this prayer for us?”

We are about as different as two people can be. If you know anything about Myers-Briggs personality types, we do not share even one letter in common. And yet we have been married for 32 years. We unapologetically believe that the key to our long-term marriage has been our shared spiritual life. When we experience the conflict our differences create, our souls continue to connect.

So here are the three arenas we hear addressed in Paul's prayer.

Request 1: Inward Spiritual Strength

Paul wants our lives (and our marriages) to be richly strengthened inwardly by God's Spirit. We know this prayer is being answered when we find strength to be patient and at peace, to be gentle and faithful, to be compassionate and self-controlled with one another. This isn't typically how we think about strength. We often think strong people get their way. But true strength is to love and be loved. It's strength to serve one another. We need the Spirit's inward strengthening to endure day-after-day, week-after-week things that don't change about the other—and to actually go beyond enduring to treasuring.

Request 2: Deepening Abiding in Christ

For Christ to be at home in our marriage, He needs to be at home in our hearts. Paul prays for this and so can we. We want to be a man and a woman who radiate the life of Christ—His compassion, His character, His goodness, His affection. But Christ being at home in our hearts doesn't happen automatically.

When God answers this request in our marriage, we see Christ's being at home in and among us deepen our sense of security and belonging to one another. Together, we experience what it means to live in the vitality of His life in us.

Request 3: Living the Boundless Adventure of Being the Beloved

Paul prays that each of us would be empowered to know the love of God that goes beyond full comprehension. Wouldn't that make a difference in how we love one another? Rather than looking to one another for the deepest needs of our souls, we discover the abundance of God in us so that we can love one another lavishly. What a difference it can make in our marriages as we each learn to trust more deeply in the real affection and delight of God over us.

As God answers this request, our closeness with each another increases along with our growing awareness of the endlessness of God's love for each of us. We remember that we can't cause God's love for us to increase by improving our performance as husbands or wives. We can't cause God's love for us to diminish by our struggles or failures. His love is sure no matter what.

REFLECTION

Why not set aside some time to talk together about these three invitations:

- How might God want to strengthen each of you inwardly?
- How might you more deeply abide in His presence?
- How might you experience being the beloved of God?

by Alan and Gem Fadling

Alan Fadling, M. Div., serves as a frequent speaker and consultant with local churches, national organizations, and leaders internationally. A Certified Spiritual Director, Alan is author of *An Unhurried Life* (IVP 2013), honored with a Christianity Today Award of Merit in Spirituality. Also a Certified Spiritual Director, Gem Fadling enjoys walking alongside women as they grow in their spiritual lives. In addition to leading retreats and blogging, Gem is the engine behind the resources produced by *Unhurried Living*. For 30 years, Alan and Gem have been working together to help people engage in a “long obedience in the same direction” (Eugene Peterson). To learn more about *Unhurried Living* and to receive a free eBook, *Take Five: 22 Ways to Enjoy God's Presence*, visit unhurriedliving.com/take-five/.



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RECALCULATING

My guess would be that, as a grandparent, you—like me—have had many starts and stops in your life. Life seems to be going in a certain direction and all of a sudden something happens and you are redirected. Course redirection can be costly spiritually, financially, and emotionally. We look to God and ask, “Why and what now?” as we wait to hear His voice and have Him recalculate the course.

Life has a way of throwing things at us that can get us off track. A child with special needs, a move to another state for a job that doesn't work out, a severe illness, the death of a loved one, betrayal, divorce, adult children not walking with the Lord—the list could go on and on.

Any one of these things can send us barreling down a new path—a new path that requires clear direction from God while trusting He will always work things together for our good. But how do we hear Him? How do we know which direction He wants us to go? We must pull ourselves away from the trauma and find a way to be still and listen.

This is a valuable lesson for our grandchildren to learn, and who better to teach them than a grandparent who has already experienced God's

faithful recalculating? Eleanor Roosevelt said it best: “Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.” Some things that come our way may not be actual “mistakes,” but nonetheless our response to our redirect can be a valuable lesson for our families. We choose how to respond to the things that feel like roadblocks in our lives.

Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG)

This month, find a quiet time to sit down with your grandchildren and encourage them to work through the maze on the opposite page together. As they come to a place on the maze where they seem trapped or lost, share with them about a time God redirected your path. Then talk with them about what might have happened if you hadn't stopped and listened for God's guidance to get back on course. Tell them how you knew God was guiding you and how

things turned out when you trusted Him and listened. Remind them that their lives will be full of stops and starts and that trusting God from the bottom of their hearts, and listening to His voice in all they do, will keep them on track!

by Debbie Guinn

SPIRITUAL GRANDPARENTING

**START
HERE**



**YOU DID
IT!!**

10 ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

1

“God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me.”

RESPONSIBILITY

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one’s life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

2

“God transforms me when I step out in faith.”

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

3

“Asks the question, ‘What needs to be done?’”

SERVING

This posture of the heart asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

4

“God fills me with His love so I can give it away.”

LOVE & RESPECT

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God’s grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one’s behavior.

5

“God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!”

STORYTELLING

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person’s life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God’s glory.

6

"God knows me, and I can know Him."

KNOWING

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

7

"I belong to God, and He loves me!"

IDENTITY

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

8

"God's family cares for each other and worships God together."

FAITH COMMUNITY

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

9

"When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."

COURSE CORRECTION

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

IT IS OUR PRAYER THAT HOMES AND CHURCHES WOULD CREATE THESE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE IN SO THEIR FAITH WILL GROW IN A COMMUNITY OF CONSISTENCY, COMMON LANGUAGE, AND PRACTICE. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THESE ENVIRONMENTS CAN IGNITE A TRANSFORMING FAITH IN YOUR FAMILY, WE SUGGEST YOU READ:

10

"I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."

MODELING

Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.



*SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today's Families*

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY

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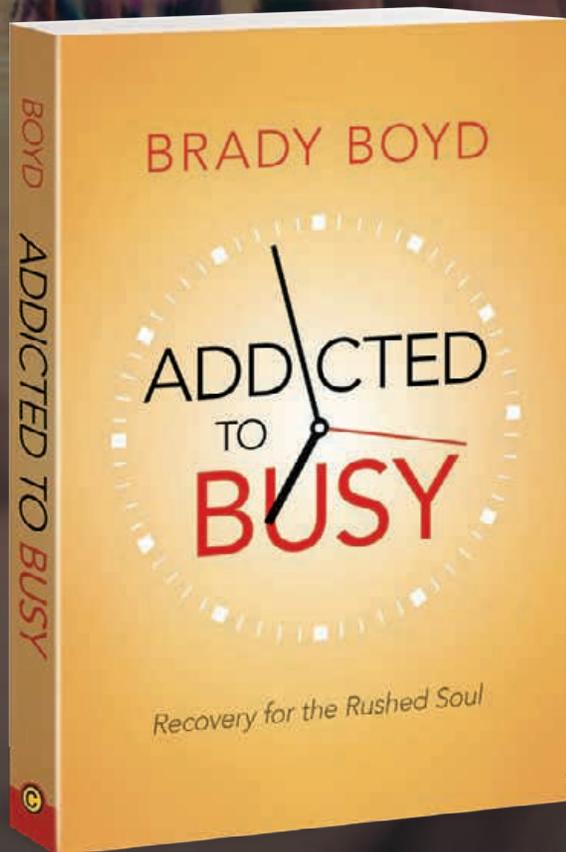
ARE YOU BUSIER THAN YOU WANT TO BE?

**THAN YOU NEED TO BE?
THAN YOU ARE MEANT TO BE?
IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE!**

We are all spread too thin, taking on more than we can handle, trying to do so much. Are we afraid that if we were to take a moment of rest, we might discover that all our busyness is covering up an essential gap in our lives?

But God never meant for you to be so busy. God's desire for you is peace. God desires rest.

In *Addicted to Busy*, Brady Boyd shows you how to live a life that embraces stillness and solitude and finds the peace that God wants for you.



Brady Boyd is the senior pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is married to his college sweetheart, Pam, and they have two great kids, Abram and Callie. Brady has written numerous books, including *Speak Life* and *Let Her Lead*. He's also passionate about caring for the people of Colorado Springs and has been instrumental in the opening of numerous Dream Centers in the city.

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David Cook
transforming lives together