

STUDY GUIDE

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PRAYING
the SCRIPTURES
for Your
Adult Children

Trusting God with the Ones You Love



Praying the Scriptures for Your Adult Children
A Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Reflection

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Welcome, Friends!

In the very first chapter of *Praying the Scriptures for Your Adult Children*, I write that parenting adult children is hard. For one thing, the issues our grown-up kids face are often trickier (and more life-shaping) than the stuff we prayed about when they were young. As someone once said, “Little people, little problems. Big people, big problems.” We get that.

But there’s another, less obvious, reason why parenting adult children is tough.

As empty nesters, we no longer find ourselves in what you might call a *parenting community*, a place where friendships with other parents have a chance to organically grow. Once upon a time we could ask for advice, offer encouragement, and swap stories with parents we spent time with at the park (or later, on the sidelines) while we watched our kids play. We didn’t necessarily seek out these confidantes; we just stumbled into one another’s lives naturally, drawn together because we found ourselves in a common season.

Now, though, the parenting landscape looks different. And, for the first time in maybe twenty or thirty years, we may find ourselves kind of alone.

This simple study guide can help reclaim those relationships. Of course, you are welcome to use it by yourself, but in the interest of creating connection and forging some of those “we’re in this together” friendships, I encourage you to invite other parents—even one or two, singles or couples—to think and pray through these pages together.

The questions aren’t meant to be hard; even the “digging deeper” sections are not lengthy or intimidating. Rather, this study guide is designed to facilitate thought, provoke questions, and stimulate both discussion and understanding. Ultimately, it’s an invitation to pray—both for your own adult children and for others whose lives intersect with yours.

Prayer is, as Jack Hayford so aptly put it, “a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of his redemptive purposes here on earth.” So let’s go ahead and slip our hand into God’s. Let’s do our best work as earthly parents by talking to our Heavenly Parent about the children we love.

Chapter 1: The Battle Begins

*Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome,
and fight for your families, your sons and
your daughters, your wives and your homes.
Nehemiah 4:14*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you think that parenting adult children is harder than parenting little ones? Why or why not?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you”? (That’s John 15:7; for further insight, check out what he says in verse 8.)
3. “Our struggles are God’s entry points.” Do you agree with that statement? And, if so, where have you seen God move into a difficult situation?

Digging Deeper

The Old Testament book, Nehemiah, tells the story of Nehemiah’s grief over Jerusalem’s ruin and his God-given vision to rebuild the city. The job was both difficult and dangerous, but the Israelites finished the wall in just 52 days.

Read Nehemiah 4.

1. Nehemiah faced mockery, opposition, and disdain. Have you ever felt ridiculed or opposed in your parenting efforts, either by other parents or your own children?
2. Can you relate to the people of Judah, who said (v. 10), “The strength of the laborers is giving out”? As a parent, what gives you the strength to continue during the hard or discouraging seasons?
3. “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome” was Nehemiah’s rallying cry (see v. 14). How can focusing on who God is, rather than what your issues are, transform your parenting perspective?
4. In verse 20, Nehemiah makes a plan to help a widely separated labor force be ready for battle. “Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet,” he tells them, “join us there.” He also implemented a buddy system (see v. 22). How important do you think it is to have someone come alongside you in both parenting and in prayer?

Chapter 2: Blessing and Releasing Your Adult Child

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “A blessing is not the same thing as an endorsement.” Do you agree?
2. How might blessing your child—affirming the good things you see in his life, and forecasting God’s favor over his future—be emotionally freeing for you, as a parent? How might it impact your relationship with your child?
3. Where do you see God working in your child’s life? Which of their choices, or character traits, can you affirm? What would it look like to envision, and pray for, God’s favor over your child?
4. Do you have a hard time trusting God when your child’s choices don’t line up with your plans? Read Philippians 2:13, and consider how embracing this verse can help you bless and release your adult children and give God the freedom to work in their lives.

Digging Deeper

The greatest blessing that our children can enjoy is the gift of God’s presence. Read Psalm 139 and record any verses that showcase God’s

- Deep knowledge of your child
- Ability to protect and provide for your child
- Willingness to seek, pursue, and be with your child
- Plan for your child
- Promised guidance for your child

Chapter 3: Praying for Your Child's Transition to Adulthood

*When I was a child, I spoke and thought
and reasoned as a child. But when I
grew up, I put away childish things.
1 Corinthians 13:11 NLT*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways is your child's transition to adulthood (with markers like getting a job, getting married, finding a place to live) similar to yours? How is it different?
2. Have you ever asked God to show you *how* you should pray for your child? Can you relate to Beth's story, when God told her to "stop talking" and start praying that God would show them his love?
3. What unique talents or abilities has God given your child? How do you see those things being used in his or her life?
4. Author Jean Fleming recommends times of prayer for your children in which you:
 - *Acknowledge* God's hand on their lives.
 - *Admit* any areas you resent in the way God created your children.
 - *Accept* and thank God for how he designed each child.
 - *Affirm* God's purpose in creating your children for his glory.
 - *Ally* yourself with God's plan for their lives.

Which of these areas are easy for you? Which ones are more difficult?

Digging Deeper

Isaiah 55 is sometimes called "God's Invitation." Read Isaiah 55:1-13, and tell how the following verses encourage you as you pray for your adult children:

- Verses 1-2
- Verses 8-9
- Verses 10-11
- Verses 13

Chapter 4: A Year of Prayer

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Romans 12:12*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. We tend to want (and even expect) speedy results when we pray. What benefits might you experience when you commit to praying about a particular need or concern for an entire year?
2. Jennifer Kennedy Dean says, “Nothing takes God by surprise.” Does the idea that God awakens prayers in our hearts—that he *initiates* them, and they are not something we think up by ourselves—change your perspective on prayer?
3. Have you ever had an experience where you read a Bible verse or promise and just *knew* that God meant it for you? How do you think God feels when we read and pray words that he first spoke to us?
4. Take some time to think about each one of your adult children. Consider where he or she is socially, spiritually, physically, emotionally, and in other ways. If you could ask God to do one thing for that child this year, what would it be?

Digging Deeper

Look up the following verses. What do they reveal to you about the value and importance of reading the Bible and letting it animate your prayers?

- Hebrews 4:12
- Isaiah 55:10-11
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- Romans 15:4

Chapter 5: Praying for Good Friends and Fellowship

*As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. John Ortberg says, “We are designed to flourish in connectedness.” Do you agree? How important is it for your adult child to have deep friendships (as compared to other measures of success or happiness)?
2. How do you think having a shared Christian faith impacts a friendship? Is church attendance vital to what Ortberg calls “joy-producing, life-changing” relationships?
3. Can you think of a friendship in your adult child’s life that is marked by:
 - Constancy/loyalty
 - Transparency/the ability to be honest
 - Faith in Christ
4. Who are *your* friends who model these things? Do you have a friend with whom you can safely be transparent, and with whom you can pray? If not, ask God to give you a friend like that. And if so, thank him for that blessing (and thank your friend, too!).

Digging Deeper

It can be easy to think of Jesus in somewhat lofty terms, with names like *Savior*, *Lord*, and *Son of God*. He was all of these things, sure, but he was also human—and he taught us how to both extend and receive friendship.

If you were describing Jesus to someone who did not know him, how would you characterize his love for his friends, based on the following passages:

- John 11:33-44
- John 13:1-17
- John 15:12-17
- John 20:24-31

As you consider how Jesus treated his friends, do you see any of these actions or attributes in your adult child’s life? Consider letting your child know that you do see these traits—and affirm them.

Chapter 6: Praying for a Future Spouse

“Let her be the one the Lord has chosen...”
Genesis 24:44

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you thought about the qualities you want in a spouse for your child? What are they?
2. The parents in this chapter prayed for their child’s future spouse. If you were to pray for an eventual marriage partner (someone you might not have even met yet!), what would you pray?
3. “Praising God changes our perspective and releases supernatural peace, hope, and joy.” Have you experienced this phenomenon?
4. Do you agree that a person’s identity should not be defined by his or her marital status? What could you do, say, or pray to help your child look beyond singleness or marriage to discover a sense of identity and worth in Jesus?

Digging Deeper

1. Proverbs 18:22 says, “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.” Clearly, God designed marriage to be a blessing. But the Apostle Paul was a single man. What does he say about his marital status in 1 Corinthians 7:7?
2. How might singleness be a “gift from God”?
3. Do you think it’s possible to pray for a child’s future spouse and, at the same time, genuinely thank God for the gift of singleness? How does Proverbs 19:21 encourage you to trust God in a child’s singleness or marriage?

Chapter 7: Praying for a Young Marriage

*A man shall leave his father and mother and
be united to his wife, and the two will become
one flesh. This is a profound mystery.
Ephesians 5:31-32*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Tim Keller says, “Marriage is glorious but hard.” Do you agree? How have you seen this dichotomy play out in your own marriage?
2. “Leaving and cleaving” is the Bible’s term for what happens in marriage as a child leaves his parents and forms a new union with his or her spouse. What have you done to help facilitate this transition in your child’s life? Where have you (consciously or unconsciously) worked against that?
3. One challenge that many young couples face is reconciling their expectations about marriage with reality. What can you do, say, or pray to help your adult child accept and embrace a spouse whose family background, ideas, and traditions might not line up with your family’s?
4. This chapter identifies four “links” in the chain of a strong marriage: *Selflessness, Friendship, Forgiveness, and Being Filled with the Holy Spirit*. What other links would you add to this chain?

Digging Deeper

Ephesians 5 offers a template for how husbands and wives are to love one another. Check out the following verses and describe what observing them might look like in your child’s marriage (or, if you are married, in your own):

- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Ephesians 5:21-22 (keeping in mind the example Paul gives of the way we yield ourselves to Christ, who loved us and gave up everything for us)
- Ephesians 5:25
- Ephesians 5:33

Chapter 8: Praying through a Troubled Marriage or Divorce

*Be patient, bearing with one another in love.
Ephesians 4:2*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Betsy and Tom began to pray differently when they realized that their daughter's husband was "not the enemy." How might having this perspective change how you pray for your own child's marital struggles?
2. Romans 5:3 tells us that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope. Nobody wants to see their child suffer, but how might this verse infuse your heart with hope as you pray for God to "pour out his love" (Romans 5:5) into your child's marriage?
3. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but nowhere does the Bible say that God hates divorced *people*. Rather, Scripture is clear that God is "close to the brokenhearted." (Psalm 34:18) If your child has been through the pain of divorce, what might you say or do to let him/her know how deeply God loves him/him, and how precious and valuable he/she is in God's eyes?
4. How does knowing that God himself has experienced the pain of rejection, betrayal, and even divorce encourage you? (See Jeremiah 3:8)

Digging Deeper

John 10:10 says that the devil's goal is to "steal and kill and destroy." We can be sure (because it reflects God's covenant with us) that one of Satan's prime targets is marriage. The good news is that we can protect ourselves. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. Prayerfully picture your child clothed with:

- The belt of truth (to provide core support and a defense against deception)
- The breastplate of righteousness (to protect the heart, soul, and emotions)
- The shoes of peace (to equip us to stand our ground and also run quickly to deliver good news)
- The shield of faith (to extinguish fear and doubt and equip us to act in accordance with God's word)
- The helmet of salvation (to guard our thoughts)
- The sword of the Spirit (that is, the word of God, which gives us wisdom, discernment, correction, and the power to pray)

Chapter 9: Praying for a Good Place to Live

*God decided exactly when and where
they must live.
Acts 17:26 (NCV)*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Think back to when you purchased (or rented) your first home. What trade-offs did you have to make? Looking back, can you see evidence of God using these limitations to teach you, or bless you, in some way?
2. As your adult child considers where to live, do you find yourself tempted to provide financial help so that he or she can get a nicer place? Or do you wish they'd scale back so as not to get over-extended? How much advice, or material help, do you think it's appropriate to give?
3. If you have "home again" kids, what can you do (or what have you done) to manage expectations about everything from household chores to how long the situation will last? How can you help promote your child's independence, while also guarding your own?

Digging Deeper

Read Ecclesiastes 7:11-12.

- What two things is wisdom compared to in this passage?
- What makes the "shelter" of wisdom preferable to a literal shelter, like an apartment, a house, or even a healthy bank balance?
- Most people think of an inheritance in terms of money. But this passage puts wisdom in the same category. What steps have you taken (or what steps can you take) to pass on a legacy of wisdom to your adult children?

Chapter 10: Praying for a Job

*I will instruct you and teach you in
the way you should go...
Psalm 32:8*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Today's young adults often want different things in a job than their parents did, and they may go about the job search in ways we don't understand. In what ways are you and your child similar in this area? How are you different?
2. As you consider the distance between trying to dictate timing and outcomes and being willing to wait in what Paula Reinhart calls "the cool shade of surrender," where do you fall on the spectrum?
3. "If we want to pray with faith, we must anchor our requests in God's promises." Do you agree? If so, are there any particular verses or promises that have served as your prayer anchor?

Digging Deeper

Scripture brims with stories of God working behind the scenes so that he can reveal his plan, or his answer, at just the right time. The book of Habakkuk begins with the cry, "How long, O Lord, must I cry for help?"

Read Habakkuk 2:1-4. As you pray for your child's job (and wait for God to provide), consider:

- Your posture (v. 1): Are you "standing" in prayer? Have you put yourself in a "watchtower," some elevated place where you can take in all that God might be doing?
- Your promise (v. 2): Have you written down God's promises? If not, ask him to give you an anchor—a promise from his Word—and record it.
- Your patience (v.3): It's hard to be patient, but God wants us to know that his answer *is* coming. What did he tell Habakkuk about timing in this verse?
- Your purpose (v. 4): On what are we supposed to depend? What is it that equips us to live, even when facing an uncertain future?

Chapter 11: Praying when Your Children have Children

*I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.
Isaiah 44:3*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you see prayer as a gift you can give to your kids as they parent? In terms of practical help, is prayer as valuable as, say, an offer to babysit or drop off a meal?
2. Susan notes that young children have many similar needs (safety, wisdom, friendship, etc.). If you could ask God to do anything for your grandchildren, what would it be?
3. Chances are, your adult children don't parent the same way that you did, and they might even do things you don't like or approve of. Where do you find balance between offering advice, accepting your differences, and taking your concerns to God in prayer?
4. Susan and her husband run an annual Cousins Camp to forge connections with their grandchildren and help strengthen their faith. While that might not be practical (or even appealing) in your situation, what might you do to build a relationship with your grandkids and invest in their lives?

Digging Deeper

The Bible is full of promises and exhortations for grandparents. Look up the following verses and consider how embracing them might help define the way you relate to your family:

- Deuteronomy 4:9-10
- Psalm 78:4
- 2 Timothy 1:5

Chapter 12: Praying through a Health Crisis

*I have heard your prayer and seen your tears;
I will heal you.
2 Kings 20:5*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you believe that God has the power to heal people? Why, or why not?
2. “Instead of focusing on the trials that lay ahead, Leslie shifted her thoughts to all that God had already done for their family.” If your child is in the midst of an illness or a health crisis, take a few moments to reorient your perspective. How has God cared for your family in the past? Can you count on his faithfulness now?
3. What would it look like for you to take Jesus up on his offer when he says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”?
4. Most parents would do anything to save a seriously ill child, even if it meant trading places. How does your experience as a parent help you understand the depth of God’s love?

Digging Deeper

Jesus healed a synagogue ruler’s daughter, a Canaanite woman’s daughter, and a boy who had been demon possessed for years.

Take another look at their stories in Luke 8:41-42, Matthew 15:28, and Mark 9:17-24. Which parent reminds you the most of yourself?

Can you empathize with the demon-possessed boy’s father? Have you ever asked God to help you overcome your unbelief? Does this story encourage you to come to Jesus not just for your child, but also for your own needs?

Chapter 13: Praying for Mental and Emotional Health

*He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Psalm 40:1-3*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever encountered the message that emotional or mental illness is a sign of spiritual weakness, and that Christians should be able to “get out of it” by praying harder or strengthening their faith? If so, how did you respond?
2. How do you think things like anger, resentment, or unforgiveness can impact a person’s mental or emotional health? What would you say to help someone let go of a bitterness that may be holding them hostage?
3. If your child suffers from a mental health issue, where do you turn for support? If you know someone whose child suffers, what might you do show love and acceptance to that person, or that family?
4. *God is good. He is powerful. And he loves me.* Those words, spoken out loud every day, represented truth for Ginny’s family. Is there a similar refrain you might embrace to help you ward off fear and stay focused?

Digging Deeper

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy just before he was martyred. He was imprisoned in a dungeon, where he was in chains for his faith. It was from this place of intense darkness and physical weakness that Paul wrote some of the most uplifting exhortations in all of Scripture.

- Read 2 Timothy 1:7. What three things mark the Spirit that God gives us?
- Read 2 Timothy 1:12. How does this verse encourage you not to be ashamed about mental or emotional illness? Do you believe that God can guard whatever you entrust to him, including your child’s mental or emotional health?
- Paul considered Timothy a dear son. He wanted the young man to be strong, and yet he never put the burden of performance on him. Read 2 Timothy 2:1. Where did Paul tell Timothy he should find his strength?

Chapter 14: Praying for Protection from Harm

*The angel of the Lord encamps around
those who fear him.
Psalm 34:7*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Look back over your adult child's life. How have you seen God demonstrate his protection?
2. When you ask God to keep your child safe, do you include prayers for mental and emotional protection, as well as for physical safety? Which of these areas do you think might pose the biggest threat to your child's wellbeing right now?
3. Fear can wage a fierce battle against faith, particularly during the wee hours of the night, when we are less able to guard our minds. What can you do to anchor your faith against the dangers of these stormy, unwanted thoughts?
4. If God calls your child to live or work in a dangerous place (whether it's in the military, or in a place where things like crime, disease, or even a toxic work environment might threaten their safety), how will you respond?

Digging Deeper

Psalm 121 is one of the "Psalms of Ascent," the songs that the Israelites sang as they made their way to Jerusalem for their annual feasts. The pilgrimage was not always easy; anything from twisting an ankle to being set upon by robbers could happen! And yet the Israelites knew God was their helper—just as we can know he is our helper (and our kids' helper) today.

Read Psalm 121 and recount all of the ways that God promises to take care of his people. Try to commit the last two verses to memory; they are good ones to recite when you wake up afraid in the night!

*The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.*

Chapter 15: Praying through a Job Loss or Financial Difficulty

*When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.
Psalm 94:18*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. When our kids find themselves in financial difficulty, it can be tempting to step in and rescue them. When do you think it's appropriate to offer to help, and when do you think it's better to stay on the sidelines?
2. Can you think of times in your own adult life when you faced a job loss or rejection? What did you learn from that experience?
3. How important is it to have an identity that is grounded in Christ, rather than in a job title or a paycheck? If your child is in the midst of a career transition or some other difficult financial season, what might you do or say to help them find their sense of self-worth in the Lord?
4. It's never too late to learn the principles of sound money management. Would you consider sending your adult children to a conference or getting help from one of the organizations identified in Chapter 15?

Digging Deeper

People don't generally think about making and managing money in spiritual terms, but Jesus talked about money a lot—by some counts, even more than he talked about love! God obviously knew that money (and how to handle it) would be a tricky topic for us, so he provided plenty of guidance.

Take a look at these verses and consider how the wisdom they contain might impact your life. How do you see these principles being played out in your adult child's finances?

- Proverbs 23:4
- Matthew 6:24
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10
- Proverbs 11:25

Chapter 16: Praying through the Struggles of Infertility

*You open your hand and satisfy
the desires of every living thing.
Psalm 145:16*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Can you identify with Julia’s feelings of sadness and frustration, particularly when it seemed that all of her friends were having babies? What details of her story did you find particularly encouraging?
2. If your child wants to get pregnant, do you struggle with frustration because you cannot be the mom (or the dad) and “fix” things? Or do you find it fairly easy to trust God and his plans?
3. Have you ever been through a prolonged season of unmet expectations, or experienced the pain of longing for something you cannot have? How did that experience shape or impact your faith?
4. “God hears the cry of our hearts.” Do you believe that? Do you think there might be a deep level on which God wants to satisfy us that has little or nothing to do with having a baby (or any other tangible blessing)?

Digging Deeper

Trusting God when outcomes are uncertain—or when God answers our prayers with a “no”—can be hard. Really hard. And sometimes, there are no easy answers.

The psalmist knows just how that feels. Read Psalm 73:13-17.

- What is the psalmist’s complaint? (v.13-14)
- What happens when he tries to understand why hard things happen? (v. 16)
- Where does he find his answer? (v. 17)

In the end, it appears that the psalmist is satisfied—fully satisfied—with the gift of God’s presence. Read Psalm 73:23-28. Can you imagine being able to write these words?

Chapter 17: Praying for Strength to Resist a Party Culture

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Matthew 5:6*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Were you worried about the collegiate party scene, when your son or daughter left home? If so, how did you deal with your fears?
2. Many of today's young adults say that "everything" revolves around alcohol, from their social lives to things like work dinners, business trips, and networking opportunities. Would you say that's true in your child's life? Is there pressure to party from coworkers or friends?
3. Have you ever thought about the distinction between the counterfeit joy of the party scene and the genuine joy Jesus offers? What do you think Jesus meant when he said he came to give us a full, abundant, satisfying life? (John 10:10) Do you think he was talking about our social and work lives?
4. Do you tend to take credit for your child's good decisions? Do you beat yourself up over his or her mistakes? What do you think our attitude should be regarding the choices our adult children make? What role does grace play?

Digging Deeper

Daniel was a smart, handsome, well-connected young man who found his faith challenged in what might be described as a Babylonian "party culture."

- Read Daniel 1:3-5. What similarities do you see between Daniel's Babylon and some of today's management training programs?
- Daniel declined the king's offer of fancy food and wine. What happened? (See Daniel 1:15-17)
- We know the story of the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). How did the actions of Daniel and his friends impact their culture? How do the choices we make impact ours?

Chapter 18: Praying for Protection from Sexual Sin

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but
be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Romans 12:12*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you pray for your adult child's sexual protection and purity? Why or why not?
2. If your child has become entangled in sexual sin, how has that impacted your relationship? Do you think it is possible to fully disagree with your child's choices and still fully love your child?
3. In what specific ways do the stories in this chapter encourage you or equip you to love and pray for your child?
4. Have you ever found your identity wrapped up in your kids, or worried about what other people think of you, based on their choices? What might you do to exchange these fears for trust and allow God's strength become your strength in the hard places of parenting?

Digging Deeper

The biblical story of Hosea is a beautiful testimony of God's power to redeem our unfaithfulness and cover our shame. It doesn't matter how bad our sin is or how many times we run away from God, he will never abandon us. And he will never abandon our children.

- God told Hosea to marry a prostitute. After they were married, Gomer continued in sexual sin. What did God tell Hosea to do? (Hosea 3:1-3)
- Like Gomer, the Israelites continued to betray God (see Hosea 5:4). Eventually, their lives became rotten and sick (v.12-13), and they had nowhere to turn. What happened? (Hosea 5:13)
- Do you believe God can use our mistakes and our suffering to draw us to himself? What does he offer to do for us? (Hosea 14:4) What choice does he ask us to make? (Hosea 14:9)

Chapter 19: Praying for Recovery from an Addiction

*He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners.
Isaiah 61:1*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “An addict’s compulsion to use drugs [is] as strong as a parent’s to protect his or her child.” How would you respond if your child was in serious danger or pain and you were told that you had to stand by and do nothing?
2. The power of addiction is frightening; it can leave a parent feeling utterly helpless. How might the promise in 2 Corinthians 10:4—that we have “divine power to demolish strongholds”—shape and transform your prayers?
3. If your adult child struggles with an addiction, which one of these “Three C’s” do you find most difficult to accept? Which one do you find the most freeing?
 - I didn’t cause it
 - I can’t control it
 - I can’t cure it

Digging Deeper

In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehosephat finds himself besieged by three enemies at once, and he admits he has no idea what to do. God gives him a battle plan:

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s... Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you... Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.

- What three things does God tell Jehosephat to do?
- What promise does God make?
- What would it look like if you were to “take up your position and stand firm” as you battle in prayer for your child?

Chapter 20: Praying for Your Prodigal

*They will be my people, and I will be their God,
for they will return to me with all their heart.
Jeremiah 24:7*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “It wasn’t as if some atheist had talked him out of his faith; rather the shift had come gradually as William spent more time with unbelievers than with Christian friends.” When a child walks away from their faith, do you think it is usually a conscious *decision* or is it, as in William’s case, more of a *drift*? What role do a person’s companions play in shaping faith?
2. How do Max Lucado’s words (“We see a perfect mess; God sees a perfect chance to train, test, and teach”) encourage you? Where do you see God training, testing, or teaching your child? Where is he doing these things in your life?
3. As parents of adult children, there are times when we don’t know where our children are, who they are with, or how we should pray. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our parenting? (See Romans 8:26 for additional insight.)
4. Matthew 23:37 depicts God as a mother hen who longs to gather her chicks under her wings, but the children are not willing to come home. How does knowing that God sees your pain—that he knows the ache in your heart—help you trust him as you pray for your child?

Digging Deeper

Re-read the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).

- The father saw his son “when he was still a long way off.” What does that tell you? Do you think the father was keeping watch? In what ways do you “keep watch” for your child?
- How did the father react when he caught sight of his son? Can you relate? What does this response tell you about God’s heart toward us?
- Compare v. 31-32 with Luke 15:6-7 and Luke 15:9-10. What do these verses indicate about the importance of shared joy? What do they reveal about how all of heaven feels when a person turns to Christ? If you are praying for a prodigal, picture yourself celebrating over your child and let that image breathe life and hope into your prayers.

Epilogue: Is Jesus Enough?

*I have no greater joy than to hear that
my children are walking in the truth.
3 John 4*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Is Jesus enough? If your adult child goes through a season of pain or suffering, but winds up with Jesus, is that okay? Are you willing for God to do “whatever it takes” to save your children?
2. Have you ever experienced God’s comfort? How do you think he responds to our grief? How does he answer our doubts?
3. Do you agree that things like pain, rejection, and loss can be agents of beauty? Can suffering be an invitation to press into God? Have you ever seen this played out in your own life?

Digging Deeper

“God doesn’t want us to trust in an outcome; he wants us to trust in him.” What does God promise to give us when we trust in him? How might these blessings equip you to pray with confidence, peace, and joy—even when outcomes are uncertain?

- Psalm 32:10
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Isaiah 26:3
- Jeremiah 17:7-8

