

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth! . . .*

*We will not hide them . . . ,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might,
and the wonders that He has done.*

Psalm 78:1, 4

A DEVOTIONAL COMPANION

Blessings
& PRAYERS
FOR PARENTS



by Lisa M. Clark

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This book is dedicated to my parents and in-laws, who are wonderful examples of loving Christian parents; my children, who daily teach me new lessons in parenting; and my husband, who is my partner and support as we learn and lead together.



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PREFACE

I hope you're not disappointed, but this is not a how-to book. It is not a parenting guide in five easy steps or a miraculous family management plan.

Nor is it a comprehensive book. There is no way to encompass every parenting situation possible in an entire collection of books, much less in a small devotional such as this.

As a fellow parent, I'm keenly aware that my own experiences fall drastically short of equipping me to address all parenting questions with any sense of authority. So instead, I turn to my Father. Our Father. He knows better than any of us what it is to be a parent, and He provides comfort to His children through His Word.

As parents, caregivers, and those who support children in various ways, we are blessed to have a God who cares about each one of us and the families we have. He knows what it is to feel love, joy, pain, and all the emotions that come with caring for another.

And He invites us to spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word to be strengthened in the parenting roles we have. Whether you read this alone or with others, I pray that this book can be a useful tool as you learn more about your Father and His will for you. I pray that it can provide comfort and healing and encouragement as you experience both the pleasures and pains of caring for God's children.

Your Sister in Christ,

Lisa



A MODEL FOR DAILY PRAYER

Let my prayer be counted as
incense before You, and the lifting
up of my hands as the evening
sacrifice! *Psalm 141:2*

*A*s parents and those who support children, we benefit in exercising our spiritual lives on a daily basis so that we may better serve our families with joy. Jesus Himself took time out of His demanding ministry to pray to His Father. God invites us to spend time with Him as well, and He promises to hear our prayers.

Following, you will find a suggested format for prayer time, whether you do this by yourself, with your spouse, or with a group of other parents. This book provides a section for each devotional component in this format. The table of contents will help guide and focus your meditation.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Devotional reading: Each devotion deals with a topic pertaining to parenting. Note that there are five main themes: joy, sorrow, fear, stress, and peace in parenting. Also, devotions focused on different stages of parenting are present in each theme. Take a moment to find a devotion that is particularly meaningful for you or your audience today. At the end of each devotion, you will find a suggestion for some of the following parts to your daily prayer.

Scripture reading: Our heavenly Father addresses us as His children, and He gives comfort, direction, and love to us, the parents of His next generation. Take time to read



some of these words to you from Your loving God.

Prayer: General Prayers are provided for common times or needs throughout your week. For a more particular theme or issue, look at the Topical Prayers section to assist your time with the Lord. Don't forget, of course, that heartfelt prayers written by you are precious to your Father. There is space throughout this book to jot down thoughts, prayer requests, and the like.

Hymn: Hymns can provide a powerful response to God's love and a meaningful way to express our needs. Whether you sing these or read them as poems, these hymns can provide added depth to your devotional time. One hymn, "Loving Father, Guide Your Children," is original to this book and applies to the concerns and joys of Christian parenting.



MEDITATIONS

Make me to know Your ways, O LORD;
teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your
truth and teach me, for You are the God
of my salvation; for You I wait all the day
long.

Psalms 25:4-5



JOY IN PARENTING

YOU ARE MINE

I have called you by name, you are
Mine. *Isaiah 43:1*

I get it!

I remember telling myself this as I kissed my sobbing newborn son's forehead. I had given him only a handful of kisses, but I knew the love I had for him was unconditional in a way that I never before understood. Yes, I loved him and spoke to him and prayed for him long before I heard his cry. But when I held him in my arms, I remember praying to God: *Oh, I get it!*

Of course I have loved others before, but it usually came after I knew the person. I could trust him or her; I felt love in return. But my son had very little idea who I was. He didn't know what was happening to him in that hospital room, and he was showing his frustration at the whole ordeal. I knew that I loved him

regardless of how he felt about me. I just *loved* him.

Those moments were such a tangible picture of how God loves me, how He loves all of us. Before we knew His name, even when we cried out in anger and confusion and sin at our sorry state, God loved us. We don't deserve it, and we more often look like the red-faced bawler than the sweet cherubic face we see on greeting cards. But God picked us up, washed us clean, and told us of the sweet comfort of His unconditional love.

My love for my children is flawed and tainted with my own sin. As much as I love them, I grow impatient with their needs. The joy I felt when I first saw their faces has been reduced to a halfhearted hug as I rush to the next task. At times, it's my own face that is reddened with anger and frustration and misunderstanding. But I know that my heavenly Father is perfect. His love is unconditional, and He forgives me when I am His disobedient child or my family's insufficient mother.

But now thus says the LORD,
He who created you, O Jacob,
He who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are
Mine.”

Isaiah 43:1

Maybe you felt the instant joy when you saw your child's face for the first time. Maybe you were confused yourself, not sure what to do with this little person. You may have been too sick or exhausted to know what was happening. But the joy we have in parenting is a gift from our God, and the joy He has for us is unconditional and without measure.

As you close this time of meditation, consider turning to the Hymns section of this book



to “Go, My Children, with My Blessing.” Today, focus on stanza 1. Think about the words “You are My own.” Consider also the words from the passage in Isaiah above: “you are Mine.” Think of the joy God must have when He says this to us. Think of the joy these words give you as you know whose you are. Finally, think of ways to show this joy to your children so they know that they belong to you and to God.

ABBA

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

Romans 8:15

*F*acebook is full of his updates. Instagram knows his face. This little adopted boy is the pride and joy of his parents, and no one knew he was coming.

Well, that’s clearly an exaggeration. Even though there were no belly photos or count-

confirm those who have come to saving faith. May Your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life that, as You have promised, Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You send it; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

(LSB, Prayers for Worship)

Grace to Receive the Word

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(LSB, p. 308)

For Home and Family

Visit, O Lord, the homes in which Your people dwell, and keep all harm and danger far from them. Grant that we may dwell to-

gether in peace under the protection of Your holy angels, sharing eternally in Your blessings; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. *(LSB, p. 315)*

Care of Children

Almighty God, heavenly Father, You have blessed us with the joy and care of children. Give us calm strength and patient wisdom that, as they grow in years, we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(LSB, p. 315)

Care for a Difficult Child

Lord God, You called the Israelites Your stubborn and rebellious children. I am just as stubborn and rebellious as they were. And now, I see from Your perspective how hurtful it can be. Forgive me, Lord, for the times I have disregarded Your will for my life and followed my own sinful desires. Lord, I need Your help as I care for my child. Give me the patience You have for me. Enable me to speak Your truth in

love. It can be difficult to show my child the Law of what we should do and the Gospel of what You have done for us. Give me wisdom so that my words are true and clear and patient and loving. Uplift me when I am exhausted with this difficult task, and comfort me with Your forgiveness and love. Amen.

Care for an Ailing Child

Father in heaven, I cannot imagine the pain You felt when You saw Your Son in agony on the cross. I cannot imagine the sorrow You feel when You see any one of Your children suffering. It hurts me to see my child in need, and I feel helpless to make things right. O Lord, have mercy on *name*, and restore *him/her* to health. Give me strength to care for *him/her*, and enable me to comfort *him/her*. Whatever Your will may be for the future, I know my child is in Your hands, and I know that I am too. Give me the peace that passes all understanding, and help me reflect Your love to my child so that *he/she* knows that *he/she* is safe in Your care. In my Savior's name I pray. Amen.

Care for Young Children

Lord of Love, Your patience knows no bounds. My own falters daily. Thank You for this precious child, who brings so much joy to my life. This child brings much testing as well. Sometimes, this dear one needs me every moment. Other times, it is as if my efforts don't matter at all. When my attempts to soothe my little one fail, when constant care leaves me physically and emotionally exhausted, when I don't seem to do anything right, come to my aid. Forgive my impatience. Give me strength. Help me show the love Jesus had when He beckoned the little children to Him. Remind me that I, too, am Your child, whom You love dearly. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Care for Grade School Children

Dear God, people are always reminding me that time goes by quickly when watching children grow up. I can already see it happening, but I'm so often distracted by the homework and hobbies and sports that come with

this phase of life. Other times, I feel so bogged down with the repetition of each week that I forget to be thankful for my children. Forgive me for my shortsightedness. Give me strength during the demanding schedules. Remind me to make room for the important to-do task of spending time with my family as well as with You. Help me see what I'm teaching my children with my words and actions. Guide me to guide my family in Your ways. When I fail, forgive me and remind me of Your never-ending love. Help me to show that love to my family. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Care for Teenage Children

Caring Father, You have seen generation after generation grow and mature. You know the sins that plague our world better than I do. As my children are gaining independence and responsibility, preserve them from harm and danger. Equip them with Your Spirit, that they may be witnesses of You as they live their lives more and more without my direct presence.