

Moms of Teens Devotions to Go

**The Days
are Long
but the
Years are
Short**



Robin Hutchins

Moms' Devotions to Go Series

Moms of Teens Devotions to Go

The days are long but the years are short...
Survival tips for the long days.

Robin Price Hutchins

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Lovingly and gratefully dedicated to the four “moms” in my life -

My wonderful mother whom I love dearly,

Faye Price,

my mother-in-law of twenty-five years,

Lois Hutchins

and

in memory of my grandmothers,

Lessie Curtis and Louise Price.

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Introduction

Dear Moms of Teenagers,

Praise the Lord! I have survived! Mothering twin boys throughout the teenage years has been the most exhausting yet rewarding phase of life. While some of the days seemed long, the years were short – too short.

There are several purposes for this book. The stories I share will help you to realize that you are not alone. Other moms who have traveled this phase of the journey will testify over and over that the Lord has been faithful. Secondly, during the long days when you are physically and emotionally drained, you will be reminded that our heavenly Father is able. 2 Timothy 1:12 says He is able to keep that which we have committed. So commit your teenager to the Lord; then let go and let God. He will amaze you as He has me. Ephesians 3:20 says He is able to do more than you can ask or imagine. He has truly done that for me.

So get ready! I have survived and you can, too! You will need your Bible and a notebook throughout this journey. It will bless you to look back and remember all that the Lord has done. Keep this book in your purse or car. Devotion truths are fresh each day so they can be read over and over.

Lastly, please do not read my words until you have read His Word. Devotion books are encouraging, yet God's Word always blesses you more.

Thankful to be serving a God, who is able,

Robin Price Hutchins

Survivor Mom of Teens

Zits, Girlfriends and "The Teenage Attitude"

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns.

Philippians 1:6 NLT

While I was Christmas shopping, I got a call on my cell phone from Dan. He was inviting our family to the Christmas Eve Service at his new church. We were excited to visit his church as he had told us much about it. As we sat at the service with our now 19-year-old sons, I could not help but notice Dan listening intently to the pastor and writing notes in the Bible. There is something about the holidays that causes us to reflect. I thought back to Dan's years in junior high when he was 13 and 14 years old. If there was ever a time that he was rebellious, it was then. It began with "the teenage attitude" which was later manifested in actions.

We are all familiar with the attitude that often infects our once precious children when they become teenagers. The teenage years are when the body experiences the most changes. To complicate things even more, along with the physical and emotional changes comes the attraction to the opposite sex. Dan had it all during the 8th grade year. He had the growth spurt, the zits, the voice change and his first girlfriend. This did not all come without its share of problems. Several trips to the principal's office resulting in phone calls to Dad are also memories of his junior high years. His conduct grades went down drastically. While going through this, we could not help but wonder what happened to our obedient, respectful son with a kind heart and sensitive nature. During the elementary school years, he was a model student. Although we did not know it at the time, we now realize that he was growing up.

I have observed many junior high students over the years. I have listened to countless moms, through their tears, ask me what happened to their once sweet child. I have discovered that teens go through a time when they do not like themselves. They seem confident and self-assured but deep down do not like nor understand the changes that they are going through. Many of these teens may be at the top of their class academically or the

star of the basketball team. However, underneath that all-together exterior is an unhappy teenager. Part of their frustration may be that they cannot articulate what is wrong because they really do not know what is wrong. This “teenage attitude” is no respecter of persons. It is also no respecter of parents.

As I sat at the Christmas Eve Service watching Dan listen to the pastor and make notes, I came to a realization. He who began a good work in Dan will see it through to completion.

Survival Tip

Your teenager is a work in progress. God is not finished yet.

Survival Training

Memorize Philippians 1:6. When reciting the verse, put your teen's name in the verse in place of the word "you." Then place this verse where you can see it often, such as on the refrigerator. When the "teenage attitude" rears its ugly head, discipline it yet do not despair. Believe Philippians 1:6 and then watch with great excitement as the Lord helps him/her to "grow in his grace until his task is finished."

Are You Completely His?

For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

2 Chronicles 16:6 NASB

Are you completely His? I am. At the age of ten, I walked down the aisle at church and told the pastor that I wanted to be baptized. Since my grandparents had always made sure that I attended church, I knew what that meant even at the age of ten. I had always believed in Jesus and knew that I wanted to belong to Him.

It was not until I was in my late twenties that I truly understood that decision. I wanted to better understand “salvation” as to get rid of doubts that I had been having. I began to study the Bible daily and this is what I learned.

When God created Adam and Eve, He was pleased with His creation until they sinned by eating from the only tree in the garden that He had told them not to. This act brought sin into an otherwise perfect world. To get forgiveness for sin, animals had to be sacrificed. You see, without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin. But God had a better plan. He sent the perfect sacrifice. He sent His own Son to earth to be born as a baby, to live a perfect life and to shed His blood as a sacrifice once and for all. Jesus died the death of common criminal on a cross. God gave His best because He loves me that much. That is grace. My small mind cannot begin to understand His immeasurable love and grace. I do not love anyone so much that I could give up either of my sons.

The story does not end with Jesus dying on the cross. Three days later, He was not in the tomb. He had come to life. He had conquered death. From earth, God “lifted” Him back up into heaven and Jesus has been there ever since, waiting for me to join Him. I look forward to that day when I will meet Him face to face. He will

welcome me as a parent welcoming home a child. I will live in heaven with Him for eternity. Because of my faith in Him and His love for me, eternal life is a free gift that has been given to me.

When reading this story, there may be questions, as our finite brain cannot understand all of these concepts. Back in my twenties, I had some of these questions. Is there really a God? If so, am I really “saved?” The Lord was so patient with me. While reading the Bible daily, I finally nailed it down. 2 Timothy 1:12b is my life’s verse: “For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” (NASB).

Faith is the assurance of what we cannot see. By faith, I believed in Him and still do. I praise God daily for this verse. I may not be able answer a lot of deep spiritual questions but I know Whom I have believed in and I know that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him. When I do not know anything else, I know those two things. I know that I am a child of the living God because He is holding my commitment. I know that He is watching over my teenagers as I have committed them to Him and He is holding that commitment as well. In John 10:28, Jesus says, “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” (NASB)

Survival Tip

You will not experience true joy and peace until you are a child of God.

Survival Training

Are you completely His? Are His eyes moving to and fro throughout the whole earth strongly supporting you? If you do not know, you can nail this down today. Read the following scriptures to see how you can know this, too. They are Romans 6:23, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:3, Romans 10:9 and Romans 10:13.

The One Minute Baby Dedication Ceremony

“I asked the Lord to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life.” And they worshiped the Lord there.

1 Samuel 1:27-28 NLT

Recently, I attended a baby dedication service for my friends who gave birth a couple of months earlier. This was a special time as many of us had prayed for this baby even before conception. As I sat there, I could not help but reflect on the time that my husband and I dedicated our babies.

At the age of five months, we dressed them in their “baby” baseball outfits (ball caps and all). Their grandmother flew out and joined us for this very special occasion. Armed with camera, corsages, bottles, pacifiers, blankies, diapers and of course Grandma, we headed to church.

Once the service began, we were introduced at the front of the church along with our friends and their newborn babies. We were all hoping for a quick ceremony before one of them started screaming frantically in front of the entire church body. I remembered how the pastor quoted Scripture and the congregation recited something about supporting us in our parenting journey. Lastly, the parents had to recite some words as well. Genuinely and sincerely in my heart, I “gave” our twin sons to the Lord. I had a great feeling of assurance and trust in the Lord. As I reflected back on that moment, I had quite a surprising revelation.

By the time the dedication ceremony was over and I sat down in the pew with the congregation; I took them back. Yes, I gave them to the Lord and then took them back. I know that because, for the next 18 years, I worried about their health, their friendships, their grades, their choices, their self-esteem and their safety. Then once tired of worrying, I would give them back to Him. Over the years, I have participated in countless baby RE-dedication services, not at church, but in my heart.

The other night the boys were driving to a friend's house and it was quite late. As always, I asked the Lord to keep them safe from harm. However, I could not relax and go to sleep until I thought enough time had passed for them to arrive at their destination. Only then would I let myself fall asleep.

The Bible tells the story of a mom named Hannah. She could not have children so she prayed and asked the Lord to give her a son. The Lord heard her prayer and gave her a son, Samuel. At the age of three, Hannah took Samuel to live with Eli the priest so that he would be taught to serve the Lord. Leaving her son and going home without him had to be the most difficult thing she had ever done. However, the Bible says that she praised the Lord and worshipped Him. While Hannah came to visit Samuel once a year, she never took him back. What a beautiful picture of a baby dedication ceremony. Oh, that I could be a mother more like Hannah – trusting God to watch over His children.

Survival Tip

How it must bless our heavenly Father when we return to Him what is already His.

Survival Training

Dedicating your son or daughter to the Lord is a conscious act of faith. Like Hannah, this step of faith is an inward realization that your teenager is actually His teenager. In your journal, write out a statement dedicating your teenager to the Lord. If necessary, read it daily. You can replace worry with the blessed assurance that they are in the Lord's hands.

Spiders, Snakes and Bungee Jumping

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!

Psalms 139:13,14a NLT

Some kids are born with a sense of adventure. They thrive on activities that have an element of danger. It started early with one of our boys. As a toddler, Douglas climbed the highest trees. As a preschooler, he caught spiders and insects. During the teen years, he rode the scariest roller coasters. Later, pole vaulting and bungee jumping soon gave him a rush of excitement. There is nothing that he is afraid to do. "Fear" is not a part of his vocabulary.

In high school, Doug discovered the sport of Frisbee golf also known as disc golf. This sport is played in wooded parks. It was not uncommon for he and his friends to see several snakes each time they played.

One day he called me from the park and told me that he had caught a water moccasin and that he was bringing it home later. As it happened, he was going to be in late and I went to bed. As I lay in bed, I realized that he was probably planning to bring the snake into the house when he arrived home. I immediately got up and left him a note on the door that said to leave the snake outside.

When I got up the next morning and went outside to get the newspaper, I noticed a shoebox with holes poked in the top sitting on the porch next to the front door. As I opened the lid and peaked in, sure enough, there was a snake crawling around inside frantically trying to escape. I later found out that he had caught it with his bare hands. I was also surprised to learn that he had previously caught several snakes and that this was the first one that he had brought home. I searched the internet for information about this snake. I learned that the snake looked identical to a water moccasin. I also found out that water moccasins are deadly. If bitten in certain areas of the body, death could come in minutes without even enough time to get to the hospital.

Later when I saw Doug, I warned him about the danger in catching these venomous snakes. I tried to impress upon him the seriousness of this matter hoping that he would develop a healthy fear and quit catching snakes. When I finished explaining the danger to him, he looked me in the eye and said, “I’ll be careful.” That was not exactly the response I was looking for. For a moment, I wished that he were a ten-year-old child again instead of an 18-year-old young man so I could forbid him from snake catching.

Survival Tip

Your teenager should have been born with a label attached that says Handmade by God. They are one of a kind uniquely designed with distinctive personality traits and gifts.

Survival Training

Doug's fearlessness, coupled with his sheer determination, is one of the many personality traits in which God has blessed him. These traits have enabled him to experience success in many areas. Think about your teen for a moment. Ask the Lord to reveal to you his/her gifting. Begin an ongoing list of positive traits, talents, special abilities and gifts. At a time when it is easy to focus on the negative, use this list as a reminder that God has "knit together" your teenager.

By the way, Doug is currently saving his money to skydive.

The Golf Cart

For God so loved the world so much that He gave...

John 3:16a NLT

My parents live out in the country in the middle of forty acres of woods and pastures. Over the years, they have purchased all kinds of fun toys. They have four wheelers, riding lawnmowers, a tractor and a golf cart. They also have what we call “the shop.” Inside the shop is a pool table, a shuffleboard table and a ping pong table along with a big screen television. For those hot summer days, they have a large swimming pool complete with diving board. Because my parents live out in the country, there are all kinds of critters to have fun with as well. There is never a shortage of things to do.

I will never forget one of the visits we made around the time the boys were in junior high. It had been a great week. Doug and Dan had ridden four wheelers, played pool, shuffleboard, ping pong, shot bb guns and swam everyday. They were exhausted. It was almost time for us to leave. The boys wanted to go for one last ride across the pasture in my dad’s golf cart. The car was loaded. We were standing around sharing one last visit with my parents while the boys were out on their last golf cart ride before the long ride home. As they drove up in the golf cart, I could tell by the long faces that something was wrong. In fact, Dan, who was driving, was almost in tears. He hopped out of the golf cart and walked up to his Pappy and pointed to the side mirror of the golf cart. It was no longer mounted to the golf cart. It was just barely hanging by a screw. Dan went on to explain that he ran into the side of a tree. By the time he got the words out, the tears soon followed. Dan felt terrible about damaging his Pappy’s expensive golf cart. Dan promised to repay him for the cost of the repairs. Of course, his Pappy would not hear of it. His Pappy told him not to worry about the golf cart and that he would take care of it. He also told Dan that he would have it fixed up like new by the time that he returned for his next visit. Then as we were loading in the van to head home, Pappy reached in his pocket for his money clip. He pulled out two twenty dollar bills and gave one to each of the boys. At that moment I could not help but feel as if the boys’ earthly grandfather had given us a glimpse of our heavenly Father.

Survival Tip

Life as we know it is confined by limits. We limit our caffeine, our calories and make major decisions based on our limited resources. Our heavenly Father is not bound by limits.

Survival Training

Read the words to the following old hymn. Meditate on the infinite love, mercy and grace that our heavenly Father bestows upon us. He never runs out.

He Giveth More Grace Annie Johnson Flint

He giveth more grace when the burden grows greater;
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit;
His grace has no measure;
His power has no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth and giveth and giveth again!

Saw and Hammer Needed to be a Successful Mom

For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever!

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NLT

Two Temples

Hattie Vose Hall

A builder builded a temple,
He wrought it with grace and skill;
Pillars and groins and arches
All fashioned to do his will.
Men said as they saw its beauty,
"It shall never know decay;
Great is thy skill, O Builder!
Thy fame shall endure for aye."

A mother builded a temple
With loving and infinite care,
Planning each arch with patience,
Laying each stone with prayer.
None praised her unceasing efforts;
None knew of her wondrous plan,
For the temple the mother builded

Was unseen by the eyes of man.

Gone is the builder's temple,

Crumbled into the dust;

Low lies each stately pillar,

Food for consuming rust.

But the temple the mother builded

Will last while the ages roll,

For that beautiful unseen temple

Was a child's immortal soul.

Dear sweet mom, do not give up on those long days when there seems to be no end in sight. Keep this beautiful poem in front of you as a constant reminder that your teenager's soul is eternal.

Survival Tip

Try to see light and momentary troubles as just that - light and momentary.

Survival Training

Look around your home. Make a list of things in your journal that are seen and things that are not seen. Label the list of things seen as temporary and the things unseen as eternal. Think about how much time we spend on what is seen yet it does not last. Pray about the things that are unseen.

When They Try Out and Don't Make the Team

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:3-5 NLT

We all want to feel as if we are a part of something. No one likes rejection. There is probably nothing more devastating for a mom than to watch her teenage son or daughter try out for a sports team, dance team or some other activity only to be disappointed.

As a teenager, it happened to me three years in a row. In seventh grade, all of my friends but one had made the junior high drill team. So at the end of the eighth grade year, I tried out. Even now, I remember that day as if it were yesterday. When the numbers were called and I was skipped, I was devastated.

I looked forward to the next spring so that I could try out for the high school drill team. Everyone thought I would have a better chance as the points were calculated differently in high school. The spring came. Tryouts occurred. Once again, I did not make the team and everyone in my group of my friends did, even the friend who did not make it in junior high.

The next spring, I thought that I would give it one more try. Throughout the year, my friends worked with me to help me get the steps down well and the routine learned. I thought this would be the year for me to succeed... only to be let down for the third year in a row. It was finally obvious that I was not cut out to be a drill team member. Not only were all of my friends a part of the drill team but my best friend was selected as captain. I never felt so rejected in my entire life. I gathered my things and headed out the door to find my mom so that she could rescue me and take me home. I just wanted to be alone. The devastation continued when I returned to

school the next day. The girls who made the team were introduced to the entire student body. I wanted to run away and hide.

It was hard to understand with the human mind why I did not make the team. For one thing I was a great student and well-liked by all my peers and teachers. Each time I did not make it, the drill team sponsor sought me out to tell me how sorry she was I did not make the team. Secondly, I did not have a lot of self-confidence and being selected for the team would have given me a much-needed boost.

In looking back, I can see how this experience taught me compassion and humility. I eventually learned that my self-esteem would not come from being a member of the drill team but being a member of God's family. While at the time it was unpleasant, the lessons learned from this disappointment were invaluable.

Survival Tip

Facing disappointment is an opportunity to develop strong character.

Survival Training

While we see trials and disappointments as a bad thing, God uses them as an opportunity to build our faith and our character. I often pray for our boys to have great faith and character but in reality I do not want them to suffer. The next time your teenager suffers disappointment or rejection, do not ask the Lord to remove it. Oswald Chambers writes in *My Utmost for His Highest* that instead of preventing struggles, we should pray that the difficulty is multiplied so that nothing would keep us from Jesus Christ. Instead ask Him to carry your teenager through to the end with the result being stronger faith, character and a closer relationship with his/her heavenly Father.

The Battle of the Trash Cans (The Chores War)

Better a dry crust eaten in peace than a house filled with feasting – and conflict.

Proverbs 17:1 NLT

While growing up, the boys always had some chores to do. Dan was responsible for setting the full trash cans out by the street on trash day and then returning the empty trash cans to the side of the house that night. Although Dan is a wonderful person with a great personality, he has always been one to procrastinate, which often led to forgetfulness. Many nights passed with no one setting the full trash cans out by the street. We would constantly remind him verbally and then we tried placing reminder notes throughout the house. To keep him out of trouble with his dad, often I would take the trash cans out for him. Once the trash cans were emptied, the battle to get them returned to the side of the house would begin. Dan would drive past the empty cans to park and then walk around them to get to the house without ever seeing them. Several times we would drag the empty cans to his parking place in front of the house, forcing him to move the cans so that he could park. That worked for a while. Once again, to keep the peace in the family, I eventually took over that job too.

However, one day I was not around when the trash cans needed to be brought in. So when my husband drove up from work on this particular day and saw the trash cans still out by the street, he was livid. The minute I walked in from my errands, I realized what had happened. The tension in the air was thick. The timing was terrible as both boys were on their way out the door to play in an important varsity basketball game. (Is there ever a good time for a family quarrel?) The emotional drain began. Being a person that hates conflict, I so wanted to pack up and leave the house for a few days and go stay in a nearby hotel. Instead, I went for a long walk alone and hoped that this long day would soon be over.

In reflecting on these unpleasant times in our family life, I realized that while conflict is inevitable, it is only for a season. Whether it is trash cans, curfews or something more serious, disagreements will happen. It is part of

the process of our teenagers growing up and parents letting go. While conflict in the home makes the days seem long, it can also lead to a time of closeness through the healing and the bonding that takes place afterward.

Survival Tip

While unpleasant at the time, conflict is inevitable during the teenager years. However, it can lead to a time of healing and closeness.

Survival Training

If you have a teenager in your home, there is likely some conflict. It might be related to grades, chores or something more serious. In your journal, make a list of these conflicts. Ask the Lord to soften hearts and begin the healing process in these areas.

Winning the Battle with a Harp and a Guitar

When they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes.

2 Chronicles 20:22a NASB

The Bible is filled with amazing stories. Although it was written thousands of years ago, its stories are about regular people just like you and me. The Old Testament tells the story of a king named Jehoshaphat who won a battle without fighting. Several armies declared war on him and the people of Judah. Once he heard the armies were nearby, he told his people to pray and fast. Jehoshaphat told them to pray to God and beg for His help. It was an atmosphere of fear and desperation. Dads were afraid for their families and moms were afraid for their husbands and children. As the people prayed, the Bible says that a man named Jahaziel was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. He told the people of Judah that the Lord said to not be afraid. When he said that, everyone fell to the ground and worshipped the Lord. They believed and were no longer fearful.

The next day women watched as their husbands and sons left for battle. I am sure it was an emotional day for all. Many must have felt as if they would never see each other again. The surprising part of this story is that as they were marching into battle, Jehoshaphat decided to put together a choir. How crazy is that! What could the king be thinking?

The troops were led by a group of men singing, "His Lovingkindness is Forever." How intimidating could that have been to the enemy! The moment they began to sing, the Lord set ambushes against the opposing armies. All the armies that came to fight Judah began to destroy each other. By the time the army of Judah arrived, the battle was already won! There was no one to fight as all of the enemies had already killed each other.

There is a great lesson for moms of teenagers in this event that occurred thousands of years ago. Although the war has been won, there is a battle for the hearts and minds of our teenagers. With the breakdown of the family

and the influence of the media, the battle is raging more than ever before. One way we can fight this battle is by praising God.

Survival Tip

Praise and worship brings us into the presence of Jehovah God. In the presence of Jehovah, there is power.

Survival Training

Choose some praise and worship music whether it is hymns or contemporary Christian songs. Set aside time to sit in the presence of Jehovah God praising Him for who He is. While listening to praise music, you can read some of the beautiful prayers of praise in the Bible. Some of these can be found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, 2 Chronicles 20:5-13, Luke 1:46-55 and the Psalms. Praise Him that the war has already been won!

The Park Bench - My Calvary

Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you.

Psalms 55:22a NLT

When the boys were in the eighth grade, they wanted to attend another church. My husband and I had been involved in our current church for many years and had no plans to leave. Our kids had grown up there and we had made many lifetime friendships. The thought of starting all over again was exhausting to my husband and me. As time passed, both boys were fairly adamant in the decision. Reluctantly, we began visiting another church. Because no one wanted to attend the same church, I began to dread Saturday nights. That is when I would throw out the question of where we would attend church the next day. No one agreed. As the months passed, it became easy for us not to go anywhere on Sunday mornings. I learned quickly that when no one expects you, it is easy to fall into the trap of not going at all. As I saw this ugly pattern unfolding, I became fearful. I had seen many other families head down this dark path when their children hit those rocky teenage years. I had watched as those I knew drop out of church one by one during this critical time in the lives of their children and consequently their family. I was fearful of that same thing happening to us.

We had always been strong and unwavering on church attendance. There has never been a question as to what we do on Sunday mornings. My husband has always supported church attendance 100% and gone with the family. But this time was different. He was often sick with allergies during this time and missed several Sundays as well. I needed more than ever to be the spiritual leader and take a stand on church attendance without compromise. The only problem was that I did not have the strength. I was falling into the pit of despair.

One particular Sunday, it all came to a head. My husband was sick so I got up alone and then woke up the kids. It took several times of going into their rooms to get them up so that they would get ready to go. I was almost to the point of tears. As the boys and I drove to church, it seemed I was the only one who wanted to be there. I went to Sunday School and sat on the back row and spoke to no one. At the church service, I did the same.

This burden had become too heavy for me to bear. That afternoon, I went for a walk to our neighborhood park. I walked over to a bench near the woods and sat down for a couple of hours. Out of desperation I laid down this burden because I could not carry it anymore. When I got up from that park bench, my circumstance had not changed, but I had. I left that burden to never pick it up again. The park bench was my Calvary.

Survival Tip

God never meant for you to carry your burdens alone. His strength is made perfect in your weakness.

Survival Training

I still go walking in that park. I will never forget what happened on Sunday afternoon several years ago. Each time I walk by the park bench, I praise God that He lifted me out of the pit of despair. The bench is a visual reminder that He is able. I did not leave my burden at the park bench because I was some super Christian mom who had it all together. The truth is that I dropped my burden because I was tired and worn out and could no longer carry it.

Do you have a heavy burden that is weighing you down and stealing your joy? Find your Calvary and drop it there. Record in your journal the burden and when you left it at your Calvary. This will help you to remember that He is able.

The Absolute Very Best Thing You Can Do For Your Teenager

“And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.”

John 17:19 NLT

Before Jesus was betrayed by Judas and sentenced to death on the cross, He went to a garden and prayed. His heart was heavy and He needed to spend time with His heavenly Father. Jesus began His prayer by first praying for Himself. Then He prayed for His disciples and lastly He prayed for all other believers. While praying for His disciples, He “sanctified” or dedicated Himself for their sakes. In other words, Jesus saw it as a priority to make sure that He was “right” with His Father before interceding on behalf of His closest friends. Jesus, who lived a sinless life, felt the need to make His relationship with God pure as He prayed for His closest friends.

Franklin Graham’s book, *Rebel With a Cause*, tells the story of Franklin leaving to go on a mission trip overseas. He was traveling with a friend to London and then to Jordan on a mission. After seeing them off, his mother, Ruth sat down to pray for the two men as they headed to the other side of the world. However, as she picked up her Bible and read John 17, “she put Franklin and Bill on hold and set about getting everything straightened out between herself and God.”

As moms, we will sacrifice at all costs for our children. It is part of our nature to nurture and protect our children no matter what the age and no matter what the cost. Often we will do this to our own detriment as well as the detriment of others. I have seen firsthand moms who have allowed themselves to fall into the pit of depression over their rebellious teen. When this happens, they forfeit their joy and render themselves ineffective to care for their husband and the rest of the family. I have also seen marriages struggle because mom placed her children before her husband. Moms, due to our selfless devotion to our children, often allow our priorities to be misplaced. While this selfless devotion may seem admirable, it has the potential to be destructive.

Jesus, who knew no sin, made it a priority to dedicate Himself to His Father for the sake of His closest friends. I am convinced that it is much more important for me to do just that. In fact, it is crucial to my survival not as a mom but as a child of the King. When all is said and done and this life on earth is over as I know it, it will be me and my heavenly Father. I will not be anyone's daughter, wife or mom. The absolute very best thing you can do for your teenager is to do as Ruth did, put your children on hold and set about getting everything straightened out between yourself and God.

Survival Tip

The absolute very best thing you can do for your teenager is to get yourself right with God.

Survival Training

Read John 17. As Jesus prayed, He prayed for Himself, His closest friends and other believers. Modeling His conversation with His Father is a great place to begin. Before praying for your teenager, first pray for yourself. Begin by asking the Lord's forgiveness for the times that you have neglected that which is first and foremost.

The Tan Van

I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.

Philippians 4:11b NLT

One weekend when the boys were home from college, we were sitting at lunch and having a lighthearted visit. Somehow the conversation turned to parenting and all the different parenting styles that we have seen throughout the years. We talked about parents who were too strict or not strict enough. We talked about parents who overindulged their kids with material things. We also discussed parents (moms, that is) who would not let their kids grow up. It was one of those heart-to-heart talks that moms love but rarely get especially with boys. Eventually the conversation turned to our family and our parenting style. Before I knew it, I heard us asking the boys what they thought we should have done differently as parents. I held my breath as we waited for the answer. Without hesitation, Dan said, “The tan van!” We knew just what he meant.

The tan van was a 1991 Ford Aerostar purchased when the boys were four years old. At the time we bought it, vans were the most popular choice of cars for families. They were roomy and convenient as they could safely carry lots of people. This van in particular was big and boxy. The tan van was a part of many family memories. Over a period of twelve years, it carried hundreds of kids to and from basketball, baseball and football games as well as school and church functions. The inside of that van was filled with conversations and laughs that we will never forget. It also had its own idiosyncrasies. For example, it could be started without a key. Part of the key broke off in the ignition. So all we had to do was turn the ignition and it would start. One time the door jammed and we drove the tan van over the Dallas freeways holding the side door closed so it would not fly open.

Since the tan van was big, boxy, safe and paid for, my husband reasoned that it was the perfect vehicle for two sixteen-year-old boys to begin their driving career. Dan was humiliated at the thought of driving the same van that drove him to his first day of kindergarten eleven years earlier. To add to his despair, his dad had purchased him a nice truck that he could drive when the tan van “bit the dust.” So each day when Dan walked out of the

house to drive to school, he had to walk by the nice truck that was waiting for him. While he loved the independence that driving gave, he hated the tan van. Luckily, Dan only had to endure the tan van for four months.

As we continued with the conversation over lunch, he told us that when he was older and became the father of a teenager that he would never make him/her drive a van. Only time will tell...

Survival Tip

Discontentment leads to complaining. Surround yourself with friends who are grateful.

Survival Training

All of us struggle with contentment at times. With teenagers, it might relate to the car that they drive. Moms often struggle with contentment as well. If we are totally honest, we must admit that we compare ourselves to others and do not always measure up. In your journal, write a list of the many ways that your heavenly Father has blessed you and your family.

Is Anything Too Hard for God?

“I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?”

Jeremiah 32:27 NLT

I love reading the Bible. I particularly like the stories of the characters that lived long ago and led extraordinary lives. As I read about each one, I try to relate to them and perhaps even put myself in their place. There is one person in the Bible that I cannot relate to no matter how hard I try. His name was Abraham.

Abraham and Sarah could not have children. This had to be difficult for Sarah as having children was the mark of success for every Jewish wife. It likely put a strain on their marriage and she could have been an outcast in society. Even though she was beyond the age of childbearing, the Lord promised Abraham that through Sarah, he would have as many descendants as stars in the sky. Humanly speaking, this seemed impossible. Yet Abraham knew nothing was too hard for God. God gave them a son whom they named Isaac.

After Isaac was born, God tested Abraham. God told Abraham to take Isaac up on a mountain, build a fire and offer Isaac as a burnt offering. In other words, tie him down and start a fire underneath him. While human sacrifice was common during that time, it was a pagan tradition. According to the Bible, Abraham did not ask one question nor did he procrastinate. In fact, he got up early the next morning and took his son up the mountain. Everytime I get to this part, I always have so many questions. Did he tell Sarah that he was planning to take their only son up on a mountain and light a fire under him? Surely not. She probably would have stood in the doorway not letting him go. Or if Isaac was a teenager at the time, she may have gathered the wood for Abraham. Why didn't Abraham ask God about how he and Sarah were going to have all of those descendants without Isaac? Also, could Abraham have misunderstood God? Maybe he could have waited a few days just to get confirmation from God that this is really what He wanted him to do. Lastly, I wonder what Abraham talked about with his son on the way up the mountain.

The story ends with Abraham placing Isaac upon the altar. Yet before lighting the fire, God provided a ram in the bushes to be the sacrifice. Abraham removed Isaac from the altar and used God's provision instead. Abraham passed God's test. Because of his faith in God, he was willing to obey without question.

God promised Abraham that through Isaac he would be the father of many nations. Although Abraham did not understand how God was going to do it, he still believed that somehow God would keep His promise. He knew that there was nothing too hard for God.

Survival Tip

Absolutely nothing is too hard for God.

Survival Training

Abraham knew God would keep His promise. He had complete confidence in God's ability to work out the details even when it seemed "humanly" impossible. I am thankful that Abraham's God is our God. He is still working out the details that seem "humanly" impossible. Read Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:17,27 and Hebrews 11:1. Write these verses in your journal. By faith, know that nothing is too hard for God.

There is No Such Thing as "The Brady Bunch"

Share each other's burdens.

Galatians 6:2a NLT

When I was a teenager my favorite television show was *The Brady Bunch*. It was a 70's sitcom about a "perfect" family with six children – three boys and three girls. There were many reasons why I liked this show. First of all, there was almost no conflict. Mr. and Mrs. Brady never argued. If the kids fought, it was always something that could be settled within the thirty minute television time slot. The family had lots of quality time together. They were always home for family meals. Also, each time one of the kids had a problem, the entire family rallied to help the hurting child. Mrs. Brady always seemed to feel good and was only sick twice the entire six years the show ran. As a teenager, I was a Marcia-wanna-be. I loved her straight hair. I have always had hair full of body and that was not cool in the 70's. I also envied the fact that she was so popular and had a popular older brother. I so wanted to be a part of a family like the one portrayed on that television show.

The funny thing is that *The Brady Bunch* is still one of my favorite television shows. Of course I now watch it from a different perspective. Instead of seeing the show through the eyes of Marcia, I now see it through the eyes of the mom, Carol. I am so envious that she has Alice. Alice is the almost perfect housekeeper and friend. She cooks, cleans and acts as a confidante for any family member in distress. Alice even lives with the Brady's so she is available 24/7 to help with kids and household chores. In my opinion, the only thing that kept her from being the perfect housekeeper is that she did not drive. My "Alice" would have to drive so she could run my errands for me.

Growing up with one brother was nothing like *The Brady Bunch*. My brother is six years younger than I am and while growing up, we hardly ever spoke. Although my parents loved us, they were busy working full time to make ends meet. Even though my own family was far from perfect, for some reason I thought that a family such as the Brady's was the norm.

It did not take me long to figure out that there is no such thing as “The Brady Bunch.” First of all, unlike Mr. and Mrs. Brady, my husband and I disagree and even argue at times. Also, I suffer from occasional migraine headaches and can often be in bed for a day or two, which means frozen pizza on those days. For sure, our kids do not always rally to help each other, as they usually do not even realize if something is wrong with the other one. Most importantly, I do not have an Alice. However, I do have something that none of the Brady’s ever had. Although far from perfect, I have a family that knows and loves their heavenly Father.

Survival Tip

No matter how good we make ourselves look to the outside world, there is no such thing as a perfect family. If we were perfect, we would not need a Savior.

Survival Training

One thing that really bothers me in our circle of friends is that we often appear to each other as if we have the perfect family. We are proud and do not want anyone to know that our family sometimes has problems. I do not mean that we should “air our dirty laundry” in front of everyone. But we could be a little more transparent with each other. Take heart knowing that in the healthiest of families conflict is inevitable and no one has a perfect family. When your family has a burden, share it with a close friend who will be blessed to pray for you through a difficult time.

Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing (A Tribute to my Grandmother)

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

2 Timothy 1:5 NASB

My mother is wonderful. Although she never read a book about raising children, she was a natural when it came to discipline. She never had to childproof our home because she taught my brother and me to obey. She has always been a wonderful wife to my father – supporting him in every way.

However, when it comes to my spiritual life, my grandmother had the greatest impact. Several years ago, she left us and went to live with her heavenly Father. My grandmother left two children, five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren here on earth. Collectively, the grandchildren wrote her eulogy. I have included parts of it below as I thought it would offer a different perspective on motherhood.

“At the age of eighteen she married Papaw, with whom she spent the rest of her life. They were inseparable. She loved the Lord with all her heart, mind and soul. Her life was dedicated to pleasing Him. Her deepest heart’s desire was for her family to love and serve the Lord as she did. She would discuss this with us regularly – always making sure that we understood and accepted the Lord’s saving grace through faith in Him. Our relationship with God always had the highest priority. It was “the main thing.”

As a Sunday School teacher for over forty years, her faith was deep. She said of her illness that it gave her the opportunity to live out what she taught all those years. She faced her illness as a brave soldier. An unexplainable peace surrounded her, as the most independent person we knew became totally independent. We watched His strength made perfect in her weakness and His grace was sufficient.

For God so loved the world that He gave...Our grandmother so loved us that she gave and gave and gave. Anytime we stopped by for a visit, we always left with something – whether it was coupons for our next shopping trip, supper leftovers, or a check to pick us up a little something. Not only did she and Papaw give of their resources, but more importantly they gave of their time and energy. She took an interest in each one of our lives – always wanting to know about the latest events no matter how insignificant. In their home, we were always treated as if we were the most important person in the world as she stopped whatever she was doing to give us her undivided attention. Somehow, she made each one of us feel as if we were her favorite. She always advised us by pointing us toward Jesus and His Word. Leading by example, she taught us right from wrong.

As with all families, we have had our share of hard times. During those times, her faith in God, strength of character and sheer determination kept our family together. Daily, by name, she lifted us up in prayer. No matter the circumstance, she never ever gave up on us. Alongside Papaw, she was the anchor of the family. Her legacy of prayer for her loved ones and faith in God will continue throughout eternity.”

Survival Tip

Keeping the main thing the main thing will allow us to have an impact that is not bound by time. We can influence future generations as well.

Survival Training

Our grandmother was not perfect. But one thing she did with her entire family was “keep the main thing the main thing.” By that, I mean that she would take every opportunity to share the Lord with us. She was faith in the flesh. Say a prayer of gratitude for your mother and grandmothers. If one or all are still living, call and check on them or drop in for a visit.

A Needlepoint Lesson

However, there is a God in heaven...

Daniel 2:28a NASB

The teenage years invite many different circumstances. There are state championships, sleepovers, school dances, drama productions and church youth activities. There are broken hearts, illnesses, car wrecks, friend issues, divorce, insecurities and attitudes. The list is endless. I read this poem several years ago and it has become very special to me. It is a reminder that no matter what the circumstances are during this crazy time of life, there is a God in heaven. Sometimes knowing that is all I need. Read the poem below. Remember that the Skillful Weaver in heaven is creating a beautiful tapestry out of your teenager's life.

The Weaver

My life is but a weaving
 Between my Lord and me.
 I cannot choose the colors
 He worketh steadily.

Oftimes He weaveth sorrow,
 And I in foolish pride
 Forget He sees the upper
 And I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent
 And the shuttles cease to fly
 Shall God unroll the canvas

And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the skillful Weaver's hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

Survival Tip

We do not always understand why circumstances happen. There is comfort in knowing that there is a God in heaven who knows.

Survival Training

Isn't it fun when the Skillful Weaver weaves the beautiful gold and silver threads in the canvas of our lives? Yet it is not so fun when the darker threads are woven. Write out this poem in your journal so that you can read it often. Let it be a reminder that there is a God in heaven who sees the completed tapestry even before it is finished.

God's Plan and Dan

The Lord will work out his plans for my life.

Psalms 138:8a NLT

When the boys were in the eighth grade, they wanted to change churches. This made no sense. They had grown up in the church we were attending. Their best friends were there. They loved the youth minister and each of their Sunday School teachers. However, they were steadfast in their desire for a change. My husband and I were not the least bit interested in visiting other churches. In fact, it sounded like a lot of work. Finally, we gave in and visited another church. In time, we fell in love with our new church and joined it as a family.

Dan's senior year of high school, he bought a guitar. Each of us thought it would be a passing hobby that would only last a few days or weeks. In fact, the day he got it, Doug looked at him and said, "Have you quit yet?" Dan proved us all wrong. Chad, the worship leader for the youth, asked Dan if he would play his guitar with the praise band. Dan was excited about this opportunity. Our new youth minister, Jonathan, gave Dan free guitar lessons each week. More importantly he invested in the life of an impressionable teenage boy. Soon, Dan was asked to lead the entire youth band in praise and worship.

Several months after Chad had left our church, he called Dan. Chad invited Dan to go to church camp with his band and run the sound system for them. With great excitement, Dan jumped at the opportunity. He got to know the guys in Chad's band throughout that week. He particularly was drawn to a youth minister named Paul. Dan and Paul became friends. Soon after returning from youth camp, Paul asked Dan to lead the praise and worship each week for his youth group. Dan said yes. Paul spent the next year mentoring Dan and teaching him about ministry.

I stood on the sidelines and watched each of these events unfold throughout the year. It all began with changing churches, then playing the guitar and Chad. After Chad, came Jonathan and then Paul. Each of these men

invested in Dan's life. They had an incredible life-changing impact on him. As I stood on the sidelines watching, a couple of things amazed me about all of this. First of all, the Lord did all of this without my help. As a mom, there is such freedom in knowing this. It takes the pressure off of me to act or intervene on his behalf. The Lord knows that more than anything I want His will lived out in Dan's life. I am encouraged to know that He will not let me get in His way. I also realized is that God is at work in all things. All things include those events that are pleasant as well as not so pleasant. I had always known this in my head but actually got to see this with my heart. God was at work in all of this from changing churches to purchasing a guitar to Dan leading praise and worship. God truly is at work in all things.

Survival Tip

God is at work in all things.

Survival Training

Whether you can see it or not, the Father's hand is at work in all things regarding your teenager's life. God will place people in his/her path that He wants to impact your teen's life. In fact, He is doing that right this minute even if you cannot see it. He will orchestrate the details of your teen's life to surround him/her with certain friends, teachers and youth workers.

In your journal make a list of your teenager's teachers, friends, youth workers and others with whom they may come in contact. Pray for them regularly. Ask the Lord to give them patience and wisdom along with a love for your teenager. At the top of your journal page, write: God is at work in all things.

Reading Glasses, Lipitor, Twenty Pounds and a Cyst

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16 NASB

Mothering the past eighteen years has been the joy of my life. When both boys went away to college, it was quite an adjustment for me. There was a huge void in my daily life. But God is gracious; He filled that void. The year the boys left, there were several additions to my life.

First of all, my eyesight was progressively getting worse. Large print finally was not large enough. So, I invested in some reading glasses. Also, my “bad” cholesterol tested high and I began taking Lipitor. My husband and I began to eat out often which afforded me an extra twenty pounds. Lastly, my family practice doctor found what he thought was a cyst.

I scheduled an appointment for my yearly physical. The doctor was concerned. He promptly referred me to a specialist for testing. I called and got an appointment for the end of that week. Throughout the week, I thought very little about the upcoming appointment. I told my husband and then briefly mentioned it to a couple of friends.

Occasionally throughout the week I was reminded of the upcoming testing. When I thought about it, I was proud of myself for being so “spiritual”. I had thoughts like, “I’m not worried. This is in the Lord’s hands.” I felt as if God was proud of me, too. After all, I was not worried. I trusted Him.

Finally the day came for me to have the diagnostic test done. As I pulled into the parking lot and turned off my car engine, I was suddenly gripped with fear. I realized that if I got bad news, this could be the beginning of a long rough road. After all, I had watched several of my friends travel down this rough road. The courage I had

earlier in the week disappeared and was replaced with a paralyzing fear. I bowed my head. Knowing that hard times grow our character, I prayed, “Lord, please don’t build my character.” As I sat in my car and completed that prayer, I was ashamed. I had just prayed the most “chicken” prayer ever and sadly meant every word I had prayed. If Jesus were one to roll his eyes, I would expect that He did it right then.

It was as if I could hear Him saying, “After all these years, she still does not get it, does she?”

I am thankful to report that the following week I got good news. While I was relieved, I do not think that God is finished with me yet. I think He has something else planned that He can use to grow my character.

Survival Tip

We grow older as our children grow older. Health issues may be used to grow our faith and build our character.

Renewing our minds will help us through those tough times.

Survival Training

God truly has a sense of humor. About the time our good health begins to leave, our children grow up and leave as well. While taking care of your physical body is important, renewing your mind is even more important. One of the best ways to renew your mind is to enlist an accountability partner and commit to memorizing one Bible verse each week. While memorizing scripture might seem like a lot of work, it is well worth it. Hiding God's Word in your heart will change your life. Renewing your mind will equip you for those character-building times.

HELP!

And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede.

Isaiah 59:16 NASB

It usually begins around sixth or seventh grade. For some reason girls begin acting cruel to each other. They backstab one another and oftentimes will quit speaking to each other. They form cliques or exclusive groups that consequently cause hurt feelings. Somewhere between elementary and junior high, girls seem to change.

In high school, girls are often mean to each other yet in a much more subtle way. They can be sneaky and manipulative in how they treat each other. Almost unconsciously, they compare themselves to each other and there is a constant rivalry going on for the opposite sex. Their hurtful acts toward each other are less obvious yet still go on behind the scenes. Nevertheless, the result is hurt feelings once again. What breaks my heart is that when teenage girls grow up to be wives and mothers, we often treat each other just as we did during the teenage years.

Being a wife and mom can be very lonely at times. We wear many different hats and play many different roles. We will serve our family when we are so tired that we cannot hold our eyes open any longer. We will listen to our teenager share his/her heart when we are emotionally drained ourselves. Some moms suffer with health issues as well. We can be suffering with a migraine headache and we will still manage to cook supper for our family and serve it with a smile. Other moms are the only people on the face of the earth that can understand what we go through each day. We do not always like to admit it but the truth is that we need each other.

Several years ago I was very worried about one of our boys. It was a situation where I could tell a spiritual battle was being fought. The stakes were high. I was desperate to take the “I have a perfect family” veil off and ask for prayer support from some of my friends. Finally out of desperation, I gave in. It was a relief to break down my wall of pride and ask for help. I selected four close friends to confide in and asked for their prayers

concerning this battle. I picked a couple of close friends that I see each day. I also picked a couple of friends who live out of state that I do not see as often. I chose friends who I knew loved me yet love our heavenly Father even more. My friends were a great support during this time. I let them know some of the details regarding my concerns for one of our boys. They were eager to petition our heavenly Father on his behalf. I email them regularly with updates.

Several exciting things came out of this experience. For one thing, when the victory was won, my prayer friends shared in the blessing. Another benefit was that they confided in me as well and I was able to intercede with our heavenly Father on their behalf. Since then I have added several more to my list of prayer friends.

Survival Tip

To boldly approach the throne of grace and intercede on behalf of a friend is an honor and a privilege.

Survival Training

I do not know why women are so critical and judgmental of each other when the truth is that we need each other desperately. It was a great relief when I shared my heartfelt concern with my friends. Right away, the burden became lighter. Read James 5:16. Choose several friends to be your prayer friends. Go ahead and “enlist” them to intercede with the heavenly Father on your behalf or your teenager’s behalf. When your time of need comes (and it will), they will be eager to not only share your burden but your victory as well.

Driving, Dating and Sleepless Nights

Oh, that I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest!

Psalms 55:6b NLT

When the boys were newborns, my husband and I kept one crib in the living room and one crib in their bedroom. We had one crib in the living room because that way the “parent in charge” could watch television while feeding babies. The boys were premature and had to eat every three hours. The problem was that it would take each one an hour to drink his four ounces of formula. Since that just gave us only one hour off between feedings, the parent in charge of the night shift would just stay up and watch television. We had no family in town and thought this would work out the best for both of us. (Of course, if we had to do it all over again, we would have been smarter and done it differently). This schedule worked fine until the boys reached about two months old. Over time, my husband and I became physically and mentally exhausted. Neither of us had a good night’s sleep. This actually went on for another couple of months. We were so thankful when the boys gained some weight and could do without the night feedings.

No one ever told me that sleepless nights would return fifteen years later when the boys became teenagers. I learned early on that there is something in the late night air that makes teenagers share heart-to-heart visits with mom. I found that the later it is, the more they will open up and share their innermost thoughts. That is amazing since they can walk around for much of the day and not say a word. Quality teenager-mom time at 2 a.m. is especially hard for those of us who are not night people.

Exhaustion also set in when the boys begin driving. The first year, my husband gave the boys a curfew of midnight. After the first year, he told them that they no longer had a curfew. When he did that, I followed him into the bedroom and asked him if he was crazy. I did not know how he could do that to me. I was already exhausted from staying awake until midnight. I did not know how I was going to stay up any later.... but I

did...lots later. I fought this new lifestyle. I have always been one that could go to bed at 11 p.m. and get up at 7 a.m. I also like to have everyone in my house settled and in bed before I can go to sleep.

The boys are now nineteen and when not living at college, they are living at home. Most nights, when my husband and I go to bed around 11 p.m., the boys are not at home. They are usually at a friend's house watching a movie. I have had to adapt to this lifestyle. Going without sleep is not as easy as it was nineteen years ago when my body was much younger.

Survival Tip

Adequate rest is essential to your mental, physical and spiritual health. Even Jesus took time to rest.

Survival Training

Rest is essential to our overall health. Some people have no problem taking naps and resting regularly. Others, like me, do not have time to rest. Rest slows me down and keeps me from accomplishing the next task on my list. I have to give myself “permission”. I do this by remembering that even Jesus had to rest.

Try to set aside time in each day to rest whether it is by napping or just relaxing with a good book for an hour or so. It is also important to regularly schedule a time to get away and rest when possible. Rest is refreshing to not only your body but also your soul.

The Lord is Doug's Shepherd

"You are my flock, the sheep of my pasture."

Ezekiel 34:31a NLT

A good friend of mine who is a minister preaches a sermon called "Sheep are Dumb." After completing a short study about a shepherd and his sheep, I understand why. This study also brought new meaning to one of the most popular chapters in the Bible - Psalm 23.

The wise shepherd starts his sheep grazing very early in the morning. They constantly graze and are never still. By mid-morning, with the sun beaming down, the sheep are hot, tired and thirsty. The shepherd seeks out a place for his sheep to lie down so that they can chew their cuds.

Sheep are by nature fearful animals and rightfully so. They are especially afraid of moving water. They cannot swim and would immediately sink to the bottom due to the weight of their coat. The caring shepherd must lead his sheep to quiet still waters so that they can drink. If the shepherd cannot find quiet water, he will set up some rocks to make a dam across a small stream to form a still pool so that his sheep can drink without fear. The shepherd is concerned with even the smallest details.

Daily the shepherd will spend individual time with his sheep. The sheep move about in a line throughout each day. One by one each sheep will leave his place in line and trot over to his shepherd. The shepherd gently rubs his nose and ears. This reassures and encourages the sheep. He then returns to his place in line. The caring shepherd knows each of his sheep.

Sheep are helpless creatures. They have poor eyesight and cannot see danger ahead even at a near distance. Sheep follow their shepherd trusting him to lead them to safe places. Sheep also have no method of defense.

When dangerous animals come near, the protective shepherd must use his rod to defend the sheep against wild beasts of the field.

Grazing in the field can even have its set of dangers. The shepherd must clear the field of dangerous plants and bushes. However, the shepherd may not see all of the prickly plants and bushes and the sheep can cut his head. This can cause painful sores. The caring shepherd applies soothing oil to the cut so that it will heal instead of becoming infected.

The wise shepherd knows and cares for each of his sheep individually. He watches over them closely so one does not stray away. He anticipates their every need and then provides for them. The defenseless sheep is totally dependent upon his shepherd. This is a beautiful analogy of how our loving heavenly Father knows and loves our teenagers and is concerned with the details of their lives. It is an encouragement to know that our teens are in the hands of a wise and caring Shepherd.

Survival Tip

Just think the God of all creation pulls your teenager out of line each day to “gently run his/her nose and ears.”

He loves your teen dearly and is anticipating and then meeting every need.

Survival Training

Write out Psalm 23 and carry it with you wherever you go. Meditate on it at least three times throughout each day for several weeks. When reading this chapter, place your teen's name in place of the references to "me" and "my". Let this beautiful picture of a shepherd and his sheep penetrate your heart and mind. This simple activity can change your life. Just a glimpse of understanding the great Shepherd's love for our teenagers, might allow us to worry less and rest more.

The Mom Plan

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

Most of us moms have a plan for our children. Because we know them so well, we think our plan is the best plan. We know with whom they should be friends, what activities they should join, what sports they should play and of course, what classes they should take in school and with which teachers. We think we have the perfect plan – The Mom Plan. It does not take long to figure out that the mom plan is just that – mom’s plan. Not only is it impossible to live out, it is not necessarily God’s plan.

The boys have always performed community service as part of their high school and college requirements. When the time came for Doug to choose his community service for the year, I knew that he would pick Habitat for Humanity. This is the organization in which volunteers build homes and then the homes are sold for a minimum cost to families who need a place to live. I could see Doug doing this as he likes manual labor and he is good with his hands. He also likes to help people. I saw this as the perfect fit for him. So when he came home and told me that he had signed up to work for Hospice, I was shocked. The look on my face had to be priceless. While I know that Hospice is an admirable ministry to those who are near death, I did not think that it was a good fit for him. He is far too sensitive to get attached to people who are dying. This would be an emotional weight that I did not think he could bear. I reasoned that he must not have known what he signed up for. So I asked him why he chose Hospice. He said that they needed people. I asked him if it was too late to change to Habitat for Humanity. He looked me in the eye and said that he did not want to change. Praise God that He can move me and my plan out of the way so that He can unfold His plan.

Doug has been visiting a nursing home for months now. He looks forward to his visits each week so that he can read the Bible to Miss Velma, a terminally ill grandmother who can only communicate by moving her eyes.

Miss Georgia, a stroke patient, is another friend that he met. He describes her as “an awesome lady.” She lights up when he walks in the room, as she receives no other visitors. He plays checkers with Mr. Preston sometimes as many as ten games in one afternoon. One of the caseworkers told Doug that he should consider checking into the job of Hospice Chaplain. I do not know where this could lead him but I do know that my plan pales in comparison to God’s plan.

Survival Tip

The Mom Plan pales in comparison to God’s Plan. Knowledge and resources limit our plan while His plan knows no boundaries.

Survival Training

Think about your teenager. In your journal, make a list of his/her strengths such as friendly, outgoing, a gifted athlete, etc. Then make a list of weaknesses such as forgetful, disorganized, limited musical ability. Look over these lists. Take a permanent marker and mark through the list of weaknesses. Do not set limits on what God has planned your teenager. He has no list of weaknesses. Your quiet introverted teenager might be President of the United States or a missionary in a third world country. When God looks at your teenager, no matter the circumstances, He only sees what He can do.

You Will Survive and Here's Ten Reasons Why!!!

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:28, 29, 31

Your teenager will be far from perfect. No matter how many books you read or how hard you work at it, you will make mistakes as a parent. But take heart, you will survive! Listed below are ten reasons why.

He can do anything. Nothing is too hard for Him. (Genesis 18:14)

He never sleeps or slumbers. (Psalms 121:3)

He will win the battle. (1Chronicles 5:22)

He can do anything. (Matthew 19:26)

He is at work in all things. (Psalms 138:8a)

He will teach our teenagers. (Isaiah 54:13)

He has great plans for the future. (Jeremiah 29:22)

He is able to do more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)

He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him. (2 Timothy 1:12)

He loves your teenager. (1 John 4:19)

He will do the work. Our part is to trust. So....trust and rest.

Survival Tip

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all of the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

Survival Training

Look up the Scriptures listed above. Write them on index cards and carry them with you in your purse. Read them several times throughout each day. Know them not just with your head but with your heart.

Pizza Hut, Pizza Inn and Pizza Coupons

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Romans 12:4, 5 NLT

Although there are only four of us in our family, we are all very different. This fact is confirmed every time we try to order pizza. First of all, none of us like the same pizza place but we usually settle for Pizza Hut. We order from Pizza Hut because they have a choice of crusts. However, all of these choices just make it more difficult for us. Ordering is always stressful. Two members of our family like cheese pizza but prefer different crusts. The other two in our family like thin crust but one likes pepperoni and the other likes both pepperoni and beef.

Our differences also manifest themselves when we go out to eat. One of the boys can eat an entire meal in three large quick bites. Then he sits there and taps his foot while his dad eats slowly and savors every bite. The other two of us are somewhere in between with regards to our eating speed. These differences can help us to get along well while at the same time these differences can lead to conflict.

When the boys were toddlers, I went to a seminar on the different “types” of personalities. This seminar was offered at our church and I just went as a show of support. I felt that stereotyping such as this was wrong and had no benefit. I thought it placed us in a box and set limits. Boy was I in for a surprise! This seminar truly opened my eyes. Four basic personality types were taught. The speaker spoke of the sanguine personality – outgoing, people-oriented and disorganized. He also spoke of the choleric personality – likes to be in charge, controlling yet sometimes bossy. The phlegmatic personality is another one – laid back, easygoing and unmotivated. Lastly, the melancholy personality is a perfectionist, very sensitive with high expectations of themselves and others.

This seminar was eye opening because we have four people in our home and we each represent one of the basic personality types. No wonder we drive each other crazy at times. Basically, I am outgoing. My husband is in charge. One of the boys is easygoing and the other is a perfectionist. While these characteristics enable us to get along well, they can also cause conflict.

Picture this on Sunday mornings. Choleric Dad is ready to leave for church thirty minutes early. He expects everyone to be ready to march out the door like a family of ducklings. Sanguine Mom is trying to get ready but had to make a quick call to a friend which ends up being a thirty minute conversation...while dad impatiently stands there and waits wondering why mom could not have done this the night before. The Laid Back Son is not out of bed yet. The Perfectionist Son is sitting in the car waiting neatly dressed with Bible in hand. It is a recipe for disaster. Try worshipping after a morning like this. Times like these, I know that God has a sense of humor. As I continued to research personality types, I gained a better understanding and appreciation of each member of my family.

Survival Tip

Learn to appreciate each other's differences. Each of us is needed in order to make our family complete.

Survival Training

Sit down as a family and discuss each other's similarities and differences. It will help you to appreciate each other. Lastly, read Personality Tree by Florence Littauer. It will give you great information and understanding related to types of personalities.

Wanted: Good Decisions

So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the Lord, that He might establish His word.

1 Kings 12:15a NASB

According to the Bible, King Solomon was one of the wisest men who ever lived. People came from miles and miles around to see him and ask him difficult questions. The Lord had blessed him with wisdom and he always had a clever answer. Along with wisdom, he had great wealth and a vast kingdom. Being a parent who has been blessed with wisdom from God, you could reason that he would have children who always made wise decisions.

Solomon had a son named Rehoboam who was not wise. Rehoboam became king after Solomon died. As king, Rehoboam had to make many decisions. His most important decision came early in his reign. Some of his people had worked hard for King Solomon. Once Rehoboam became king, their desire was to work a little less and pay no taxes. They wanted a break after many years of service. In return, they would remain loyal to him.

Rehoboam sought advice from two different groups of people. He first met with some of the older experienced men who recommended that he give them their requests. The older men advised him to listen to their complaints and answer them with a kind word and agree to lighten their load. The older men knew how hard they had worked in the past for King Solomon. They also reasoned that it would be wise to do what it takes to keep their loyalty. However, the younger men advised Rehoboam to not give into their wish. They suggested that he make their workload more difficult and their punishment more painful. That is what Rehoboam did. He took the advice of the younger men and answered the people harshly.

Although Rehoboam had been raised by one of the wisest men who had ever lived, he was a son who made a bad decision. Even after his father had taught repeatedly that older people are often wiser, he still chose to go with the younger friends who gave him the poor advice. He made a bad decision with grave consequences

ahead. Rehoboam's decision caused the kingdom of Israel to split. His people who had asked for relief left and offered their loyalties to another king.

This is the amazing part of the story. The Bible goes on to say this situation was from the Lord that He might accomplish His Word. In other words, God used Rehoboam's poor choice to work out His plan.

The Bible has countless stories of people who made bad decisions. These stories teach us that our God is a God of redemption. While we may suffer consequences, He redeems us from our poor choices. He is a God of second, third and fourth chances. He does not waste our mistakes and He never gives up on His children. He can use our poor choices or our "events" to accomplish His Word.

Survival Tip

We serve a God of redemption. He is a God of second, third and fourth chances. He does not waste our mistakes and He can even use them to fulfill His word.

Survival Training

In many ways, it was much easier parenting when our boys were younger as I felt as if I had control over their lives and their decisions. That control gradually goes away as our children become teenagers and young adults. When I was a teenager, I made some poor choices. It is hard for us to watch our teens make mistakes. We must remember first of all, that is how they learn life lessons. Secondly and more importantly, our God is a God of redemption and can use poor choices to bring about His purpose. Write out a prayer asking to Lord to give you peace and your teenager wisdom as you watch him/her face many decisions during this time of life.

The Last First Game

But Mary thought about all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

Luke 2:19 NLT

Sports have always been a large part of our family life as we all enjoy competition. Each Friday during the fall, all decked out in school colors, we would head across the city of Dallas (or wherever) in the five o'clock traffic to watch our boys play football. Some nights we would drive 10 miles. Other nights we would drive 200+ miles. As parents, we would make this journey no matter how sick, how tired, or how busy we had been earlier that week. In the back of our car, we kept coats, blankets, gloves, toboggans, raincoats and umbrellas. We watched games in record-breaking heat, pouring down rain and, of course, freezing cold weather with a wind chill. We had countless dinners consisting of hot dogs, chips, candy bars and hot chocolate. It was such a great time. I never remember us complaining once about the traffic, the weather or the dinner. We made friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

Each year, there is such a rush of excitement with the anticipation of that first game of the season. I remember the first game of their senior year in high school. My husband and I were so excited that we laid out our clothes the night before. The pep rally at school just added energy to our anticipation. As we were at a standstill in the rush hour traffic, I looked at my husband pensively and said, "Just think, this will be our last first game." What I meant was that this would be the last time we would experience that rush of excitement for the first game of the season. After what I thought was a brilliant observation, my puzzled husband just looked at me and said, "Huh? What are you talking about?"

I realized at that moment there are some things that only a mother can understand. I tried to watch every minute they were on the field as not to miss a single play. Often it was as if I were sitting in a theatre and watching a movie. No matter how much I wanted to replay a scene or pause the tape, I could not. The next thing I knew, we were driving to the last game of the season. This would be the last night that we would see our boys dressed

out in uniforms and pads as numbers 12 and 86. At the end of the game, I remember walking to the car and standing in the parking lot. I did not want to get in the car and leave. I wanted to remember the feel and smell of the crisp near winter air. I knew that once we got in the car and drove away from the field that it was over. For the first time in my life, I wanted to control the passage of time. We were not ready for this last season to come to an end. If I could, I would have rewound the tape and gone back to that last first game.

Survival Tip

In a culture bombarded with media and technology, a time of reflection and mediation is healthy.

Survival Training

The Psalmist said, “Be still and know that I am God.” In a world with no television, radio, cell phone, cd player or MP3 player, it was probably much easier for Mary to “be still.” Be creative in your schedule and set aside ten to twenty minutes to sit quietly alone and reflect upon the stages of motherhood and God’s faithfulness through it all. Try to make this a daily activity. You may find that this quiet time can give you fuel for the journey ahead.

Senior Pictures and Draft Notices

But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord.

Psalm 31:14a NASB

I was surprised to learn that senior pictures are a big deal in high school. The spring of the boys' junior year, other moms began asking me where we were going to get the boys' senior pictures made. I had no idea, as I had not given it any thought. Through conversations with others, I soon learned a lot. I learned that we must purchase several new "outfits" for this occasion as the photographer allows the student to stop and change clothes throughout the photo shoot. That way there is more variety in the selection of proofs. I also learned that it was not uncommon for my friends to drive several hours to go to the best-known photographer or to get the best background for the picture. The other thing that surprised me was that there is a definite social stigma associated with which photographer is chosen. It seems I was asked daily "who" was taking the boys' senior pictures. There also never seems to be a good time. We waited weeks for their hair to be the "right" length and for the zits on their faces to clear up. Lastly, I never dreamed that the amount of money spent on senior pictures would be equivalent to a full time semester of classes at the local junior college.

The funny thing is that senior pictures have no meaning to boys. It is something they endure for their mom because their dad tells them to. The time finally came. Their hair was a good length and the zits were under control. They grabbed an extra shirt out of the closet along with their school letter jacket and we were on our way. I bribed them to smile.

Several weeks later the pictures arrived. The box of photographs was sitting on the coffee table with the rest of the mail. I hurriedly began to open the box. I could feel a moment of reflection coming. However, while I was cutting open the box, something caught my eye. Although I had never seen one before, somehow I knew exactly what it was. On top of the stack of mail was the boys' Selective Service Draft Registration notice. Knowing that our nation was currently at war, for a moment I was gripped with fear. Although I am a proud American, I could

not come to terms with the fact that the government thinks my 18 year old sons are old enough to leave their home (or should I say leave their mommy) and go to a faraway country and fight in a war with real guns. Suddenly, the excitement of the senior pictures was replaced with the reoccurring theme that my kids are growing up and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it.

I gave the draft registration notices to my husband for him to handle. I told him that moms do not “do” draft registrations. Then I tore open the box of senior pictures and held on tightly to the last bit of childhood that I had left.

Survival Tip

Trust God with the future as well as the present.

Survival Training

Within minutes, I went from senior pictures to draft notices. Our children grow up so fast. Whether it is fighting in a war overseas or staying home to attend a college nearby, it can be difficult for us to trust God with our teenager's future. Hannah Whitall Smith writes in her book, *The Christian's Secret to a Happy Life*, that we should learn to trust the Lord. She goes on to say that we are to lie down upon the couch of His sweet will. He will sustain us and He cannot fail. Our part is to rest. Read Psalm 31:14 and rest upon on the couch of His sweet will.

Scrapbooks, Trophies and Child Altars (For wives)

Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:11-12 NLT

Each year at our school there is a reception that takes place after the graduation ceremony. Parents of the graduating seniors set up displays that represent or honor their child. Parents might display things like baby pictures, old baseball gloves or other special keepsakes and memorabilia from their child's life. Then there is always the scrapbook. Some moms begin their child's scrapbook years in advance. Other moms begin the week before and work around the clock to produce a scrapbook that might look as if they had spent years on it. (There is much pressure because, although unspoken, moms know that there is a direct correlation between the quality of the scrapbook and a mom's love for her child.)

My husband and I attended many of these receptions before our two boys graduated. Each year we would privately make fun of the parents for setting up these "altars" for their children. The time and money they spent on these table arrangements was incredible especially since they were only displayed for about an hour or so before it was time to tear it down and take it home.

Last year it was our turn to set up displays for each of our boys. My husband and I took on this project with great enthusiasm. I spent many hours and lots of money throughout their senior year taking pictures. Once the best pictures were selected, I made numerous trips to Wal-Mart to get the reprints made. All of this was done in order to create the story of their life in the form of a scrapbook. My husband drew a diagram on paper of how we wanted each of their tables set up. Then he bought six easels so that we could display six poster-size prints of the boys playing sports. We also set out many of the trophies and medals won over the years. We felt as if our table set-up was better than any of the other graduates. Yes – we fell into the trap just like everyone else. In

looking back, all of that effort was more for us than it was for the boys. I am not sure they even saw their table set-up.

One thing really scares me about this whole reception table set-up. As my husband and I joked about parents setting up “altars” for their children, I realized that there might be some truth to this. Is it possible that I might “idolize” my children perhaps by placing them above my husband and my God? Not only is it possible but it is likely. My husband once said that the year our twins were born was the most difficult year of our marriage. In looking back, I realize that he lost his best friend that year. I was so caught up in motherhood that I had little time for him or anything else for that matter. If we have defied the odds and we are still married to the father of our teen, one of the best things we can do for our child is to love their dad. It is no wonder that the divorce rate soars once the empty nest phase comes. When we have spent most of our energy nurturing our kids and not our husband, then there is little left once the kids are gone.

Survival Tip

God first. Husband second. Children third.

Survival Training

If your priorities have been out of order, write out a confession in your journal. Ask the Lord for His forgiveness. Then ask the Lord's help in keeping your priorities in the right order. Most importantly, plan a surprise date with your husband.

Handcuffs, Mug Shots.....a Night in the Slammer (It Really Happened!)

And your children shall be taught by the Lord, And great shall be the peace of your children.

Isaiah 54:13 NKJV

My husband was out of town for the week and I was alone. The phone rang at 1:15 a.m. I knew something was wrong. Doug had left to go out with friends around 10 p.m. and had not returned. The operator asked me if I would accept the charges for a collect call from Doug. I was frozen with fear. Of course, I accepted. With great relief, I heard his voice. He told me that he and his friends had been arrested and locked up in jail. He said that after he spoke with the judge in the morning he would call me. Needless to say, I did not sleep much that night.

God made Doug with no fear and an incredible sense of adventure – an interesting combination that does not always allow for good judgment. He enjoys life “outside the box.” Some of his friends have the same sense of adventure. This quest led them to discover a new hobby last summer – golf ball diving. They would go to golf courses in the middle of the night, dive in the ponds and see how many golf balls they could find. They were careful to choose golf courses that did not employ “divers” so they would not be stealing from anyone. They learned quickly that the brand name golf balls were found at the expensive golf courses. They frequented the more elite courses. After a summer of golf ball diving, he and his friends had accumulated about eight thousand balls.

As fall with its cool night air was quickly approaching, Doug and his friend, Kody, decided to go out for one last night of diving. The golf course happened to be near a water treatment plant. With the threat of terrorism high, there were night guards on duty at the plant. The night guards called the police. Five police officers and a police dog came to check out the “terrorists”. Instead they found wet teenagers in their boxers and a bucket filled with golf balls. The golf ball divers were arrested, handcuffed and taken to jail. That night as I lie awake

in bed, words like “arrested”, “criminal record” and “bail” kept going through my mind. These were words I had only heard before on television. I never dreamed I would be using those words in sentences about my son.

Their experience in jail was unforgettable. Doug and Kody were frisked, fingerprinted and had mug shots taken. When Doug was frisked, the officers forgot to take his cell phone. Doug made good use of his phone by taking pictures of them in their cell. Then he voluntarily turned in his cell phone. Still wet with pond water, the officers gave the boys some blankets and some mats to sleep on for the night. The following morning, they were charged with criminal trespassing and released on bail to await their court date.

Survival Tip

Take comfort in that the Lord will orchestrate circumstances and events so that He may teach your teenagers.

Survival Training

There is great comfort in knowing that our heavenly Father will orchestrate events and circumstances to teach our teens. While learning life's lessons may not be pleasant and sometimes costly, Isaiah 54:13 says that our children will have great peace. Write Isaiah 54:13 in your journal. Ask the Master Teacher to teach your teenager.

Truck Trouble and Letting Go

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT

The greatly anticipated day finally came. We had shopped throughout the summer for clothes, furniture and toiletry items. It was the day that we were moving the boys into their college dorm. They both chose to go to a college about thirty minutes away. We were thrilled with their decision to go to the same school as well as a school nearby. Perhaps our nest would not be quite so empty on the weekends when they came home for a visit.

On move-in day, we got up early and loaded both trucks with all of the necessary items for successful college life. Armed with irons, ironing boards, starch, bath mats, bath towels, sheets, name brand clothes and many other essentials as well as non-essentials, we headed south down highway 360. I was so excited for them. As with all college freshmen, they were both a little anxious about this new experience. However, they had several friends attending this same school. I knew that would help them with the adjustment.

Little did I know the turn of events that lay ahead for the next several days. As we arrived to the campus on this hot summer Thursday and were in a line to be directed to the appropriate dorm, Doug's truck overheated and stalled. It caused a huge traffic jam as well as a lot of stares. The first few minutes at his new home were a disaster. We had to have his truck towed, which left him at school without a vehicle to drive. Not only was he without a truck but he was without a couple of his good friends as well. One of his good friends was in Europe and would be arriving at school several days late. After moving into his dorm room, his brother returned home for a few days to get his wisdom teeth out. While Doug knew a few other students on campus, he did not know any of them well. So basically he was stuck at school with no close friends and no transportation.

As silly as it may seem now, that was one of the most difficult weekends of my parenting life. The Lord and I played "tug-of-war" all weekend over Doug. In my mind, I wanted to go and get Doug and bring him home.

That way he could be with friends and family instead of in an unfamiliar setting with hundreds of strangers. The funny thing is that while I was playing “tug-of-war” with God, Doug was making lots of new friends. Although my fleshly self wrestled with God, my spiritual self was at peace. My heart knew that Doug was in the hands of his heavenly Father. The Lord had orchestrated these events for His greater purpose. There was a peace in that realization that surpasses all understanding.

Doug actually did come home that weekend. He came with his new friend, Matt. Matt lived in the dorm room across the hall. They shared a close friendship for the next several months until Matt had to return home due to health reasons. Matt was one of the many friends Doug made that first year of college. While both boys grew up a lot that first year away from home, without a doubt, I grew up the most.

Survival Tip

Playing tug-of-war with God is not a game that takes place on a playground but in between our ears. Trusting God will help us to let go of the rope.

Survival Training

Write a love letter to your teenager and give it to him/her. Then place a recent picture in your Bible. Think of him/her as nestled in the center of God's Word. His Word is so powerful. When playing tug-of-war with God, perhaps this might make letting go a bit easier.

Survival Kit

Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Psalms 119:105 NAS

Write these Scriptures on index cards and tape them on your refrigerator, around your teen's room, car and anywhere that you need a light unto your path.

Salvation – Romans 10:9,10, Eph. 2:8-9, Rev. 3:20

Driving – Ps. 121:8, Deuteronomy 28:6, what can man do to me

Friends – 1 Cor. 15:33, Prov. 17:17

Purity – Ps. 119:9

Life Lessons – Ps. 34:11, Isaiah 54:13

Knowledge and Intelligence – Daniel 1:17, Hosea 6:3

Depression – Nehemiah 8:10

Faith – Luke 17:5, Heb. 11:6, Heb. 10:38, 2 Tim. 4:7, 2 Cor. 5:7

Thoughtlife – Philippians 4:8

Hurt/Brokenhearted – Ps.147:3, Ps 34:18

Words – Eph. 4:29

Times of Trouble – Ps. 46:1-2, John 14:1

Protection – 2 Thess. 3:3, Deut. 1:30, Rom. 8:31, Exodus 33:14, Ps. 34:7

Finances – Ps. 23:1, Ps. 34:10, Matt. 10:8, Prov. 13:22, Matt. 6:25, 31-34, Phil 4:19

Temptation – 1 Cor. 10:13

Future Plans – Jer. 29:11, 2 Peter 2:9, Psalm 119:11, 1 John 1:9

Trials – 1 Peter 4:12-13, 2 Cor. 1:4, Heb. 5:8

Fear – Ps. 56:11, 1 John 4:18, John 14:27, Ps. 27:1, 3, Heb. 13:6

Forgiveness – Ps. 103:12, Is. 43:25, Col. 3:13

Attitude Toward Work – Col. 3:23

Satan – James 4:7, Eph. 4:27, 1 John 3:8, 1 John 2:14, John 17:15, 1 John 4:4

Good Health – Jer. 17:14, Jer. 30:17Ps. 103:3,4, 3 John 1:2, Luke 6:19, James 5:15

Survival Helps for the Long Days

Holy Bible

The Christian's Secret to a Happy Life

Hannah Whitall Smith

The Practice of the Presence of God

Brother Andrew

My Utmost for Highest

Oswald Chambers

Morning and Evening

Charles Spurgeon

God's Psychiatry

Charles L. Allen

A Shepherd Looks at the Psalms

Philip Keller

Personality Tree

Florence Littauer

Disciplines of a Beautiful Woman

Anne Ortlundt

Disciplines of the Heart

Anne Ortlundt

The Power of a Praying Parent

Stormie Omartian

Rebel With a Cause

Franklin Graham

Intimacy With God

Cynthia Heald