

# 5 Ways to Add Laughter to Your Life

Studies have shown babies and children laugh hundreds of times a day. Adults, on the other hand, often barely make it to double digits. Even joyful people can feel weighed down by the pressures and heartaches of life.

But Jesus said whoever humbles himself like a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4).

Maybe it's time to turn your troubles over to God and become more like a child—full of joy and laughter. Here are five things the Bible says about laughing, along with a few ways to bring out your inner child:

**1. Take time to laugh.** “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:1, 4).

If you've been on this planet for more than a few years, you know life isn't one big laugh. It's filled with difficult trials. Even so, the Bible declares there is “a time to laugh.” Some ways to incorporate more laughter into your life: Talk to a friend with a good sense of humor, retell a funny story from the past or play a practical joke on a good friend or family member. Need another idea? Spending time around children or pets is typically a surefire way to ramp up the laughter.

Do you find it hard to laugh? Sometimes fear and anxiety can steal your joy. Here are some steps you can take to conquer anxiety and get back to laughing.

**2. Share joy.** “A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Prov. 17:22).

Don't keep joy to yourself. Share the "good medicine" of a joyful heart with others. Have you brought joy or laughter to someone today? If not, think of a way you can make one person laugh. It'll bring joy to both of your hearts.

Michael Jr. is a Christ follower and comedian who has shared his story through BGEA's My Hope project. Check out this 2-minute stand-up segment for a laugh.

**3. Lighten Your Load.** "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21).

Have you ever been so sad that you thought you'd never laugh again? If you are a follower of Christ, you are blessed to be part of God's kingdom. The God of the universe can bring you comfort and inner peace even as you struggle with a heavy heart.

Being "blessed" is about experiencing hope and joy regardless of circumstances. King David once wrote about it this way: "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Ps. 30:11). Feeling burdened today? Ask God to lighten your load.

Did Jesus ever laugh or was He solemn all the time? Billy Graham's Answer.

**4. Savor surprises—and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.** "And Sarah said, 'God has made me laugh. All who hear will laugh with me.' Also she said, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age'" (Gen. 21:6-7).

Abraham's wife, Sarah, waited 90 years to become a mother. Thinking there was no way she could provide a family heir herself, she was downright dumbfounded when told she would have a son. She had to laugh out of pure joy. Think of a time when *you* were pleasantly surprised by God's timing.

**5. Expect great things.** “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. ‘The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad” (Ps. 126:2).

When God led His people out of captivity and brought them back to their homeland, they were so relieved and thankful that they laughed and shouted for joy. After spending 70 years as captives, one of the first things they did was build an altar and worship God.

It can be easy to dwell on things that aren’t going your way, but remember the verse above—God does do great things. Keep an eye out this week for the great things He is doing in your life, then take a moment to thank Him for it.

Billy Graham has spent decades preaching about our serious need for Christ, but he also has a lighthearted side. Read 10 funny stories from his 6-plus decades in ministry.

True joy begins with knowing the God who created you. Find peace with God today.

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **8 Things Your Wife Should Expect From You**

More and more couples seem to be writing their own marriage vows these days. Susan and I did the same thing 26 years ago.

Ours included some traditional vows but also reflected the uniqueness of our personalities and commitment before God to one another. Then, after we got married, we discovered our differing gifts and divvied up household responsibilities

according to those gifts. For example, Susan is the financial person, so she pays the bills. I can fix things; when something is broken, I repair it.

While wedding vows, personalities, responsibilities and many other things will differ from marriage to marriage, there are nonnegotiable marriage expectations that should be the same for all spouses. Husbands and wives should be able to expect certain things from one another. So here are 8 things your wife should expect from you.

Remember: Each is a way in which you demonstrate your love for her.

**1. A relationship with Jesus.** If you and Jesus are tight, then you will be close and intimate with your wife as well. The more grounded you are in the Word, the better you will be able to handle the hurdles that come with your marriage.

**2. Trustworthiness.** As I shared in *Unlocking the Door to Intimacy in Marriage*, being trustworthy means you are who you say you are. That is, you are authentic ... the real deal. It also means you will always speak the truth and don't keep secrets from your wife. Susan knows I don't keep secrets from her. I'm always "open for inspection." For example, Susan knows my computer password and can access it any time to see what I am reading and looking at. She can also see my calendar at any time. Susan can also pick up my Smartphone any time to read my texts and emails and check out what kind of music I'm listening to.

Being trustworthy also means that you'll do what you say you'll do ... that your wife can "take it to the bank," so to speak. For example, if you tell her you'll pick up some milk on the way home, make a note to remind yourself to do it. Don't forget and dismiss it as not being important.

**3. Faithfulness.** You're certain you'd never give yourself physically to another woman ... but what about mentally and

emotionally? Even if you don't go looking for porn, do you let your eyes and thoughts wander when something or someone alluring comes into view? Just for a moment or two?

Faithfulness isn't just about what you don't or won't do. It's about what you *do* to make sure that commitment is honored. Jerry Jenkins' book *Hedges: Loving Your Marriage Enough to Protect It* looks at the ways we can guard the borders of our marriage garden.

His advice includes avoiding "just the two of you" travel or meetings with another woman whenever possible. No jokey, flirtatious or suggestive talk. And if you pay a compliment, make it about the woman's hair or clothes, not directly about her.

**4. Provision.** In our homes, we have a clear responsibility to provide for the physical needs of our wife and children. That means that we must work and earn money to provide for those needs. That doesn't necessarily mean we have to be the sole breadwinner. Many couples both have jobs these days. If that's so, where and how are we helping in other areas of home life?

By the way, don't think that putting a paycheck on the counter covers it all either. In addition to financial and physical needs, we must also support our family emotionally and spiritually.

**5. Protection.** Chivalry may not be dead, but it's in poor health. For me, the growing lack of gentlemanliness in society is a worry. Opening a door for a woman or walking on her outside in the street are marks of respect. Here are the "4 Benefits of Showing Chivalry to Your Spouse and Daughters."

We live in a dangerous world: Someone is sexually assaulted every 107 seconds. Your wife and your children need to feel safe and protected—and not just physically. You may have a home security system to guard against burglars. But what about other kinds of "home invasion," like harmful media? Are you on

the alert for your wife and family?

**6. Leadership.** Some people get a bit bent out of shape over this one, but a man is called to lead his family. A man who loves his family well will lead his family well. When a man's wife and children know that he always has their best interests at heart, they'll follow him. Love is leadership's unseen essential.

**7. An attitude of servitude.** This is the antidote to the previous leader thing getting out of whack. As leaders, we should not look to be served but to serve in our homes. What does that look like in your home? How are you serving your wife and children? What are you doing to ensure that they are becoming all they can?

Being a servant means that the world does not revolve around you. That her needs and desires, their needs and desires, take precedence over your planned fishing trip, your golf game or your night out with your buddies. When they know they are important, they will follow you.

**8. Sexual intimacy.** It's easy to think that sexual intimacy is only a priority for guys, but it's important for women too, though perhaps in a slightly different way. Women derive physical pleasure too, of course, but there is also a big emotional component. Your pursuit demonstrates that she is desired and delighted in, that she is still the one. It is also an active expression of your faithfulness. So don't look at your neighbors' lawn; instead, take the time to water your own grass, so that it's the greenest it can be.

Are you meeting these fundamental expectations in your marriage?

**Mark Merrill** is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

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# Psalm Therapy: Healing Negative Emotions God's Way

Once there was a girl who was talented, pretty, and smart. She had a bad temper, however.

When she became angry, she said and did hurtful things. Her father became concerned about her and decided to teach her a lesson.

He gave the girl a bag of nails and a hammer.

"Whenever you lose your temper, go out back to that old fence," he told her. "Take one of the nails and hammer it into the fence as hard as you can. Hold nothing back."

Over the next few weeks, the girl did what her father asked. Eventually, all the nails were gone.

"Now, pull out one of the nails," her father said. The girl did it.

The father then said gently, "Even though the nail is gone now, there is a hole left behind. You can patch it, but this fence will never be the same. That is what you do to others when you say or do hurtful things. You always leave a hole, no matter how many times you say you are sorry."

Many Christians have 'holes' left behind from past hurts. If you don't allow God to heal them, they can impact your ability to love others and have a healthy relationship with yourself.

To help you manage your emotions (and avoid creating "holes" in others), I am pleased to announce my newest e-book, ***Psalm Therapy: Healing Negative Emotions God's Way***. In the book, you

will learn how people in the book of Psalms dealt with emotions like feeling abandoned, angry, comfortless, doubtful, fearful, and others.

If you don't have a Kindle, don't worry. You can get free Kindle reader apps for your Computer, Tablets, and Smartphones [here](#).

Be blessed in health, healing, and wholeness.

**Kimberly Taylor** is the author of The Weight Loss Scriptures and many other books. Once 240 pounds and a size 22, she can testify to God's goodness and healing power. Visit [and receive more free health and weight-loss tips](#).

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## Prophets Are Not Psychics or Witches or Shamans

Every day I get at least a handful of digital requests from precious people all over the world desperately seeking a prophetic word. As I've said before, some come begging. Others come demanding. Still others come with money in hand to buy a prophecy or dream interpretation.

I don't sell prophecies and dream interpretations. I'm not a psychic. I don't read crystal balls. I'm not a shaman. I don't divine the hidden. I'm not like Buddha. You can't rub my belly for good luck. Honestly, as much as my heart goes out to people who are desperate to hear the voice of God, if I endeavored to "go to the throne" to get a word from God for everyone who inquired, I'd have to isolate myself in a cave and live on bread and water.



Don't get me wrong. I am not against personal prophecy. I prophesy over people at the Awakening House of Prayer and various conferences all the time. But as I've said many times, prophetic ministry doesn't operate like a gumball machine. You can't put in a quarter—or send an email or Facebook message—and out comes a prophetic word. It just doesn't work that way.

### **Phony, Fake Prophets**

True prophets don't work to make you dependent on their gift to guide you. Phony prophets specialize in this area. True prophets live by the Ephesians 4:11 model: to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Phony prophets specialize in clever marketing schemes to put a quick buck in their pocket in exchange for a prophetic word that may or come from their spirit—or a familiar spirit—but isn't likely to have originated with the Spirit of God.

**JOIN JENNIFER ON FACEBOOK FOR SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY AND ENCOURAGEMENT. [CLICK HERE.](#)**

I recently ran into one of these phony prophets. We'll just call her Jade. Perhaps ironically, this all-powerful Internet prophetess purchased prophetic training materials from my website. Apparently, the post office dropped the ball and delayed the delivery. My office checked the tracking and let Jade know that the materials were definitely in transit and apologized for the delay.

We didn't hear back from Jade until seven months later, when she suddenly surfaced with a complaint that she hadn't received the printed materials. Jade also shared how she felt stuck and had so many issues to deal with in her life. She was frustrated and unhappy. We tried to minister to her and checked on the order with the Post Office.

Meanwhile, we noticed Jade sells prophetic words on her website. Shocked to come email to email with an Internet

prophetess, we asked her how much she charged for personal prophecy. To our amazement, Jade then offered to “get a prophetic word” for us but warned that “I own my own business and work day and night, so sometimes it takes me a long while to deliver the prophetic words.”

According to the Post Office, the package was delivered over half a year ago! Nevertheless, we refunded her money immediately for the entire order, including the digital materials she had already received. Then we got our prophetic word, but it was word curses from the pit of hell. We broke those words, in Jesus’ name. But that got me wondering, do phony, fake Internet prophets offer a satisfaction guarantee for their prophecies? Selah.

Thankfully, we didn’t pay for any prophecy, but I know many people do. They pay prophets for bogus words and make major life decisions based on those words and wonder what went wrong. I talk about this in my book: *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* Again, I don’t sell prophecies and dream interpretations. I’m not a psychic. I don’t read crystal balls. I’m not a shaman. I don’t divine the hidden. I’m not like Buddha. You can’t rub my belly for good luck.

### **The Holy Ghost Is Not for Sale**

Of course, not all fake, phony prophets are on the Internet. I recently heard of a well-known prophet who would not prophesy at the altar until he received an offering from each individual who wanted a prophetic word. There were even credit card machines for easy swiping so folks wouldn’t hold up the line. Yes, really.

When I get phone calls, emails and Facebook messages begging, demanding and offering to pay for prophetic words, it grieves me because I can see clearly that there is still a major misunderstanding about prophetic ministry in the body of Christ. And that can put these precious believers in danger of

getting merchandised, deceived and otherwise steered in the wrong direction in the name of sincerely “seeking God.” I don’t have time to respond to each and every one in detail about the role of the prophet, why it’s inappropriate for prophets to charge for prophecies or how to hear from God.

But let me assure you of this: God wants to speak to you. In fact, He’s probably speaking to you more than you realize. I have a free prophetic teaching series on YouTube about how to discern the voice of God. It’s old and the quality isn’t the greatest, but it may help you. There are also many books on the topic.

Precious saints, God wants to speak to you directly. Don’t run to a prophet—and don’t pay a prophet—for prophetic words. Run to God and sow your time into fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. You won’t be disappointed and you won’t walk away with a manufactured poor prophecy that leads you in the wrong direction. The Holy Spirit will lead you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). That’s a promise from King Jesus. Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is senior editor of Charisma. She is also director of Awakening House of Prayer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and author of several books, including *The Next Great Move of God: An Appeal to Heaven for Spiritual Awakening*; *Mornings With the Holy Spirit*, *Listening Daily to the Still, Small Voice of God*; *The Making of a Prophet* and *Satan’s Deadly Trio: Defeating the Deceptions of Jezebel, Religion and Witchcraft*. You can visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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# 5 Top Food Sources For Fatty Acids Vital To Your Body

The essential fatty acids identified as Omega-3 are vital to your well-being, but Omega-3 is not a substance the body produces naturally. Thus, in order to get the amount of Omega-3 you need for optimal health, you will need to consume foods containing it.

There are a variety of food sources containing Omega 3, so you can diversify your diet and still get the amount of Omega-3 your body requires.

A-Linolenic acid, docosahexaenoic acid, and eicosapentaenoic acid are three major types of Omega-3 fats. The latter fats are those identified as those that are capable of alleviating inflammatory conditions. Omega-3 fatty acids help boost the body's immune system functioning as well as the health of your joints. It also contributes to cardiovascular, eye, skin, and brain health. According to health experts, every adult should consume at least 1000 milligrams of EPA and DHA daily. The following food sources are excellent sources for Omega-3.

**1. Chia seeds.** You will get 4915 milligrams of Omega-3 fatty acids per one ounce serving of Chia Seeds. Add some Chia Seeds to a bit of yogurt or put some in a smoothie to get your daily dose of Omega-3. You will also be getting a good natural dose of magnesium, vitamin B-12, iron, and calcium as well.

**2. Flaxseed.** One tablespoon of whole flaxseed contains 2338 milligrams of Omega-3 and 606 milligrams of Omega-6. Flaxseed is also an outstanding source of vitamin K, thiamin, niacin, folate, choline, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and fiber. You can add flaxseeds to soups, salads, smoothies, oatmeal, and bread.

**3. Eggs.** A single large hard-boiled egg has 39 to 150

milligrams of Omega-3 fatty acids. You will also get 594 milligrams of Omega-6, vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin K, folate, choline, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and selenium. The yolks of the eggs contain the most Omega-3 fatty acids since farm-raised chickens consume a diet high in Omega-3.

**4. Salmon.** A four-ounce raw salmon contains 1600 milligrams of Omega-3. A three ounce fillet cooked with dry heat contains 1237 milligrams of Omega-3, just over 50 milligrams of Omega-6, vitamin A, niacin, folate, vitamin B-12, calcium, magnesium, selenium, phosphorus, and potassium. You can bake or grill salmon, and there are hundreds of recipes so you can diversify your diet.

**5. Walnuts.** Adding walnuts to your favorite salads, homemade bread, and muffins or simply eating them as a snack gives you a dose of Omega-3. A quarter cup is all you need to get 2600 milligrams of the fatty acids your body craves. Walnuts are also a good source of vitamin A, folate, fiber, and magnesium.

**Don Colbert, M.D.** *has been board-certified in Family Practice for over 25 years and practices Anti-aging and Integrative medicine. He is a New York Times Bestselling author of books such as The Bible Cure Series, What Would Jesus Eat, Deadly Emotions, What You Don't Know May be Killing You, and many more with over 10 million books sold. He is the Medical Director of the Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Florida where he has treated over 50,000 patients.*

*For the original article, visit .*

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# Are You a Likeable Christian?

Before you get angry and upset about the title of this article, please hear me out. I am not trying to tear down anyone's character, nor am I trying to tell you how to live your life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

It's simply the question I came up with—about myself no less—after reading *The Likeable Christian* by Justin Lathrop, a friend of mine and a pastor in Red Oak, Texas. As he does with most everything I read from him, Justin challenged me to stop and think about this. As a disciple of Christ, am I really demonstrating likeability at all times?

When I take a good, hard look at myself, the answer to that question is an unequivocal “no.” But what does it mean when I say “likeability?”

I believe Justin defined it well when he said, “Likeability requires nothing more than living like Christ, actually doing what He did, and loving people the way He loved them. When we live like that, we can be free because the rest is up to Him.”

In that regard, I would say my life and my character have vastly improved over the past year. I hope that the people around me would say the same.

However, I can honestly say that I never lived up to my end of the bargain for the better part of the first 48 years of my life. I've not been an unlikeable person by any stretch of the imagination, but I also wouldn't label myself as very likeable, either. I would say I was somewhere in between, sort of lukewarm. And we know what Jesus said about that: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:16, MEV).

Like many people I know and those I see comment on social media, I played the part of what Rick Warren refers to as an

“angry Christian.” If injustice reared its ugly head in any form, you can bet that I had something to say about it. And no, I didn’t say it in a very Christ-like manner. I didn’t say what needed to be said in love. And yes, the Holy Spirit reminded me in a not-so-gentle manner of my inconsistent “Christian” behavior.

A great example of my struggles came Sunday during a family gathering. A member of my wife’s family, whom I thought was solid in her faith, stunned me when she informed me that “everything in the Bible isn’t true.” She also told me that, in essence, you didn’t have to be “born again” to reach heaven. I could elaborate, but that’s for another post. I didn’t handle it well and said some things I shouldn’t have. Lord, forgive me, and I will ask her forgiveness as well.

But why was I angry? Was I angry about her flippant attitude toward the Bible, or was I angry at the fact that I thought she knew Jesus better and that I was potentially looking at another lost soul? I would like to believe it was the latter.

As Justin points out in the book, “We can’t bully someone into changing. We can’t spout truth in love when we call out sin left and right. None of those responses to sin will gain us likeability; none will convince people of God’s love. The only way we can bring about change and share the message of Jesus that has changed us is through love—no matter the sin, no matter the circumstance—just love.”

Because of our self-centered human nature and the desire to be right (again, that was all me), that type of love simply isn’t easy to produce. Jesus spent a lot of time around sinners, but he didn’t shame them into his way of thinking. He simply loved them, and His love changed them.

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Again, that's likeability.

As Justin says, “Our job is not to tear people down—neither the people nor their sin. We can't do anything to change someone's behavior, and this isn't our responsibility. Our responsibility is to love and care for people and to treat them how Jesus did.”

That doesn't mean that we should compromise the Word of God or keep quiet about sinful lifestyles or habits. When people did things contrary to the Word, Jesus let them know about it. He told the adulterous woman to leave her life of sin. But he also defended and protected her, too.

When culture counteracts the Word of God, we must tell the truth. But, we must say it in love.

So, how do we know if we are a likeable Christian? 1 John 2:5-6 tell us, “But whoever keeps His Word truly has the love of God perfected in him. By this we know we are in Him. Whoever says he remains in Him ought to walk as He walked” (MEV).

Are we walking just as He walked? True Christian faith results in loving behavior, and that's why John said the way we act can give us assurance that we belong to Christ.

And as I always like to say, “there is that.” God bless.

**Shawn A. Akers** *is the online managing editor at Charisma Media. He is a published poet and published a story about Dale Earnhardt in NASCAR Chicken Soup For the Soul. You can read his blog [here](#).*



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# 8 A's of Effective Parenting

Over the last 26 years of being a parent, I've learned a lot. One important thing I've learned is that parenting is all about relating.

When I say relating, I mean really identifying with and connecting with our kids. In *The 6 A's of Relational Parenting*, youth expert Josh McDowell shares six factors that play into good, relational parenting. I've used his 6 A's as the basis for my thoughts in this post and have added a couple more.

Here are the 8 A's of effective parenting:

**1. Affirmation.** When we affirm a child's feelings, it gives them a sense of authenticity. When our children are sharing their feelings or opinions, they want us to listen to them, identify with them and affirm them.

It would go something like this: Your son comes home and says, "Man! My math teacher made me so mad today. He said I wasn't trying." Your instinct might be to try to downplay the situation like this: "Oh, son, he probably didn't mean anything by it. Let it go." Or you might say—before you even address his feelings—"Now son, were you trying? Maybe he had a point." Or "You're a big boy now; you can't get so upset about things."

Those are all attempts to control or fix the situation. Instead try this: "Son, I am so sorry that happened. How do you feel about it now?" Then just listen, let him know you understand how he's feeling and thank him for sharing his feelings. In doing so, you are telling him that he can be real and authentic with his feelings and with you. Even when we

don't agree with our children, we can still affirm their feelings and them as individuals.

**2. Acceptance.** When you give unconditional acceptance, you give a child a sense of security. This basically comes down to one principle that must be conveyed to our children: "I don't love you because of what you do or achieve; I love you because you're my child." Our love and affection should not be based on grades, behavior or achievements.

**3. Appreciation.** When we express appreciation, it gives a child a sense of significance. Appreciation is one of the most powerful motivators for right behavior in our kids. The more we "catch" our children doing things right and we express our appreciation, the more motivated they will be to behave better. You can express that appreciation by saying something like: "Thanks for telling me the truth about what happened. I know it wasn't easy, but I really appreciate the way you are owning and taking responsibility for your actions."

Appreciation can also be expressed by writing a short note of encouragement to your child. Here are "7 Notes You Should Write to Your Child."

**4. Applause.** When we applaud our children, it gives them a sense of confidence. As parents, we sometimes get so focused on instructing and disciplining our children that we forget to applaud them. Your applause can literally be putting your hands together for your child at their recital, their game or their school. It can also be with your words. These "6 Short Sentences Your Child Needs to Hear You Say" will help you get started. We must be bold in applauding our children.

**5. Availability.** When we are available to our children, it gives them a sense of importance. We can say all we want about how important our children are to us. But if we're not available to them, our words will ring hollow. Sometimes, our automatic response to our kids when they approach us is: "Not

right now. I'm busy." But our children should come before our TV watching, our hobbies and our work. So when our kids come to us, our response should be to stop, drop and listen. Stop what we're doing, drop to our knees and listen to them, hug them and play with them.

**6. Apology.** When we apologize to our children, it gives them a sense of trust. Over the years, there have been many occasions that I have apologized to my wife, Susan, and our five children. Fessing up about our mistakes, confessing when we are wrong, and asking for forgiveness is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of humility and strength. Trust is earned, and one way to earn the trust of my children is for them to know that I am completely trustworthy and honest. Admitting my error and apologizing for it helps earn that trust. It shows them that I'm the real deal, not a guy who always thinks he's right.

**7. Affection.** When we show our children affection, it gives them a sense of lovability. All children want to feel like they are lovable. If they don't get love from you, they will get it somewhere else. Here are a few things you can do to show affection. Wink at your daughter across the dinner table. Give big hugs to your son. Develop a bedtime tuck-in routine for your children. Hold your daughter's hand. Have a special nickname for each of your kids. Wrestle with them on the floor. Give them piggyback rides.

**8. Accountability.** When we hold children accountable, it gives them a sense of responsibility and self-control. Children need the disciplines of responsibility and self-control to function successfully in life. As parents, we must create rules and boundaries for our children. Once those guidelines are set, we must be consistent in enforcing them.

What are some ways you can demonstrate these 8 A's to your children on a daily basis?

**Mark Merrill** is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [here](#).

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# 11 Things to Know About Keeping Your Brain Healthy

No matter what our age, we all want our brains to function their best. However, this is of particular importance as we age.

We all know people who are of an advanced age who are as sharp as a tack, and others who are that same age who don't think clearly or quickly. We wonder what we need to do to end up like the first person.

Recently, the Institute of Medicine, which is the health arm of the National Academy of Sciences, released a report that identifies what helps and hurts brain function as we age. The results were published in this month's AARP bulletin.

Let's start with the bad news first so as to end on a positive note.

## Things That Can Harm the Aging Brain

**1. Depression.** People who suffer from depression have an astounding double the risk for brain dysfunction, including dementia. One possible explanation is that depression causes changes in the brain's hippocampus.

**2. Difficulty seeing and hearing.** Being able to see and hear well are directly associated with healthy cognitive function, including memory. People who can't see or hear often avoid social interaction, which is a key factor in brain health.

Also, according to a Johns Hopkins study, adults with hearing problems appear to have a greater rate of brain shrinkage as they age.

**3. Medications.** Antihistamines, sleep aids, and antidepressants have been shown to increase the risk of dementia. So if you are depressed, which is also a risk factor, try to deal with it naturally, such as with adequate sleep, exercise, a healthy diet, and prayer.

**4. Stress.** Daily stress can cause memory problems, but stress that lasts for months and even years is associated with a faster decline of brain health. Many of us can't eliminate the stress in our lives, such as traffic jams and difficult relationships, but we can deal with stress effectively, in the same ways we deal with depression: adequate sleep, exercise, healthy diet, and prayer.

**5. Air pollution:** Long-term exposure to air pollution is linked with brain shrinkage, brain damage, and impaired brain function, according to one new study.

**6. High blood pressure and diabetes:** These are also risk factors for heart disease. Doctors have been linking brain health and heart health for years now. Exercising, eating right and maintaining a healthy weight can lower blood pressure and reverse diabetes.

### **Things That Help the Aging Brain**

**1. Exercise:** The best is exercise that causes you to breathe heavily for at least 30 minutes straight ... combined with weight lifting. People whose brains benefited the most from exercise were people over the age of 65.

**2. Intellectual stimulation:** When it comes to the brain, "use it or lose it." Having a natural curiosity and continuing to learn are excellent for brain function. Some of the best ways to help your mind stay fit are learning a new language,

reading, and writing.

**3. Social stimulation.** Connecting in a positive way with other people has been proven time and again to keep our minds young. Spending time with friends and loved ones, such as at church activities, volunteering, and playing games all help preserve brain function.

**4. Healthy diet.** Stay away from processed foods containing hydrogenated oils (trans fats) and sugar. Research shows a link between packaged food and brain shrinkage. On the other hand, scientists have discovered healthy fats are good for the brain. These include fish oils and other Omega-3 fats as well as the fats in nuts, avocado, coconut oil, and olive oil.

**5. Good sleep.** This means getting plenty of deep, restful sleep. Some people suffer from sleep apnea, a condition that usually affects people who are overweight. It is a condition whereby the throat closes during sleep and causes the person to stop breathing temporarily and wake up momentarily, then go back to sleep ... a cycle that repeats itself all night long. As a result of the constant waking-up, people with sleep apnea never enter into the deep, restorative sleep necessary to repair our brains. People with sleep apnea are at increased risk for memory problems and dementia. If you suspect you might have sleep apnea, see your doctor as there is a non-pharmaceutical treatment called a CPAP that works great.

*For the original article, visit .*

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## Prophecy: When the Gadites

# Rise the Goliaths Will Fall

“When the Gadites rise the Goliaths will fall.” I heard the Holy Spirit speak those words Tuesday night after I hung up from our Appeal to Heaven prayer call.

We’re praying out the prophecies over the nation and we were praying out a prophetic word Tim Sheets released, part of which read: “As Esther, they will rewrite them by My statutes. Governors of the culture will now come forth. Remnant warriors will now emerge who have the heart of David, the wisdom of Solomon and the tenacity of Paul.”

While I was praying through that part of the prophecy, the Holy Spirit started showing me the Gadites. I began to pray for the mighty warring Gadites to rise and take out the Goliaths. Again, when I hung up I heard the Holy Spirit say, “When the Gadites rise the Goliaths will fall.”

## Who Are the Gadites?

The Gadites came from the tribe of Gad. Gad was the seventh son of Jacob. His name means “troop.” The Bible describes the Gadites as “men able to bear shield and sword, to shoot with a bow, and who were skillful in battle, who went to war” (1 Chr. 5:18). When Jacob blessed his 12 sons before he died, he prophesied, “Gad shall be attacked by raiding bands, but he shall raid at their heels” (Gen. 49:19). In other words, it looked like Gad had lost the fight but he made a comeback. Isn’t that what it looks like in America even now?

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We find another mention of the Gadites in 1 Chronicles 12:7-9: “From the Gadites mighty men of valor, men of the war battalion, who could handle shield and sword, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were as swift as the gazelles

on the mountains, separated themselves for David in the stronghold in the wilderness" (MEV). Remember, it was the Gadites who stood on the side of righteousness with David amid Absalom's great rebellion. The Gadites are the ones who will stand strong amid the Great Falling Away we're seeing in the church even now.

*Matthew Henry's Commentary* describes the Gadites this way: "They were able-bodied men, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon, the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces. In this they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains, so that no man could escape from them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them. They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons ... They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties. What enemies those were that they met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, does not appear; but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury ..."

## **Goliath Must Fall**

The Gadites had faces like lions. I like that. It means the fierceness and boldness showed on their faces, intimidating their enemies. Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

How bold is a lion? They aren't called the king of the jungle for nothing. The Bible calls the lion "strongest among beasts" (see Prov. 30:29-30). Amos asked, "The lion has roared; who will not fear?" (Amos 3:8) You can hear a lion roar from miles and miles away. And Peter warns us to, "Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Of course, Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (see Rev. 5:5).



Goliath, on the other hand, was just an uncircumcised Philistine. Unlike the Gadites, Goliath was not in covenant with God. Goliath could not claim the promises of God. Goliath may look big—and he is—but he is no match for the Gadites. In your life and in this nation, Goliaths have risen up to war against us. But take heart. When the Gadites rise, the Goliaths will fall. Rise up now, bold as a lion, and decree and declare your victory over Goliath. Stand for truth amid the rebellion! It's time to roar! Decree and declare that the Goliaths attacking this nation will fall, in Jesus' name!

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## 3 Ways to Marry Work and Family to Achieve Goals

"It's just business, nothing personal." That is one of the worst quotes I've heard.

It is a basic excuse that says I took this action or didn't take this action because there is no personal relationship between us. No matter if we are making decisions for a Fortune

500 company or our families, each one of those involves relationships with people that make it personal.

Therefore, we should consider both in decision making. We should marry work and family to set and achieve goals. Zig Ziglar calls it “home field advantage.” The best way to achieve that home field advantage is not separating the two, but bringing them together.

Here are three ways to accomplish that:

### **Be Consistent**

Some of us have a work voice and home voice. We also have a home demeanor and a work demeanor. The way you handle yourself in front of your boss should be consistent with the way you handle yourself while with co-workers and peers—as well as how you handle yourself while with your wife and kids.

If you don't go off the handle at work when someone does something wrong, then don't do that at home. If you go the extra mile and do things that someone else was supposed to do, do the same at work. Every relationship, at work or at home, is personal because it involves people. You should treat them as such no matter where you are.

### **Consider the Impact**

What will happen if you take on this new project or accept this new role which requires more travel? What happens if you take a few minutes extra in the morning with your kids and you arrive just in time or a few minutes late to work? What happens when you don't follow your budget and now you need to request overtime?

What we do at home impacts work. What we do at work impacts home. You need to plan for both. Many men plan for their work, career, and maybe financial goals. But that is not complete without including family goals. If your goal is to travel “x”

times this year, will that require extra work hours, a promotion, or a side business? When setting goals, make sure to set personal, career and family goals.

## **Be and Give Your Very Best**

Have you ever worked with someone who was having relationship problems at home? Have you experienced a time in your marriage when work has been stressful for your wife? Those challenges bleed to other areas. But when things are going well with both, they feed off each other, and it's a wonderful thing. Be sure you are 100 percent in while at home, and 100 percent in while at work, but make sure your boss and family know and respect your other role. Introduce both worlds.

Sometimes our kids, maybe even our wives, don't really know what we do or what it takes. Invite them into that world and introduce the people who exist in that world with you. Talk about the work you do or how your work/company serves others. Talk about what you like as well as what is challenging for you.

Do the same for those you work with. Let them know you have a wife and kids, and share about them as appropriate. Put pictures on your desk. Talk about what you did with your wife and kids recently. Bring your family to family-friendly work events.

Work is not just business; it's personal. Home life is not just personal; it involves your work. Marry them in order to get the most out of both and use these three things to help you.

**Jackie Bledsoe** is an author, blogger and speaker, but first and foremost a husband and father of three, who helps men better lead and love the ones who matter most.

*For the original article, visit .*