

6 Ways to Help Get a Non-Christian Spouse to Pray With You

It sounds trite but seems true. The family that prays together stays together. But what do you do if your spouse is not a Christian?

Here's a recent scenario I experienced with a friend of mine:

We sat outside in the plaza of a coffee shop. He looked worn out, tired and frustrated. He sighed out in anguish, "I've retained an attorney. I have no other choice. We're just not getting along. She wants to live like she's still single. I want to have a marriage and a peaceful home. She wants to party. I want a wife that will pray with me and believe God for a great life. She's just not the person I thought she was."

Although I am not a marriage counselor and seldom take on the daunting task, I did offer my friend some advice. I suggested he stop trying to fix her and make or mold her into a religious woman and begin to be the husband he should be. I explained that the word, husband, means, "husbandry"; it means to "cultivate."

He needed to speak words as if they were seeds planted within her for an expected harvest in return. Rather than focus on what she is not, pay attention to what attracted you to her in the first place. Show gratitude for her and treat her as a beautiful bride, rather than an unclean person who doesn't know God.

He left that day with a small glimmer of hope. He called the attorney to put the divorce process on hold and began to do what I suggested. Within a year, not only was their marriage

saved, they were thriving with a new child and a peaceful and prosperous home. She began to attend church with him, and they began to pray together.

I later asked, "When was the breakthrough in your marriage?"

He said, "One day, she was facing a difficult situation at work. She was overwhelmed with stress from it. I gently took her hand and asked, 'Do you mind if I speak a blessing over your day at work?' Amazingly, she said, 'Please, I need it.' That was the beginning of it all."

Here are some steps to get a non-Christian spouse to pray with you:

1. Don't consider them unclean or inferior. This is one of the most crucial mistakes we make in relationships. This attitude reeks with judgmentalism. It repels our spouse as if our religion is a bad odor. The Apostle Paul said, "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband" (1 Cor. 7:14).

Your example of faith will have a cleansing effect on your unbelieving spouse. Paul also said, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25-26). In other words, speak kind and comforting words that build up, encourage and strengthen your spouse. Don't speak negative words and expect positive results.

2. Create and protect the atmosphere of your home. Don't allow strife to enter in. Where there is strife, there is every evil work. Don't underestimate the destructive power of strife. It's obvious that music creates an atmosphere. Television can have a huge impact on the home. Nothing can set the tone of the home like your words.

3. Attend a church that supports healthy, positive relationships. Attend a church that promotes the ideas of healthy marriages. One that provides safe and nurturing programs for children. Has the fruit of your pastor's teaching produced a healthy family in his home? Does the leadership in your church model a strong family life? If a leader cannot be faithful to his own marriage, what makes you think he will honor yours?

4. Keep your relations confidential. My friend confided in me regarding his marriage, but I quickly pointed the conversation to him and his issues, not hers. She wasn't there to be in the conversation so it would have been inappropriate to talk about her. Guys, no locker room talk. Don't talk about your sex life. Ladies, don't belittle or demean your husband to your girlfriends. Keep your marriage bed holy.

5. Show gratitude for your spouse. Your spouse connected with you. Your dreams and your ambitions are all part of the shared hope you have together. Don't stop dreaming together.

Speak kind and comforting words. I saw this example in Scripture, and it overwhelmed me with the character of God. During a vision in the night, a prophet named Zechariah was involved in a dialog with angels and the Lord. When the angels reported what they had found on the earth, Zechariah says the Lord turned and spoke, "kind and comforting words to the angel."

This example shows how gracious the character of God is toward the angels. I often remember this example when it comes to my response to my wife. I often reflect on my conversations asking, "Did I treat her with the respect that God treats his angels?"

6. Continue to court one another. A few years ago, I realized I had slipped into the daily grind of life and stopped pursuing my wife. I changed that by asking her out on a date.

I hired a babysitter. I made reservations at a restaurant and a hotel. We had a wonderful time. Interestingly, during that date our intimacy wasn't just physical, it became spiritual. I remember hearing a concern she had for our family and responded later at the hotel, "Honey, I know you're concerned about this, and I think we should take some time to pray about it." We did.

I wasn't raised in a religious home. My experience has come from reading the Bible and attempting to make myself a better man, an example of faith for my family to follow. My faith is not expressed in a long list of do's and don'ts, but in a deep and passionate desire to be the kind of man that inspires faith in others, especially to my wife.

Neil Kennedy, author of several books—including *FivestarMan: The Five Passions of Authentic Manhood*, *Centurion Principle*, *Mother's Guide to Raising a FivestarMan*, *God's Currency*, and *Speaking the Father's Blessing*—has authored articles for scholarly journals and multiple magazines, publishes *The Daily Champion* for men, and is founder of *FivestarMan*, an international movement of men.

For the original article, visit [.](#)

This Could Be the Hidden Reason You Overeat

Have you ever heard of "brain hijack"? By the end of this message, you will know what it means and why it's the real reason you overeat.

Why is this such an important issue, especially for

Christians?

1 Peter 5:8 warns us: “Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

The information you are about to learn shows you how certain types of foods interfere with your ability to be sober, watchful, and focused on the purpose to which God has called you.

Scientists once did an experiment on rats to determine the nature of drug addiction. They trained the rats to press a little bar and they would receive a small dose of cocaine.

At first, the rats would press the bar just a few times a day. Eventually though, the rats became so addicted that they would press the bar dozens of times a day, even forgoing food and water just so they could get their fix.

The scientists discovered that when the rats received the drug, it lit up the brain’s pleasure/reward center, the nucleus accumbens. When this area of the brain is stimulated, it naturally makes you feel good.

However in this case, the brain was lit up for a dark purpose—drug addiction. The term “brain hijack” describes this process.

If you are currently binging on food, then you too are suffering from “brain hijack.” It is most likely that your brain is sensitive to sugar. When you overeat, you are lighting up your brain’s reward center—but it’s ultimately for a dark purpose.

It didn’t start out that way. Just like the rats, all you wanted was to feel good. You made the connection that high-fat, high-sugar foods make you feel good.

But soon, your brain’s pleasure center was hijacked and, in

spite of logic and the Holy Spirit's warning, you found yourself unable to stop.

John 10:10 says, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." You know logically that overeating consistently causes you to gain excess weight, which will ultimately destroy your health. However, overeating is not logical; it is emotional.

That is why it is critical that you learn to secure your emotions with God's truth. The Bible says:

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (1 Cor. 6:12)."

In other words, you can eat anything but you shouldn't eat everything—especially if you know a particular food is not helpful to you.

So how can you take your brain back? You have to re-train your brain to seek other sources of pleasure besides food. God built the nucleus accumbens for a good purpose—it enables you to enjoy life but in ways that are good, not bad for you.

Here are four ways you can start to take your brain back:

1. Prayer. Your first line of defense is to ask the Lord in prayer for help. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus said that you should pray not to be led into temptation. So before you start your day, pray "Do not lead me into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one" (see Luke 11:4).

2. Remove temptation. Say this statement out loud: "The best way to win a fight is to avoid getting into one in the first place." It is a principle from the martial arts. The martial artist only fights when she has to; she doesn't go around picking fights to prove how big and bad she is.

In a similar way, you know which foods trigger your binges.

Stop picking fights with them. Get them out of your house, your desk or wherever you keep them. Stop leading yourself into temptation.

This is different from forbidding yourself to have certain foods. When you tell yourself you will never have a food again, all that does is activate the rebellious (sin) nature within all of us.

Instead, you tell yourself that you are making a wise, empowered choice to remove yourself from harm.

It is no different from a person deciding not to eat a food to which they are allergic! Does a person really have to fight with themselves not to eat a food that they know will make them itch, swell up or cause sickness? I don't think so.

Is it a food that you think you can't live without? Are you thinking you will die if you don't have it? That is a serious warning sign that this food has power over you. The enemy has likely set up a stronghold in your mind. You need the Holy Spirit's wisdom and power to get free from it. And you need to be diligent to take such thoughts captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Here's another tip. When you prepare your plate, look at the side of your fist. The human stomach is naturally that size. So fix your plate to be an appropriate size to satisfy your body's hunger only. If you overfill your plate, you will be tempted to eat it all—whether your body needs it or not. So avoid the fight by controlling your portions.

3. Build pleasure into your daily life. Here are some activities that also light up your nucleus accumbens, but in healthy ways. These are a NECESSARY part of your healing, so take time for them daily.

Take them as seriously as you would a prescription from your doctor:

- Good music (especially praise music)
- Laughter (funny movie or clean joke book)
- Massages or using a foot roller
- Warm baths or showers
- Body stretching
- Dancing
- Learning new and interesting things
- Sex (marrieds)

I suggest making a list of other things that have brought you healthy pleasure in the past. Then get creative as to how you can introduce them back into your life.

4. Praise. Play praise music that you love. When I do it, my brain starts feeling good worshipping the Lord. I'm lighting up my nucleus accumbens. By the time the song is over, the urge to eat is no longer there. I just took back my brain!

Depending on how long your brain has been hijacked, it may take time for you to take it back. But, this work is not optional. You want to obey the Biblical directive not to be brought under the power of those things that harm you.

Remember the wise words of Jesus: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:34)."

May God bless you as you seek to do His will in every area!

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.*

For the original article, visit .

Angelic Hosts Are Stirring in the Waters of America

I saw the Lord's heart for the United States of America to be raised up as a flag of testimony to other nations. As much as it is steeped in such darkness and has moved away from its first love, Jesus, it **can be turned back**, in Jesus name.

The Lord is wanting to bring about a great **turning** in the United States and set her high on a hill to shine to all the other nations of the world, releasing a **Song of Victory** across the entire earth that a nation **can** be turned around by the power of prayer and His people moving together in one accord in intercession.

As the people of God prayed and cried out to the Lord, I saw angelic hosts in the core of the United States of America and they were stirring the waters. They were stirring the waters to bring healing and restoration into the nation. As the people of God cried out and prophesied His words, living in the divine echo of what He was saying, these waters were then being released into many parts of the USA. The Lord wants to heal the land of the United States, bringing life again into places that have dried up and died.

I then heard the Lord say, "Do you believe these dry bones can live?"

"He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.'"

So. I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no death in them. Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army (Ezek. 37:3-10).

The Lord wants us to align with Him, with what He is saying—to declare and **believe** that the dry bones of the United States of America CAN live.

The four winds of God are coming to breathe upon the United States of America. Strong winds will be seen in the natural as a prophetic sign of the four winds of heaven coming into the USA to **break** the hold of the spirit of death over the nation and bring it to **life again**.

People of God, it is **important** in this time of prayer and fasting to be declaring the things the Lord shows you over the United States of America. The destiny of the United States hangs in the balance. He is asking His people, "**Prophecy to these dry bones**." Put your ears to His chest and listen to what He is saying and **speak it out**. Be the echo of heaven over this beautiful nation.

I then saw many of the people of God so discouraged and despaired over the government of the United States of America.

I saw Jesus come to each one, one by one and He took them in His arms and He spoke with such love and kindness and He said:

"It is not over yet. Not all is lost. Continue to declare My goodness, My kindness and love into the White House. Continue

to declare encounters with My love and goodness into the Whitehouse.”

I then saw Daniels arising all over the world being raised up for such a time as this to move into governmental arenas in the United States of America bringing His hope, His love and His goodness into it. I saw as these Daniels were rising up and moving into governmental areas and there was a wave of His love moving into the Whitehouse.

Encounters with Jesus are coming into the White House as the people of God pray. It is not over yet. Not all is lost. Continue to declare His goodness, kindness and love into the White House. For the Lord desires the White House to be a place that is governed from purity and righteousness. He has not given up on the White House and He does not want His people to give up on it too. A shaking is coming to the White House and as the people of God pray, the shaking may tip into God’s desire and destiny for the United States.

People of God, you have been prepared for such a time as this. Your hands have been trained for war and fingers for battle. He is calling His people together in unison to declare and sing a song of victory over the USA. Sing a song of victory even before you see it. The army of God is moving forward. This is a significant time in the United States history. United States of America, it’s time to **come to life!**

Lana Vawser has a heart to encourage the body of Christ and individuals in their walks with Jesus; deeper intimacy with Him; and learning to hear His voice. She operates in the prophetic and loves to share the heart of God with others. Lana has written her first book, titled *Desperately Deep—Developing Deep Devotion and Dialogue with Jesus*, and loves to see others grow in all that God has for them.

What Exactly Is Robbing You of a Good Night's Sleep?

One time I developed a shoulder injury while lifting weights. During the day, the pain was annoying, but I could ignore it. At night, the pain became major because every time I tried to sleep, I eventually rolled over on that shoulder and woke up. That went on for months, and I became an unwilling insomniac until the shoulder healed. I felt like a walking zombie!

Many of you know exactly how I felt. Everybody wants to sleep well, but many of us can't for reasons that range from troubling life situations to physical problems to poor eating habits. You may even have a serious sleeping disorder. Suffice it to say that if you have difficulty sleeping, you are not alone.

Here are some of the common deterrents to a good night's sleep:

Stress and anxiety. By far the biggest cause of insomnia is stress. People lie awake trying to work out their life's problems, mourning the past and worrying about the future.

Painful physical conditions. Arthritis, chronic back pain, tension headaches, degenerative disk disease, bursitis, tendonitis and virtually any other painful condition can rob an otherwise healthy person of sleep.

Caffeine. Many people doom their sleep by consuming caffeine in coffee, soft drinks, chocolate and over-the-counter headache medicines like Excedrin. Caffeine increases the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol. Also, caffeine can remain in the body for up to twenty hours. More than 80

percent of all Americans consume caffeine regularly, and the average American drinks about three cups of coffee a day.

For some people, that's a recipe for sleepless nights.

Cigarettes and alcohol. Nicotine and alcohol can interfere with sleep. Some people think alcohol helps you to fall asleep, but in fact alcohol can disrupt the stages of sleep, causing you to sleep lighter and to awaken feeling less refreshed. Nicotine from cigarette smoking is a stimulant that causes adrenaline to be released, which often causes insomnia.

Medications. Decongestants, appetite suppressants, asthma medications (such as theophylline), prednisone, thyroid medications, hormone replacement, some pain relievers, some blood pressure medications and certain antidepressants may all cause insomnia.

Food insomnia. Many people eat too much sugar and highly processed foods before bed, keeping their nightly date with a bowl of ice cream, piece of cake or bag of popcorn. These carbohydrates stimulate excessive insulin release from the pancreas. The result is a "sugar high" of energy. But later, usually in the middle of the night, your blood sugar hits a "low," which triggers the adrenal glands to produce more adrenaline and cortisol. Suddenly you are awake and feel hungry again.

Low-carb diets. These diets can also create a low-blood sugar reaction, causing you to awaken in the middle of the night. Even if you fill up your stomach with healthy foods at bedtime, it may affect the quality of your sleep. When you eat too much protein or eat too late, you generally will need more sleep. This is especially true when you eat too much meat. That's the reason why animals, like lions and tigers, usually require up to twenty hours a day of sleep—their bodies are having to digest and assimilate all the protein in their bellies.

Exercise. People who exercise within three hours of going to sleep raise their levels of stress hormones, which may interfere with sleep.

A bad mattress or pillow. Is there anything more frustrating than a mattress that is too saggy or too hard, or an overstuffed pillow?

A snoring spouse. My neighbor came to me one day and said, "Please give my husband something to stop his snoring! I can't even sleep in the same bed anymore. He snores so loud that our kids in the other bedrooms wake up scared in the middle of the night." Many people feel that desperate. A snoring spouse wrecks many people's sleep. I'll share my remedies for snoring in a later section.

Newborn babies. As welcome as they are, babies can ruin sleep patterns. Breast-feeding mothers know how an active nighttime routine can make their brains and bodies feel like jelly.

Hot flashes or menstrual cramps. Women over 50 often know the aggravation of being kept awake by hot flashes or night sweats. Other women have such severe cramping that they become insomniacs every month when their period arrives.

Enlarged prostate. Some men over 50 find themselves on a there-and-back-again loop to the bathroom when they should be fast asleep.

Environment. Noisy neighbors and their dogs, the room too hot or too cold, bright lights shining through your bedroom window or trucks, planes, trains or motorcycles passing by can all disrupt sleep patterns.

Each of these sleep thieves is responsible for countless hours of lost sleep, lost productivity, lost creativity and lost mental health.

Let's take a closer look at some of these sleep thieves—in

particular, those having to do with what we choose to ingest as food or drink. As you will see, our consumption habits can greatly impact the quality of our sleep.

Caffeine

I am not against drinking one or even two cups of organic coffee in the morning because of the numerous health benefits of coffee. However, caffeine increases alertness and stimulates the central nervous system. And, unfortunately, many Americans are drinking coffee or some other caffeinated beverage in the late afternoon or evening, and that is affecting their sleep. It takes about six hours to metabolize half the caffeine in a small cup of coffee.

So if you drink your coffee in the late afternoon or evening, the caffeine will probably stimulate your nervous system and keep you alert during the night, thus prohibiting you from entering the deeper stages of sleep. The more deep sleep you attain the more refreshed you usually awaken. If you are suffering from insomnia, limit your coffee intake to one to two cups a day in 8-ounce cups, not 16-ounce cups, or approximately 150–300 mg of caffeine a day.

If you have any liver impairment caused by medications such as statin drugs or history of a fatty liver, cut that amount of caffeine in half. If you still have problems with insomnia, keep cutting back your caffeine intake until you have either weaned off coffee or you are sleeping well. Beware that over-the-counter medications can be packed with caffeine as well. For example, one Excedrin contains 65 mg of caffeine. Cold medications also commonly contain caffeine. So watch your intake of those products before bedtime.

Chocolate can also keep you up at night due to its caffeine component. Chocolate ice cream, chocolate cake, chocolate candy bars, chocolate milk—all of these contain caffeine and theobromine, which are both stimulants. Chocolate also

contains tyramine and phenylethylamine, both of which increase alertness and can contribute to insomnia.

Sugar and Carbs

Caffeine is not the only dietary enemy of sleep. Sugar can be just as bad for your ability to rest. A poor diet of too many simple sugars and processed carbohydrates can also lead to insomnia. We in America eat far too much sugar, and when we eat sugar before going to bed, sleeplessness can be the result.

Americans are now consuming more fat-free foods, which usually means they are over-consuming highly processed carbohydrates and sugars. Foods high in processed carbohydrates and sugars stimulate insulin release from the pancreas. Insulin in turn triggers the body to store more fat. Insulin may also cause low blood sugar. Low blood sugar then triggers the adrenals to produce more adrenaline and cortisol, which may cause you to be awakened in the middle of the night.

Eating sugar and processed carbohydrates before bedtime often leads to low blood sugar in the middle of the night. This can also happen if you go to bed hungry. You can prevent this dip in blood sugar that wakes you out of sleep by eating a light, well-balanced, high-fiber snack at bedtime. Eating a light evening snack that is correctly balanced with proteins, carbohydrates, fiber and fats will stabilize blood sugar levels and improve sleep.

You may use whey protein, rice protein or a vegetarian protein other than soy (such as Life's Basics). These are protein powders that may be mixed with water, coconut milk, skim milk or plain low-fat kefir. Or you may get plain protein powder such as whey, vegetarian (such as Life's Basics) or rice and make a smoothie with frozen fruit and ice mixed with water, coconut milk, skim milk or plain low-fat kefir.

Late-Night Eating and Drinking

When it comes to what keeps you up at night, it's not just what you consume but also when you consume it. Eating a large meal close to bedtime can cause insomnia. Our digestive tract is not designed to digest in a prone or supine (lying) position and works best when we are up and moving around. Our stomach and pancreas are also not designed to be undergoing major digestion of food while we are sleeping. This is another reason we see so much heartburn, indigestion and acid reflux in America, which also contribute to our insomnia. Foods containing both tyrosine and tyramine cause insomnia because they are converted in the body to norepinephrine, which is an excitatory neurotransmitter that stimulates us and may keep us awake. Foods high in tyrosine include milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, soy, peanuts, bananas, turkey and lima beans. Foods that are high in tyramine include red wine; yogurt; sour cream; aged cheeses; pickled meats; many fish; fermented foods such as soy sauce, sauerkraut and pickles; figs; raisins; dates; fresh baked breads and processed meats such as bologna and salami.

Also, consuming too many fatty foods close to bedtime will delay digestion and can cause insomnia. Fats take much longer to digest compared with carbohydrates or proteins.

Let's not forget one more culprit: alcohol. Many individuals drink one or two glasses of wine at night since it helps them unwind and fall asleep. Yes, as I mentioned previously, alcohol does help you fall asleep; however, you are more likely to awaken later in the night. Alcohol intake reduces the time spent in stages three and four and REM sleep, which are the most restorative stages of sleep.

What's more, alcohol can worsen snoring. So alcohol is actually a double-edged sword when it comes to sleep. Also, a major problem with many of my patients is overconsumption of fluids in the evening. As a result, they are up two to three times a night urinating. After 7:00 p.m. simply cut back on your fluid intake.

Dr. Colbert Approved Bedtime Snacks

- A piece of fruit, like a small apple, grapefruit, 4 ounces of berries or kiwi with a small handful of nuts (walnuts, almonds or pecans)
- One serving of low-fat, whole-grain crackers or one piece of whole-grain bread with about a teaspoon of organic peanut butter or two ounces of turkey
- One-half cup organic skim milk or low-fat cottage cheese or low-fat, no-sugar yogurt (if not sensitive to dairy) with fruit added
- A small bowl of whole-grain cereal (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) with organic skim milk

The Case of the Snoring Spouse

Does your partner happily saw logs all night while you watch the ceiling? If your spouse snores, it could be sign of sleep apnea (which we will discuss in a later chapter on sleep disorders). But know that even though all patients with sleep apnea snore, all snorers do not have sleep apnea.

Have your partner undergo a medical evaluation if he or she seems to stop breathing for short periods of time. Snoring that is not related to sleep apnea does not pose any health risks and does not cause daytime drowsiness for

7 Ways to Bless Your Wife on Mother's Day, and Always

For those of us who are married, loving our wives is one of the most important things we can do for our children, which is listed as the number one point on our classic "10 Ways to Be

an All Pro Dad” list.

It’s foundational when it comes to your relationship with your kids and makes this time of year and Mother’s Day even more important. Our kids are watching us and how we interact with their mothers. They remember when daddy brings mommy flowers or when daddy kisses mommy when he greets her or leaves for the day.

For most of you, Mother’s Day and your marriage go hand-in-hand. Don’t limit your appreciation of her to what she does with and for your kids, but also show your thankfulness for her as your wife. Make it a regular thing, not just during the holiday.

Here are seven ways to bless your wife this Mother’s Day and throughout the year.

1. Surprise her. My wife absolutely loves surprises. Perhaps your wife does too. I’ve learned surprises don’t have to be big, budget-busting or elaborate. Just do something for her when she isn’t expecting it.

2. Be thoughtful. “It’s the thought that counts.” That is sometimes used as a disclaimer for a “bad” gift, but it’s true when you carefully think ahead to do or give something that has a significant meaning for your wife.

3. Involve the kids. While I can’t take credit, my kids love doing things for my wife on Mother’s Day and any day. Your kids probably do too, and your wife will love it even more when they’re involved.

4. Tease her. Extending Mother’s Day beyond the actual day or giving a preview is a great way to get her excited and anticipating the day. Strategically do or give her something days in advance leading up to Mother’s Day, maybe a special note each day from you and each of your kids.

5. Give her a break. Have you tried playing the role of mom or doing the things that a mom normally does? Talk about extending your comfort zone and hard work. Sometimes the best gift is no gift at all, just time to relax.

6. Tell her. How often do you express how much your wife means to you as the mother of your kids and as your lover. Tell her verbally, tell her with a love letter or act it out. It doesn't matter how, just be sure to tell her.

7. Tell everyone. Bragging isn't great when it's on yourself, but bragging on your wife and her motherhood skills is awesome. Let the world know you married a great woman who is also a great mom. Use social media, rent an ad, whatever. Just be sure to encourage her and let other's know how much she means to you and your kids.

What do you think your kids' mom will enjoy most this Mother's Day?

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 [here](#).

WATCH: Make Up Your MIND With This Diet Change

If you want to keep your brain healthy as you get older and possibly cut your risk of Alzheimer's or dementia, try improving your diet.

Researchers at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago

developed a diet that has been associated with a lower risk of those diseases.

The MIND diet includes green leafy vegetables and other vegetables, berries, nuts, whole grains, poultry, fish, and more.

The researchers also say you should avoid red meat, butter, stick margarine, and cheese—because of its high level of saturated fat—as well as pastries and sweets and fried or fast food.

For the original article, visit .

9 Easy Ideas for a Mother's Day Plan

My wife is the planner in the family. I am spontaneous.

Before I met her, I took a trip to Las Vegas and had an extra day alone. I took the opportunity to cross something off of my bucket list: Drive through the desert in a convertible. Without any planning or even directions, I drove to Los Angeles. Other than that, I had no plan. When I arrived in Los Angeles I found myself in the gang territory of East L.A. After I got directions, I took a quick drive around and headed back to Las Vegas.

Before my wife takes a trip, she plans out every detail. She researches the best places to eat and visit.

This has led to some tension in our marriage, particularly when vacationing. When we took a trip together to Los Angeles,

I couldn't believe all I had missed. There is some beauty in being spontaneous. But trust me, guys, when it comes to special days like Mother's Day, it is better to have a plan.

Here are 9 easy ideas for a Mother's Day plan:

1. Decoration surprise. There is nothing like coming down the stairs on Christmas morning and seeing all of the presents under the tree. After she falls asleep the night before Mother's Day, get up and deck the place out.

2. Handmade and/or handwritten cards. Whether you're just learning to write or a published author, nothing is more touching for Mom than to receive a handwritten note. Expressing your love and appreciation for Mom on paper takes time and expresses thoughtful devotion. It doesn't have to be long or fancy, just something from the heart. Here are printable card options.

3. Let her sleep in. Being a mom is exhausting. Give her the gift of sleeping in. If you have young kids, then get up with them and handle all of the morning duties. Maybe even take them out for the morning so the house is quiet.

4. Kid video interviews. Have your kids sit down and answer questions about their mom. It can be as simple as recording it on your phone and showing her. It can also be more elaborate by editing it on your computer. This will be a documented gem that she can watch for years to come. Here's a great example.

5. Flowers. A classic Mother's Day gift. A variation of this could be getting her a plant. They last, but careful, they take maintenance. Be sure she enjoys taking care of plants or you will have given her just another thing to do.

6. Breakfast in bed. Another classic Mother's Day treat. Take it up a level by making something from her favorite cookbooks. Incorporate the kids if they are able to help.

7. Make dinner or take her out. This is similar to breakfast in bed—nothing says love like food. Make her favorite meal or take her to her favorite restaurant. Enter the contest on Monday for a chance win and it could be on us.

8. A lazy stroll. Take some time and ask Mom to go on a walk with you. Walks provide the perfect opportunity to spend time together and talk about life. This gesture will warm her heart and show her how much you enjoy time together and her involvement in your life. The subtle conversations about friends, school or dreams show her you're willing to go the extra mile to make her feel special.

9. Little favors. Doing little favors, either for her or around the house, make Mom feel special. Anything from bringing her a cup of tea to unloading the dishwasher without being asked could be the perfect ideas for spoiling Mom. These small blessings let her relax and enjoy some down time. When Mom sees her children want that for her, she'll feel especially loved.

Sound Off

What is the best gift you have ever given for Mother's Day?

BJ Foster is the Content Manager for All Pro Dad and a married father of two. For the original article, visit [here](#).

Sleep Thieves Hide in Unsuspecting Places

Making sure your body benefits from all the stages of sleep can be a challenge, with so many Americans getting so little

sleep each night, but you do not have to be one of the statistics. I recommend keeping a sleep diary because it will enable you to make some key observations in order to determine your true sleep problem.

Complete your sleep diary each morning upon waking. If you are taking sleep aids, please refrain from taking them while you are keeping this sleep diary so that you can know the pure details of your sleep issue. Please be sure to include the following information in your diary:

- The time you went to bed and the time you woke up
- How long it took you to fall asleep
- The times you woke up during the night and how long it took you to fall back asleep
- How much caffeine you consumed during the day and the time that you consumed it
- Anything you ate as a meal or snack in the evening and the time you ate it
- Any naps you took
- Any medications you took
- Rating of the quality of your sleep in terms of restful with no awakenings, to few awakenings, frequent awakenings, awakened but fell back to sleep, and finally, awakened and stayed awake
- Your level of mental alertness when you woke up in the morning (Were you groggy or refreshed?)
- Any physical, emotional, or environmental factors that disturbed your sleep (a snoring spouse, a hot room, television noise, traffic noise, a storm, attending to the needs of a child, stress, recurrent preoccupations, worrisome thoughts, heartburn, coughing, illness, and so on)

It is best to keep a sleep diary for two to four weeks continuously; date each day. When you awaken in the morning (not in the middle of the night), simply write down your observations before you get out of bed.

By now you've discovered that many of your daily choices can impact your ability to walk in the wonderful blessing of refreshing, rejuvenating sleep. Enjoying rest is a powerful gift from God. Therefore, always look to Him for blessed rest, for He promises to give you sleep. The Bible says, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2).

Sleep thieves hide in unsuspecting places—in food, in artificial light, in medication, in exercise, in your bedroom environment, and even sometimes in your sleep partner. Do all you can to eradicate sleep thieves from your nightly routine.

Good sleep hygiene is real. Try to incorporate all 25 habits into your lifestyle of rest.

A sleep diary can help you notice patterns and problems. Use it to track your nightly rest.

This article was excerpted from The Ultimate Sleep Guide: 21 Days to the Best Night of Your Life (Siloam, Charisma House, 2015), by Don Colbert, M.D. The book can be purchased [here](#).

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 best-selling 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.*

Queen of May? The Spirit of Jezebel is Hiding Behind These Altars

Every year between Lent and Resurrection Day, Jezebel's witchcrafts wreak havoc on believers and unbelievers alike. After Resurrection Day, the spiritual climate clears up—until May.

If you live in a region where false Mary worship is rising, you'll notice that Jezebel's witchcrafts rise again in May. That's because of the traditional "May Crowning" ritual that takes place to honor the Virgin Mary as "the Queen of May."

Essentially, this means there is a hyper focus on devotions to Mary. There are two problems with this. First, Mary doesn't want or expect our devotion—she wants and expects us to worship the Son of God, Jesus. Second, by treating Mary as an idol we're empowering the spirit of Jezebel.

Mary Should Not be Worshipped

Although the Bible describes the mother of Jesus as "highly favored" (see Luke 1:28), that doesn't mean she is supposed to be worshipped. In fact, the Greek word for favored in this verse is "charitoo." Charitoo means grace.

God honored Mary with the blessings and grace and we should respect her as the mother of Jesus but not exalt by crowning her in rituals. We're supposed to throw our crowns at Jesus' feet (see Rev. 4:10), not place them on Mary's head.

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

This month, you'll read articles pointing out [5 Reasons to Honor Mary This May](#) that explain the long-standing tradition

to honor the “Blessed Virgin Mary.” These articles tell of a “May Altar” that “is erected with a statue or picture of Mary, flowers, and perhaps candles. The altar stands from May 1-31 as a reminder of Mary’s importance in the life of the Church and in our own lives as well.”

It wasn’t the disciples or apostles—not even John whom Jesus told to care for his mother after His death on the cross (see John 19:27)—who started building altars to Mary. Actually, no one can trace its exact origin. Some say it started with the Greeks, who dedicated May to the goddess of fecundity known as Artemis. The Romans honored Flora, the goddess of blossoms, in May. Apparently, the notion to honor Mary along with these false gods became popular in the Middle Ages.

Catholics are quick to tell you they don’t worship Mary or pray to Mary. But when we build an altar to Mary and adorn it with flowers and candles, are we not exalting Mary to a place that does not belong to her? Are we not worshipping the created instead of the Creator? (see Rom. 1:25)

Who is the Queen of Heaven?

It’s curious to me that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is so often called the Queen of Heaven. It’s curious to me because the Bible speaks about the Queen of Heaven as it relates to idols. Specifically, the Queen of Heaven in the Bible refers to a goddess that goes by many names, including Isis, Innana, Astarte, Hera and Asherah. As I explain in my book, *The Spiritual Warrior’s Guide to Defeating Jezebel*, the wicked Queen Jezebel worshipped Asherah.

Jeremiah 7:17-19 warns against making altars to the Queen of Heaven: “Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. Do

they provoke Me to anger? says the Lord. Do they not provoke themselves to the shame of their own faces?"

The Bible talks about **Jezebel** and her **witchcrafts** (2 Kings 9:22). The spirit of Jezebel is the same as Asherah (also known as Ashtoreth). The Old Testament Jezebel's father, Ethbal, was the high priest of the goddess Ashtoreth, the queen of heaven. Can you connect the dots? Mary is not the queen of May, but Jesus is the king of Kings. If we're going to build an altar to anyone, it should be to our Lord and Savior, not His earthly mother.

I'll leave you with this: Witchcraft can cause you to grow weary in well-doing and even faint if you don't know what you are dealing with—and how to battle it. So, how do you battle it? You battle witchcraft like you battle every other **principality**, power, ruler of the darkness of this age, or spiritual host of wickedness (Eph. 6:12). [Click here](#) to read more about discerning spiritual climates and battling Jezebel's witchcrafts.

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.

How to Talk Through Tough Topics With Your Spouse

I'm a wordsmith. I hang on every word that is said. I'm a literal listener.

My wife, Susan, is not. She's a big picture person. She's intuitive and reads emotions. Because of our differing styles of communication and information processing, whenever Susan and I have a tough topic we need to address, we use what's been called the speaker-listener technique.

I'm not aware of its origin. Many family experts have used this technique over the years. Relationship expert and friend Dr. Gary Smalley also calls it "drive-thru communication" because you communicate kind of like you do when you're in a drive-thru. You give your order and the cashier repeats it back to you, "So that's two burgers, a fry and a coke." Then you either say, "That's right" or, if they don't hear it correctly, you repeat the order.

Susan and I have been married 26 years and still benefit greatly from using this speaker-listener technique, especially when we have a serious, sensitive, emotionally charged or tough topic to talk about. As I mentioned in *A Behind-the-Scenes Look at My Marriage*, Susan and I interrupt each other quite often. We don't always listen to each other well.

Instead of really hearing one another, we're just thinking about what we want to say next. So this tool helps us to slow the conversation down, forces us to really listen and understand what the other is thinking and feeling.

How it Works

Here's how the speaker-listener technique works:

1. Speaker has the floor. This ensures that only one person speaks at a time. Use any object such as a pencil or even the TV remote (but make sure the TV is off!) to designate who the current speaker is, that is, who has the floor.

2. Speaker speaks briefly. The speaker makes a statement or point. It's important to make it short so that the listener will really listen to what you're saying. Three or four sentences at a time is a good rule of thumb. The temptation, especially for those just starting to use this tool, is to give a long monologue or lecture out of fear that this will be your only opportunity to speak. But if you follow these rules, you'll have plenty of opportunity to speak. Also, when speaking, it's good to use "I" statements and talk how about you feel rather than accusing or focusing on the other person's actions. Here's a template that you can use: "In situation X, when you do Y, I feel Z."

3. Listener paraphrases. After the speaker makes their first point, the listener repeats it back or paraphrases what they heard so that the speaker knows the listener clearly understood. At this point, the listener should not refute what the speaker is saying or offer their opinion. If the speaker says something inflammatory or disagreeable, you must wait until you get the floor to state your response. And sighs, groans or other noises, or derogatory facial expressions are not allowed. If you disagree, you can state your case when you have the floor. It's also very important to be an active listener. That means that the listener is giving the speaker their full attention and looking them in the eyes, not reading your text messages or watching the TV.

4. Speaker affirms or corrects the paraphrase. After the listener paraphrases, the speaker affirms that they paraphrased correctly or politely corrects the listener's paraphrase.

5. Speaker and listener repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 above. The

speaker may keep the floor and repeat these steps several times until they have felt heard on their initial point.

6. Speaker and listener switch roles. When the speaker feels like they have been heard and understood on the points they are trying to make, the speaker and listener switch roles. The speaker should not fear giving up the floor. During the course of the conversation, the floor should change a number of times and both the husband and wife should have an opportunity to say everything they want.

Let me give you a very brief illustration. The spouse who has the floor says, "Honey, when you come home from work and immediately sit in front of the TV, it makes me feel like the TV is more important to you than I am." Then the other person repeats it back, "OK. So it bothers you when I come home and go right for the TV. It makes you feel unimportant." And the spouse who is the speaker says, "Exactly."

Remember, the focus initially should not be on conflict or topic resolution, it should be on good communication and hearing and understanding one another. After each person has felt completely heard and understood, a couple can then discuss a resolution using the same speaker-listener technique.

You can also read my blog on putting conflict to . for how to come to an agreeable resolution of an issue.

Have you ever tried the speaker-listener technique? How has it worked for you?

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .