

Mother Learns to 'Lay Her Isaac Down' in Wake of Tragedy

Carol Kent says God taught her how to surrender to Him after her son committed murder in broad daylight

Her son was a respected soldier with a promising military career, but Carol Kent doesn't want to give anybody the impression that he is a hero. That is far from the truth—he shot and killed a man in broad daylight. Instead, she wants to share with others the painful journey of faith God has helped her walk for the last half-decade.

Her journey began on Oct. 24, 1999. The telephone rang at 12:35 a.m. Her husband answered, listened, then informed her that their son, Jason, had been arrested for the murder of his wife's ex-husband. Kent said she collapsed to the floor in shock.

Her son—a 25-year-old who loved Christ, was a model student and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy—had become so obsessed with the alleged abuse of his two stepdaughters that he shot their biological father in plain view of passers-by.

An author and speaker, Kent prayed and interceded for 2-1/2 years before her only child's trial. When the trial finally took place, she walked around the courthouse seven times in a Jericho-style prayer walk, petitioning God for His will. But her prayers did not yield the results for which she had hoped. The jury delivered their decision and Jason accepted his sentence: life in prison, without the possibility of parole—ever.

“Jason received the punishment with a demeanor of quietness,” she said. “As if he had prayed much. He didn’t break down. He didn’t show anger. He was just at peace, much more at peace than any of the rest of us. Then they put the cuffs on him and the waist chain, and they sent him out.”

As her son serves his penalty, Kent, too, lives out a life sentence of hope deferred. But she says with the loss of former expectations comes the possibility of new dreams forged by fire, heartache and suffering that are made of strong metals.

She tells her story in her book *When I Lay My Isaac Down* (NavPress). She says through the darkness, she found a path to redemption in the story of Abraham and Isaac.

God tested Abraham, commanding him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. Abraham rose early the following morning and headed toward the altar. His son asked, “Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God will provide for Himself the lamb, my son.” And the two of them walked on together (see Gen. 22:1-8).

Kent knows that her son is not a picture of Isaac, who had done nothing wrong. “I don’t excuse what he did,” she said. “His actions would not have been God’s plan for his life. But Jason is my personal ‘Isaac.’”

She says God enabled her to lay down her claim to her son with complete trust and submission, even while her mother’s heart recoiled at letting go. “I realized that what I sacrificed on the altar were my own desires, prideful ambition for my son, family holidays and an idyllic future.”

The first time Kent saw her son after his arrest, it was through the filter of a thick Plexiglas barrier. Ten inmates had assaulted him at the jail. "He was beaten and bruised, his two front teeth were jagged pieces. He was broken, hurt and sad. And so was I," Kent said. "There was nothing I could do about the circumstances that brought Jason to that place. There was no way to bring [his victim] back to life. There was no way to fix things and make life as it was before."

The Kents spent Easter with Jason following his trial. They sat together, as a family, in the prison courtyard and determined they would not waste their sorrow. They would allow God to use their tragedy as a platform upon which to proclaim His goodness to a world in need. A part of that proclamation is the Kents' prison ministry called Speak Up for Hope, , a nonprofit organization through which the couple helps churches and ministries reach out to prisoners and their families.

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