

*Lessons*  
I Learned From My  
*Mother*

Jon Redmond

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## *Dedication*

This booklet is dedicated to my mother, Dottie Redmond. It seems like every time I talk about her in public I start crying, so I thought it might be best to put my thoughts and feelings on paper.

Our family is from Georgia, but I only lived there for the first few months of my life. I have spent the rest of my life in Tennessee and Texas. When my brother, Joel, and I were young, our parents used to take us back to Georgia to see our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins a couple of times a year. And every now and then we would go back for a full-blown family reunion. I can remember times at those reunions when my maternal grandparents would introduce me to a distant relative. They would always say, "This is Jon. He's Dottie's son." When they said, "This is Jon," there was no big reaction, but when they said, "He's Dottie's son," I got a lot of attention! The mention of her name brightened up everybody's face. They all loved my mom. I cannot fully express what an honor it was and is for me to be referred to as "Dottie's son." That title brightens up my face, too!

I love you, Mom...more than words can say.  
Thanks for everything!

## *Introduction*

The relationship we have with our parents is, hopefully, a special thing. When we are young, the relationship is one way, but as we get older the nature of the relationship changes.

I have been blessed to have had a wonderful relationship with both of my parents as a child and as an adult. When my brother and I were young, my parents did everything they could to give us a happy home life. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had a lot of fun. They had a way of making "little things" seem like "big things." We spent my childhood years in Lenoir City, Tennessee, near the beautiful Smoky Mountains. We were probably the only "preacher's family" in town who prayed for snow on Super Bowl Sunday so church would get cancelled and we could stay home and watch the game. On more than one occasion, those prayers were answered!

My teenage years were spent in Sulphur Springs, Texas. It was a wonderful place to grow up. Our lives there revolved around the church, the school, and the ball field. Church never got snowed out on Super Bowl Sunday in east Texas. It was probably a good thing, though, because by that point in the journey my parents were teaching us that going to church is

more important than watching a football game. Looking back, I'm thankful for the first half of every Super Bowl that I ever missed. I'm also thankful that we got home each year for the second half!

When I went to Baylor University in the fall of 1988, I honestly thought that I would never again live in the same town as my parents. I assumed I would be pastoring a church in some other location after I completed college and seminary. But God had other plans. When I graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995, I came to Pasadena to help my dad at First Baptist for three months. By the grace of God, those three months have turned into twenty-five years, and during these years, God has given us another season of living in the same town together that we never thought we would have.

Had I never come to Pasadena, I would still have been close to my parents. But working at the same church with my dad for a quarter of a century has created an even stronger family bond than we could otherwise have possibly had. And during these years, the nature of our relationship has changed. They're still my parents, and as such, I respect them. But they're also my friends. It's a special thing when a friendship like that develops.

Since so much of what my dad and I do is public, his influence on my life is pretty obvious. But my mom has had an equally strong influence on me, so I thought it would be a good idea to share some lessons I have learned from her along life's way.

I have always liked Proverbs 31. That's the chapter in the Bible that talks about a virtuous woman, a wonderful wife, and a marvelous mother. At the end of the chapter, the Bible says, "*Her children rise up and call her blessed*" (v. 28). That's what I hope to do in the pages that follow.

Please allow me to share with you some of the greatest life lessons my mom has ever taught me. She didn't teach them to me in a lecture or a sermon, she taught them to me as I have watched her live her life and as I have listened to her wisdom for the last fifty years. Not surprisingly, these are the same lessons that she continues to instill in my niece, Charli Jo, and my nephew, Joel, Jr. The times may have changed, but the lessons remain the same. My prayer is that what I have learned from my mom through the years will turn out to be a blessing to you as well. I could have written a lot more, by the way, but these booklets can only be forty-eight pages long!

## *Lessons I Learned From My Mother*

### **1. Find out what God wants you to do in life and do it with all of your might.**

When my mom was twelve years old, she surrendered her life to be a missionary. She was at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina when she made that commitment. She later told me that at that young age she felt the call of God on her life. She knew He wanted her to serve Him in some way, and as a little girl the only way she thought she could do that was as a missionary. In hindsight, it is clear that God was calling her to be a pastor's wife. The call was clarified later on, but the call to a life of ministry came to her at a young age.

God's call is often like that. We don't always, if ever, know the specifics and the extent of what God is calling us to do at the time He calls us to make a decision or take a step of obedience. When God called Abraham and told him to leave the place where he was living, God instructed him to go "*to a land that I will show you*" (Genesis 12:1). Abraham didn't know where he was going when he left the place where he was. He had to trust God to lead him. The writer of Hebrews said that

Abraham “*went out, not knowing where he was going*” (*Hebrews 11:8*). The life of faith often leads us into the unknown.

Perhaps you sense God leading you to surrender your life to Him in some way. You’ve resisted because you don’t know the specifics or the ramifications. I encourage you to surrender to God all that you know to surrender and then trust Him to make the next step clear. A well-known pastor of another era, Norman Vincent Peale, used to say: “Following the will of God is like following the beam of a flashlight on a forest trail. One step must be taken before the next step will be illuminated.” So respond to the light that you have, and God will give you more light. Conversely, if you don’t respond to the light that you now have then things will never be any clearer than they are right now.

When my mom was twelve years old, all she knew was that God was calling her to some form of ministry. The specifics of that call wouldn’t become clear for many years. In fact, by the time she was just a few months out of high school, God had impressed upon her heart to simply serve Him where she was and to trust Him with her future. She worked for an insurance company in Atlanta and then moved to Louisville, Kentucky, to be with her parents



who had moved there for work reasons. While there, she attended the University of Louisville and also worked as a receptionist in a general surgeon's office. She told me that she felt like God wanted her to minister to those who visited that office, so she prayed for each patient who came in. After two years on that job, she applied to work for Delta Airlines back in Atlanta. One day she received a call from Delta, and the man she talked to offered her \$225 a month. My mom told him that she didn't think she could do it for that amount. He asked her how much it would take to hire her. She replied, "At least \$250!" (My mom was quite the negotiator!) And he hired her over the phone. So she left her parents in Kentucky and moved back to Georgia to work for Delta. She worked there for nine years. She loved that job and viewed it as her place to serve God. It was in this season of her life that she met my dad.

While my parents were dating, my dad's grandmother died, and my mom went to the funeral with her aunt. When she saw my dad standing outside the funeral home greeting the people as they came in, she said to her aunt: "Look at Charles greeting the people. He's going to be a preacher one of these days." To which her aunt replied: "Yes, and you're going to marry him." To which my mom responded: "Not in this lifetime. I'm not going to marry a

preacher.” It’s hard for me to imagine now, but at that time in her life, for whatever reason(s), my mom didn’t see herself as a pastor’s wife. But even then, she sensed God’s calling on my dad’s life.

After they married, she sensed it even more. He was working in the business world as a service manager for a Dodge dealership. He later became an insurance adjuster for Allstate. He then worked for my mom’s parents’ dry-cleaning company in East Point, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. (By this time, my grandparents had moved back to Georgia from Kentucky.) Even though he loved my grandparents, he wasn’t content in that job because God was calling him to do something else. God was calling him to preach.

Early in their married life, my mom taught the fifteen-year-old girls’ Sunday School class at Second Baptist Church in College Park, Georgia. My dad taught the young singles’ Sunday School class. Mom says that even then my dad loved church. He loved studying the Bible, and he loved to teach. She always told him that he was a natural and that she sensed God calling him into the ministry. Eventually, he sensed that call, too, and in 1967 he surrendered his life to the ministry. Much schooling and preparation lay ahead of them at

that time, but the commitment to preach had been made. My great aunt's words proved true. My mom was becoming a pastor's wife. That call would lead them from Georgia to Texas (for seminary), then to Tennessee (to pastor), then back to Texas for two more pastoral assignments. In a very real sense, my mom had become a missionary of another kind. What God had placed on her heart at Ridgecrest when she was twelve years old had now come full circle. For well over fifty years now, my parents have served the Lord together in ministry. I've watched them both go through a lot of situations and circumstances, but I've never seen them waver in their commitment to God's call to ministry. They've served Him with all of their might. And so should we.

I encourage you to find out what God wants you to do in life and do it with all of your strength. Whether you work for a car dealership, an insurance company, the airlines, as a receptionist, at a dry cleaners, in a local church, as a housewife, or in some other line of work, serve God with all of your might.

2. **Never stop doing what God has called you to do.**

While I'm on the subject of preaching and ministry, let me say that my mom has been

the driving force, humanly speaking, of my dad's ministry. In seasons of frustration and discouragement, she never would let him quit. This was especially true in my parents' first few years in Pasadena. The church was in the process of buying almost fifty acres of land in the southeast corner of Pasadena where new growth was taking place, and my father was leading that project. While the majority of the people in the church thought God was leading the church to do this, not everyone did. Sadly, a handful of people did everything they could to get my dad to leave the church. On one occasion, he was about ready to give up. He came home from work one evening and said to my mom: "We're not staying here any longer. Life's too short. We have other ministry opportunities out there, and I think we should just take one." When he said that, she took him into the living room and gave him one of her impromptu sermonettes. My brother and I were away at college at the time, but years later I heard what she told him. She said, "Charles, God has called us to this church. He wants the church to buy that land so more people can get saved. It may not be easy but nothing worthwhile ever is. God has called us here, and we're not leaving until He tells us to leave." I think he said, "Yes, ma'am," and they stayed! For her, quitting was never an option.

Much earlier in their marriage, when my mom was still in her twenties, she developed some spots on one of her lungs that greatly concerned the doctors. One doctor thought it was a life-threatening condition and wanted to remove part of her lung. Thankfully, those spots turned out to be benign and harmless, but back then it was a scary time for my parents. After one doctor's visit, when her future seemed very bleak and they thought she might die, my dad told her that he didn't think he could continue in the ministry without her. It's understandable how he would feel that way. Any husband would. But my mom would have none of that talk. She said, "Charles, God has called you to preach, and with me or without me that's exactly what you're going to do." Thankfully, it was "with her," but that fortitude, resolve, and determination have made an indelible impression on our family.

Through the years, there have been key times in my own life when my mom's words: "Never stop preaching" have given me the courage to keep on. Her voice of encouragement has been the constant in my life. Her determination to persevere has always inspired me to press on in the strength of the Lord.

I think my mom always knew that the devil would want to exploit any weakness (be

it spiritual, physical, relational, financial, or emotional) to try to get us to stop doing what God had called us to do. Her response to any such thinking was always: “That’s not an option.”

Quitting isn’t an option for you either. Never stop doing what God has called you to do. God’s call is too important. Souls are too precious, and eternity is too long for us to give up when the going gets tough. The prize in heaven is for those who persevere and overcome. So keep preaching (or keep doing whatever it is God has called you to do). One day you’ll be glad that you didn’t quit.

### 3. *The devil will not have victory in this situation.*

My mom is not one of those people who looks for the devil behind every bush. In fact, she doesn’t look for him at all. She focuses instead on Jesus, but she is very much aware that the devil is out there. She knows that he would love nothing more than for God’s children to live discouraged, depressed, defeated, joyless, hopeless lives. And she knows that he uses the difficult circumstances we encounter to try to pull us down.

I cannot tell you how many times she has said to one of us in the family: “The devil will not have victory in this situation.” She has a way of simplifying life and boiling things down to God and the devil.

My mom is a fighter. You wouldn’t guess that if you only knew her from a distance. Don’t get me wrong. She is the kindest and most loving person I know, but if she senses a spiritual battle taking place, she doesn’t run away. She fights. She prays. She quotes Scripture. She rebukes the devil. And she praises God all the more when there’s a battle going on.

She firmly believes that the devil always fights the hardest just before God is going to do something great. Her ability to discern spiritual warfare somehow inspires her to keep on keeping on. Satanic attempts to discourage her somehow fuel her faith.

Whatever you’re facing today, draw a line in the sand and declare by faith: “The devil will not have victory in this situation.” And be encouraged. The fact that the devil is trying to discourage you is a backwards affirmation that you’re on the right path. If you will stay in faith, victory will come. Remember, “*We are*

*more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).*

#### **4. Be kind to people.**

I guess one of the first Bible verses I ever learned was, “*Be kind to one another*” (Ephesians 4:32). Kindness is such an important quality. The Bible says that “*kindness makes a man attractive*” (Proverbs 19:22, TLB).

I can’t recall ever seeing my mother be unkind to anyone. She would probably say that there have been those times, but I never saw it. To me, she has always been the picture and the model of a kind and gentle spirit. And when Joel and I were young, she taught us to always be kind to people. I wish I could say that I have always, in every situation, been kind. But I haven’t. There have been times when I haven’t been as kind as I should have been. There have been instances, especially when I was younger, when I allowed my zeal and passion to cause me to be unkind to those who disagreed with me. I look back on some of those times now with embarrassment.

As I have gotten a little older, though, I can honestly say that kindness is one of the qualities I most value. I have a desire to be



kind to people, and if I ever feel as though I have been unkind, it really bothers me.

If you think about it from a biblical perspective, kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (*see Galatians 5:22-23*). Kindness is something Jesus produces in us as we trust Him and abide in Him. He is the one who said, *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)*. So kindness is actually the result of trusting Jesus and being in unbroken fellowship with Him. In other words, the best way to be kind is not by trying to be kind. If kindness really is a quality that the Holy Spirit produces in us then it is His job, not ours, to produce the kindness. Our job is to stay close to Jesus.

As I look back on times in my life when I wasn't kind, it was because I wasn't trusting Jesus like I should have been. I wasn't walking as closely to Him as I should have been. I wasn't Spirit-filled in those moments.

Looking back, my mom wasn't kind because she was trying hard to be kind. She was kind because she was full of the Holy Spirit. She was full of Jesus. And Jesus, really, is the epitome of kindness. If we'll just trust Him, love Him, walk with Him, and stay close

to Him, I'm convinced that kindness will come out of us with little or no effort on our part. Kindness comes naturally out of the heart of the person who is full of the love of God. Upon reflection, I'm convinced that's where my mother's kindness came from.

5. ***Don't let anybody or anything take your joy.***

Joy and kindness are closely related. Joyful people tend to be kind. People who aren't joyful tend to be rude.

One night my mom and I were walking out of an event together, and we walked by some people who weren't overly friendly. They are actually good people, but on this particular night they just didn't have much to say. My mom was her normal bubbly self, but their coldness kind of rubbed me the wrong way. When we got away from them, I said, "How can you be so happy around people who are so cold?" She replied, "Well, sometimes it's not easy, but I try to look at it differently. Maybe they're having a bad day. Maybe they're just shy. Maybe they weren't taught to be warm and kind." In other words, she was giving them the benefit of the doubt, but she wasn't about to let them take her joy.

Throughout my life, I've heard her say to me, "Don't let anybody or anything take your joy." That's good advice for all of us to heed.

Life is full of potential "joy killers." There will always be people in bad moods, others who don't like us, and circumstances that are unpleasant. That's just part of life. But if we could learn to keep our joy regardless of how others act, what others say, or how circumstances unfold, we would be well on our way to a happier life. Remember, joy comes from Jesus Christ and from being in a right relationship with Him. He expressed His desire to His disciples when He said, "*That My joy may remain in you*" (John 15:11). Think about that. Jesus has placed His joy in the heart of every person who has received Him as Savior and Lord. And He doesn't want us to lose that joy regardless of what happens.

But how can we keep it? How can we remain joyful? The answer is simple. In fact, it's easier to say than it is to do. The way to keep your joy is to keep your focus on Jesus instead of on people or circumstances. Additionally, if you focus on your blessings instead of on your problems, you'll be much happier in life. My mom said it right: "Don't let anybody or anything take your joy." It's just not worth it. Focus on Jesus instead.

6. **God will bring you through the trial...not somehow, but triumphantly.**

So much of what I have learned from my mom has to do with the importance of having a positive attitude. She has always looked at trials as opportunities. She views them as opportunities to learn, opportunities to grow, and opportunities to share Christ. Her belief is that when God allows one of His children to go through a trial that He always does so with a good purpose in mind. And, sooner or later, one way or another, He will bring us through. The trial will be over, and we will be better off for having experienced it.

In Old Testament times, the Israelites spent four hundred years down in Egypt. They were abused and mistreated. They were overworked and beaten. Finally, God had seen enough. He led the people out of Egypt during the first Passover celebration. Those who had placed the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes were supernaturally protected from God's judgment on the Egyptians. When the Israelites left Egypt, they requested "*from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing*" (Exodus 12:35). In other words, they left Egypt better off than they would have been without their experience of suffering there. The Bible says that the Lord gave His people "*favor*

*in the sight of the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:36).* To use my mom’s phrase, God brought them out...“not somehow, but triumphantly.” That’s just the way God does it.

We read in Scripture that God gives us *“beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61:3).* He has a way of giving us *“double honor”* for the injustices and difficulties we have experienced along the way (*Isaiah 61:7*).

I can honestly say that God has done this multiple times in my life. With every burden there was an ultimate blessing. With every struggle God had something special in store. With every trial there was a treasure He had for me to discover.

The same is true for you. Whatever you may be facing, be encouraged. God will bring you through it. And He’ll do it...“not somehow, but triumphantly.”

7. **Be a balcony person, not a basement person.**

I once heard a preacher say that after many years of preaching he had learned that “there’s a broken heart on every pew.” I believe that.

People are hurting. People are grieving. People are looking for someone or something to lift them up. My mom always believed that we have the responsibility to lift the spirits of those who are down.

When I was young, I can remember her saying, “Be a balcony person, Jon, not a basement person.” I didn’t really know what that meant until she explained that balconies are up and basements are down. She always encouraged Joel and me to lift people up instead of pulling them down.

We can all be balcony people in a lot of simple ways. A smile, a pat on the back, a kind word, a phone call, a listening ear. These are just a few of the things we can do to lift up those who have been knocked down by life.

#### **8. *Make the most of your situation in life.***

Life doesn’t come to us perfectly wrapped and just like we want it to be. Life can be tough. Sometimes we go through things we would rather have avoided.

In the late 1990s, my mom was diagnosed with Celiac Disease. Celiac is an autoimmune disease that eats away at the lining of the small intestine. It is caused by an intolerance to

gluten. Gluten is a group of proteins found in wheat, flour, barley, and rye. A person with Celiac Disease simply cannot eat any of those foods. No flour, no wheat, no hamburgers with fillers, and no regular bread, cookies, crackers, or cereal. These are just some of the foods that must be avoided. It's a life-changing disease, at least dietarily speaking.

But when my mom got the diagnosis, she began the process of learning what she could eat. She learned how to cook differently. She met with other people who had the disease to learn which restaurants were safe for her to eat in. She read everything she could read about the disease, and my dad was right there with her during all of that...learning what changes they needed to make. But there's one thing my mom never did. She never complained. She never got bitter. She made the most of the situation and moved on in life. Now, approximately twenty years later, eating a gluten-free diet is second nature to her. And it's actually a healthier diet, too.

Maybe life has dealt you a discouraging blow. I encourage you to make the most of your situation. Do the best you can with what you've got. Don't waste your time complaining. That will only impede the progress you're wanting to make. Accept the

things that you cannot change as part of God's mysterious plan for your life and make the most of them. Move forward by faith.

## **9. Take time for a serendipity.**

I don't mean this disrespectfully, but some Christians are difficult to be around. They are downtrodden and not much fun. The conversations are heavy and somber. Joy is absent. I get depressed just thinking about it.

My mom isn't like that. She's fun to be around. And no matter how serious things may have gotten at the church, she always planned a "serendipity" for herself and my dad...and for Joel and me when we were young.

A "serendipity" is the word my mom uses to describe something fun. It may be as simple as meeting my dad at Starbucks or Panera Bread during the middle of a busy day. It may be going to McDonald's for a cup of coffee. It may be watching a Hallmark movie or an episode of *The Andy Griffith Show*. It may be going to Houston on my dad's day off and shopping at Whole Foods or having lunch at Escalante's. To my mom, a "serendipity" doesn't have to be a big, expensive outing, but it has to be something. Those "serendipities" have probably saved my dad's life. They have



kept him balanced and reduced the stress he was experiencing at church. Let's face it. We're all busy. But if we're too busy to spend thirty minutes in Mayberry or make a quick trip to McDonald's, then maybe we need to make some changes to our schedules. Slow down a little bit. Take time to smell the roses. Have an occasional serendipity and see what happens. You just might like it.

### **10. *The angels are with you.***

My mom's favorite Bible verse is *Psalms 91:11*. That verse says, "*For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*" My mom believes in angels. In fact, she says that on three separate occasions they have sung to her. I would never question that. If she said it, I believe it.

When Joel and I started driving, my mom would frequently pray for the angels to watch over us and keep us safe on the road. "The angels are with you," she would say.

We can't see the angels, but the Bible makes it abundantly clear that the angels do God's bidding and protect God's people. I hope you believe in angels. Even more importantly, I hope you ask God to send them to watch over you and your family each day.

## **11. God will make it as clear as a day in July.**

Discovering God's will is not always an easy thing to do. Sometimes we can't tell if God wants us to take a new job or stay at our current job. Should we buy a new house or just stay put? Should we go back to school and get another degree or not? Life presents us with many such issues and questions. There aren't specific Bible verses for these types of decisions. So what should we do when we're trying to decide whether we should work at Exxon or Shell?

Well, the Bible teaches that God reveals His will for these matters in ways that we can understand. He opens certain doors and closes others. He sends people into our lives to help us along the right path. He fills our hearts with peace if something is His will. He makes us restless if something isn't His will. And He would never, under any circumstance, lead us to do something that contradicts the clear teachings of Scripture.

When I used to talk to my grandmother about whether I should make this or that decision, she would say to me, "God will make it crystal clear." My mom has always said it this way: "God will make it as clear as a day in July." She has always believed that God wants

His children to know what He wants them to do, and that, in time, He will make things clear.

If you don't know what to do in a particular area of your life, my advice is this: Keep doing what you're currently doing until God makes something else clear.

God said, "*Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?*" (*Isaiah 43:19*). God wants us to know His will. Until we do, it's best to wait for Him to make things clear. And, in His perfect timing, He always does.

So, if you're struggling over a major life decision, just relax. Be patient. At just the right time, God will make things as clear as a day in July. You'll know exactly what to do.

## **12. The best place to be is at the feet of Jesus.**

Perhaps the greatest lesson I have ever learned from my mother is the importance of having a daily time alone with God in prayer. She taught me that, and she modeled it.

For as long as I can remember, my mom has had a special place at home devoted to prayer. She calls her prayer place "*Bethel*" which literally means "house of God." She borrowed

that name from a story in the Bible where Jacob had a special encounter with God and subsequently named that place “*Bethel*” (*Genesis 28:19*). It was the place where Jacob and God met.

I don’t really know how much time my mom spends at “*Bethel*” each day, but my impression is that it’s a significant amount. She prays for our family. She prays for the church. She prays for other people. She prays for herself. She prays for lots of things. When Joel and I were young, she got up long before we did in order to pray. We are so blessed to have had that “prayer covering” over us all of our lives.

She told me one day that I never needed to worry about getting old or where I would live or who would be with me when it came time for me to die because she had already prayed me through my entire earthly existence. When I was a baby, she prayed that when it came time for me to die that someone would be there with me who loved me as much as she did. One day while she was praying that, Jesus whispered to her heart, “There will be. I’ll be there, and I love him even more than you do.” Who even thinks to pray for something like that? Who is that sensitive to someone else’s life and future? My mom is.

There's a story in the New Testament about the time Jesus went to the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha. Martha was running around like crazy trying to make the house just right. Mary, on the other hand, sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His words. Jesus commended Mary for her devotion to Him. I've always thought of my mom as a Mary.

I don't know anything about your prayer life, but I encourage you to have one. Whether you pray early in the morning, late at night, or at some other time, I encourage you to pray. Just talk to God like you would talk to a friend. Confess your sins. Ask for His wisdom, guidance, and help. Pray for your family. And be sure to take some time to listen. He'll speak to your heart. I'm fully convinced that the best place to be in all the world is at the feet of Jesus. Don't neglect to spend much time there.

**13. *Stand on the promises of God...no matter what comes against you.***

Prayer and Bible reading go hand in hand. When we pray, we talk to God. When we read the Bible, He talks to us.

Several years ago, my mom gave me one of her Bibles. It's the Bible she had used for many years. When I started thumbing through

it, I was amazed at not only all the underlining she had done, but also at all the notes she had made. It was obvious to me that her Bible had been her daily companion. It was somewhat of a spiritual journal of her life. She had written in there the date and where she was when she read specific passages. I have that Bible in my study at home and treasure it greatly.

When my mom was diagnosed with lymphoma in May of 2019, she got some index cards and started writing out a lot of Bible verses about healing. She and my dad read those verses together twice a day throughout her illness, praying over each verse.

I will never forget driving my parents to my mom's first round of chemotherapy at MD Anderson Hospital. As we were approaching Interstate 45, my mom started quoting those verses. Her faith was so strong. Her focus was on God. She was engaged in a battle, and she was using the weapon of God's Word in the midst of it. It was a holy moment for me. There is no doubt in my mind that her faith in God's Word played a major role in her healing.

During your daily prayer time, be sure to spend some time in God's Word. Even if you only read a chapter a day, God will honor that, and He will speak to your heart. God's Word is

a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (*see Psalm 119:105*). I encourage you to read a portion of it each day so you won't have to walk around in the dark. Read it. Believe it. Personalize it. Claim it. And when you find yourself in a battle of some kind, stand on it and refuse to be moved.

#### **14. *You're a child of the King.***

In the 1970s and 1980s, my mom used to give Joel and me a little talk every morning before we went to school. She would always say to us: "Remember, you're a child of the King. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Jesus loves you, and so do I." That was our morning sermon before we started our day. She wanted us to know that, as children of the King, we had nothing to worry about.

I can remember one morning when we were talking about the rapture on the way to school. My mom was explaining that Jesus could come back at any moment. While I knew this was a good thing, it kind of scared me. I said, "But if Jesus comes back while I'm at school, how will I ever find you?" She said, "If Jesus comes back while you're at school, I'll meet you in the air. We'll instantly all be together." That

made me feel a lot better. I always felt safe if my mom was close by.

As children of the King, we have the guarantee that God will meet our every need (*see Philippians 4:19*). We also have the promise that when the rapture happens, we'll meet Jesus and all of our saved loved ones in the air. As children of the King, we have nothing to fear. My mom wanted us to know that even though she couldn't be at school with us that God would be there. We were His children. And everywhere we went, He would be there, too.

**15. *Make new friends and keep the old. One is silver, the other is gold.***

My mom didn't make that little saying up, but she believed it. She has always had a good group of friends. Her Georgia friends go back to her childhood. She has stayed in touch with many of them through the years. But as our family moved to Texas and then to Tennessee and then back to Texas for two more stops, I have always been amazed at my mother's ability and willingness to make new friends. Some of her closest friends are those she has had for several decades. But surprisingly, she has other very close friends whom she has only known for a fairly short amount of time.



Moving can be a traumatic thing. Sometimes you feel like you're being disloyal to your old friends by making new friends. If you've never moved, you wouldn't understand that. But it's nonetheless true.

Additionally, if you've ever been hurt in a relationship you tend to be a little more guarded. But my mom has never been like that. She believes strongly in the importance of friends. She's easily the most social person in our family. Her friends keep her life balanced and fun.

No person is an island. We need each other. Nobody can be friends with everybody, but everybody needs some friends. If you're in need of a new friend or two, pray about it. And then begin to be a little more friendly yourself. The Bible says, "*He who has friends must himself be friendly*" (Proverbs 18:24). Maybe that's my mom's secret. She has a lot of friends because she's friendly, and she's easy to be friends with.

### **16. God is greater than any problem I have.**

One of my friends from seminary is a man named Steve Lee. Steve is a Korean who grew up in Canada. When I was in seminary, his family's apartment was above mine. In that

small apartment lived Steve, his wife, his daughter, and his mother. One of the things I always admired about Steve was how good he was to his mom. They were very close.

Through the years, as my parents would visit me in Ft. Worth, they developed a good relationship with Steve. When we graduated from seminary, my mom made him a cross-stitch picture that said, “God is greater than any problem I have.” She had made me one previously.

Many years after graduation, Steve and his family were back in Canada working at a church. One summer, we took some students from our church in Pasadena up to Canada to do some mission work at his church. While there, he took me to his office one day and showed me the cross-stitch picture my mother had made for him. It was in a prominent place in his office. He told me what a blessing it had been to him through the years. By then, his mother had died. He had experienced other challenges and problems, but that little cross-stitch picture had been a constant reminder that God is greater than any problem we have. Perhaps you need that reminder at this time in your life. Whatever you’re facing, remember that God is greater than that problem. Just trust Him with it. He will see you through.

**17. How you handle a difficult situation is more important than the situation itself.**

Life is full of disappointing and even heartbreaking situations. Many of them are unfair, and many others are very painful. The key, though, my mom always taught us, is not the situation itself, but how we handle it.

When my mom's father died, she took it really hard. They had a special bond. But in her sadness, she turned to God in a fresh way for comfort and strength, and God began to help her with her grief. One day she called me and said that God had done an amazing thing for her. She explained that He had made it where her father's presence in her heart was now more real to her than his physical absence. In fact, she said that she felt his presence more now, in some ways, than when he was still on earth. God had comforted her hurting heart by reminding her that her father was alive, well, and happy in heaven. That assurance changed her perspective. She had responded to her situation with prayer and faith, and God had honored that by giving her peace.

He will do the same thing for you. Always remember that your response is more important than the situation you are facing. Respond properly, and you will be blessed.

## ***18. Stick to Jesus.***

My senior year in high school was a really good year. The only thing that made it somewhat sad was the knowledge that I would soon be moving away to college. It seemed like everything about that year had that “last time” feel to it. The “last” first day of school. The “last” away football game. The “last” home football game. The “last” Thanksgiving. The “last” Christmas. The “last” hamburger. The “last” taco. The “last” egg! You would have thought I was going off to war!

When the time came, in August of 1988, for my parents to drop me off at Baylor, I had mixed emotions. I was excited about college, but sad about leaving my family. I’m a “mama’s boy” in every sense of the term...and proud of it! And I knew I would cry when I hugged her, my dad, and my brother good-bye.

My mom is a crier, too. I blame my crying on her! When it was time for me to hug her good-bye, she had put on her sunglasses to hide her tears. There we stood as a family...under a big oak tree in the parking lot of Penland Hall on the campus of Baylor University. She took out several sheets of paper and said this was the farewell letter she had written to me. But now that the time had come for her to read it, she

was emotionally unable to do so. I must confess that I was relieved because I was emotionally unable to hear it!

Then she said this to me: “Jon, if I had to summarize this whole letter in just a few words I believe I could do it. In fact, I could summarize this entire letter in just three words, and these will be my last words to you before you begin your college life: “Stick to Jesus.” That was it. That was her speech. We hugged. We cried. They drove back to Sulphur Springs, and I went to Room 185 of Penland Hall with those words forever etched in my mind...“Stick to Jesus.” No matter what happens. No matter how painful or difficult or lonely. I had my marching orders. They came from my mother, but they were inspired by God: “Stick to Jesus.” It’s the best advice I’ve ever received.

### **19. The book’s not finished yet.**

Sometimes we pray for something, and it just doesn’t happen. We’ve all had that experience. It can be very disheartening.

There have been times through the years when I’ve said to my mom, “How do you figure that this prayer wasn’t answered? It just doesn’t make sense to me. It doesn’t seem fair.” Her response to such questions has

always been: “The book’s not finished yet.” In other words, she was saying to me that just because something hasn’t happened yet doesn’t mean that it won’t happen. God is the author of the books of our lives, and sometimes He saves the best part for the last chapter.

Maybe that’s the word of hope and encouragement you need today. Perhaps you’ve prayed for a wayward child to come home. Maybe you’ve prayed for an illness to be healed. Some have prayed for a family saga to be resolved. And currently, you see nothing happening. The temptation is to throw up your hands and give up. Don’t do that. Keep believing. Be patient. It’s not over until God says it’s over. The book’s not finished yet.

**20. Be brave in life. And when the time comes, you don’t have to be afraid to die. Jesus will be there for you.**

It’s always fascinated me to read how many times God told strong people in the Bible not to be afraid. He gave that command to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the disciples, and the apostle Paul. God knew that even the strongest person among us sometimes battles the monster of fear.

When Joel and I were really young and had to go to the doctor to get a shot, we were naturally afraid. My mom used to sing this little song to us that she called, “*The Shot Song*.” It goes like this:

*I’m so very brave and strong  
When I go to get a shot.  
I just turn my head and close my eyes  
And it won’t hurt a lot.*

I never knew if that was a real song or if my mom just made it up. But it had a nice little tune to it, and it rhymed perfectly. And it conveyed the message she wanted to get across: “Be brave!” That song really helped. God wants us to be brave in life. He wants to deliver us from all fears (*see Psalm 34:4*).

When my mom was diagnosed with lymphoma, I didn’t handle it well at all. For about ten days, I couldn’t stop crying. My mother and I have always been close. We have the same spiritual and emotional makeup. And to be honest, I had never thought about life without her. She was seventy-nine years old at the time of her diagnosis, and I was forty-nine, so the thought of her dying should have at least crossed my mind. But it never had. And when the reality of her diagnosis hit me, I was completely devastated.

One of the things that helped me with that was multiple long conversations with her. Somehow just talking to her about the situation was therapeutic for me. I've always been able to talk to my mom about anything that concerned me, and now I needed to talk to her about her and about how much I loved her.

She was handling things much better than I was. Her faith was strong. Her outlook was so positive. I like to think that my faith was fairly strong, too, but my heart was just broken. I couldn't think about her without crying. Somewhere along the way, she said to me, "We're going to have to take a 'brave pill.'" I think she had already taken one, but she could tell that I needed one pretty badly.

I'll always remember a doctor's visit my mom had at MD Anderson with Dr. Maria Rodriguez, a truly gifted doctor with a compassionate heart, just before she began her chemotherapy treatments. As Dr. Rodriguez was sharing her concerns about my mom's kidneys, her heart, her age, and whether or not her body could even survive the chemo, my mom's "brave pill" kicked in. She said, "Dr. Rodriguez, I want to thank you, first of all, for taking me on as one of your patients. I also want you to know that I'm a Christian, and as a Christian, I believe that my times are in God's



hands. So whichever way this thing goes, I'm okay."

I thought, "Wow. That's faith. That's trust in God. That's the grace of God giving my mom such peace." My dad, my brother, and I were so blessed to see her handling it so well.

And somehow, I began to draw strength from her. Her faith in God made her experience with chemo so much easier for her and for us. We were okay because we knew that she was okay. God had given our entire family peace...perfect peace.

Thankfully, the chemo worked. To the glory of God, the lymphoma is completely gone. The Lord used that treatment to save her life. Thank you, Jesus. We pray now for her to stay healthy. Please join us in that prayer.

I saw my mom look death in the face and never flinch. She stayed her joyful self. Even at times when she was extremely weak and very sick, her faith never wavered. Jesus saw her through. And through that experience I got an up-close lesson in trusting God in the face of death.

One day we were riding home from MD Anderson and my mom said, "Jon, I want to tell

you something that I've never told you." I thought, "Where is this conversation going?" She went on, "When you and Joel were very young, I prayed a specific prayer to God. I asked Him to use me to show you both how to live and ultimately how to die. And as I've been going through this chemo, I've wanted so badly to be a good example for you both. I've wanted you to see that you really can trust God with everything. He's so trustworthy."

Maybe this has become my mom's greatest legacy to me. At seventy-nine and then eighty years of age, she went through six rounds of chemo that included some very scary moments, and her faith sustained her. She had peace, perfect peace, through it all. I learned from her that we have nothing to fear in even the lowest and most serious experiences of life because God is always with us. As Christians, we face nothing alone. And certainly not death.

For the Christian, death is the door we walk through to enter the city of heaven. The city itself is beyond description. It is a city of light and a city of love. We will close our eyes in this life and open them in heaven. It will be quick, and we won't go from here to there alone. Jesus and the angels will carry us to our new home in an instantaneously quick and peaceful moment.

A new and perfectly healthy body awaits you in heaven. So does a new home, prepared by Jesus Himself. Abraham is there. So are Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Moses is in heaven, and Joshua is there, too. David is there. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all of the prophets are there. The disciples await your arrival in heaven, along with Paul and Silas. Timothy and Barnabas are there as well. Your saved family members and friends will greet you upon your arrival. The angels are there. And best of all, Jesus is there. Death is the door we walk through to enter that beautiful city. We have nothing to fear. When the time comes, we'll enter it peacefully and quickly.

My mom knew that as she contemplated her own mortality. She's a genuine Christian, and she was ready to see Jesus if this had been her time. Thankfully for us, it wasn't. God mercifully healed her, and we are incredibly thankful. And so is she. But had it gone the other way, she was at peace with that, too.

Maybe you don't have the same peace my mom had as she thought about death. She had peace because she had placed her faith and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of her sins. She is saved, and that issue is settled in her heart. That's really what her "brave pill" is. It's trusting Jesus with all of her heart.

Are you doing that? Are you trusting Jesus with all of your heart? Is your salvation settled? If not, it can be. The Bible says, “*For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). That word “*whoever*” includes you. If you will repent of your sins, ask Jesus to save you, and trust Him to do it, your salvation and your eternal destiny can be settled right now. You’ll have peace in life, and when the time comes, you’ll have peace in death. Pray this prayer right now:

*Dear Jesus,*

*I need You in my life. I have sinned, and I am sorry. Please forgive me. Cleanse my heart.*

*I believe that You died on the cross to pay for my sins and that You rose again conquering death and the grave.*

*Jesus, I ask You now to come into my heart, forgive my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.*

*In Your Name I Pray,  
Amen.*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, God heard it, and He answered it. You are now a child of the King. I encourage you to get involved in a good Bible-believing church and to share your decision with others. I also encourage you to begin reading the Bible every day. You could begin by reading a chapter a day from the gospel of John. Additionally, spend a few moments each day in prayer. God will honor that.

I also encourage you to live your life in such a way that God will be honored and that others will be blessed. I can assure you that other people are watching you. They are looking to see how you will respond to the challenges of life. This is especially true of your children and grandchildren. Not only are they watching you, but more than likely they will develop a heart like yours. Never underestimate the opportunity you have to influence them for God and for good. You are their earthly role-model. I encourage you to take that job seriously.

I pray that some of the lessons that my mother has taught me through the years will become a real blessing to you as well. And if the rapture of the church takes place while we are separated from each other, my family and I will meet you in the air!

## *Booklets by Jon Redmond*

- \*How to be a Happy Christian*
- \*Riding Out the Storms of Life*
- \*Finding Freedom Through Forgiveness*
- \*Never Alone*
- \*How to Make Heaven Your Home*
- \*How to Make Heaven Your Home (Spanish)*
- \*When God Says, "Wait"*
- \*How to Have a Peaceful Heart*
- \*In the Twinkling of an Eye*
- \*Angels Among Us*
- \*What Happens at the Moment of Death?*
- \*Discovering God's Will*
- \*The Lord Is My Shepherd*
- \*How to Lead a Child to Christ*
- \*On Eagles' Wings*
- \*Living on the Edge of Eternity*
- \*The Problem With Procrastination*
- \*The Lord's Prayer*

- \*Lessons from the Lions' Den*
- \*How to Survive a Satanic Attack*
- \*Lessons I Learned From My Mother*
- \*Hiding His Word in Our Hearts (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
- \*31 Timeless Truths for Victorious Christian Living (A Fresh Thought for Each Day of the Month)*
- \*Prayer & Fasting (3 Days of Seeking the Lord)*
- \*The Life of Christ (As Depicted in the Chapel Windows of First Baptist Church in Pasadena)*
- \*Bible Reading Plan (4 Different Plans are Available)*

Most of these booklets can be read online at [www.fbp.org](http://www.fbp.org). All of the booklets are available at First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas.

## *Jon Redmond*

Jon Redmond is the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served on the church staff at First Baptist since 1995.

A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.