

YOUR SOUL TO KEEP

*A prayer book for praising God as you
pray for your adult kids*

KRISTI DUSENBERY



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ISBN: 9798218195694

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Printed in the United States of America

The Laughing Grandma
Indianola IA 50125

www.TheLaughingGrandma.com

DEDICATED TO

Our precious army of prayer warriors,
who keep us grounded, encouraged, and well-fed.

We adore you.

And to our kids, who keep our prayer list full
and our hearts fuller. You were born for each other,
so wherever life takes you, stick together.

(Proverbs 17:17)

*“The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds
blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse,
because its foundation was on the rock.”*

Matthew 7:25

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GETTING STARTED

PREVIEW

*“You’ll never be a perfect parent, but you can
be a praying parent...Your prayers for your children
are the greatest legacy you can leave.”*

Mark Batterson

Now I lay you at His feet
and pray the Lord your
SOUL TO KEEP

May angels guard you through your life
and guide you in God's perfect light

These words are my whole-heart's prayer for our adult kids. They fully belong to God. Their souls are fully in His hands. And even though it's been true since the first moment we held them in our arms, letting go of the details of parenting feels unnatural...even undoable at times. The *simple* reality is that our role as their parents changed profoundly the moment they left home...because that's the way it's supposed to be.

Instead of being "children under our authority," they've become fellow adults under God's authority, who need a positive Christian relationship with their parents as they make their own way in the world. It's an important transition that every parent goes through and it often puts a magnifying glass on our regrets, causing us to question the job we did and making us feel less significant somehow. But becoming the parent of adult kids is not a demotion. In many ways, it's more important than ever before; requiring more grit, more emotional stamina, more wisdom, and more dependence on God than we ever imagined.

Several years ago, our need for grit and emotional stamina was shoved into overdrive when we received a phone call from one of our sons. His marriage was in crisis and we never saw it coming. Truth is, the reality of his words nearly broke us. We felt sad, afraid, and angry. We worried about our son, worried about our daughter-in-law, and worried about our grandbabies. Most of all, we were utterly consumed by feelings of helplessness.

All we could do was to love them, speak God's truth...and pray. As humbling as it is to admit, I prayed more for their marriage in those few days than I had in many previous months combined. Nothing kick-starts a prayer life faster than pain, and nothing sends us running into the arms of God quite like the sudden realization that we have absolutely no control over anything.

During that difficult time, *Your Soul to Keep (YSTK)* was born - not the book, but the process. Tim and I needed support from our peers and we needed them to pray, but we realized quickly that it was an awkward leap from casual, *safe* conversation to sharing the painful, ugly details of life. Even though we had wonderful friends who were very glad to pray, we hadn't been purposeful in developing trust and transparency regarding our adult kids. I suppose we were caught up in the social-media mentality of only sharing the good stuff, while keeping the *ugly* tucked neatly away. There was definitely something missing.

As the dust continued to whirl more than settle, we reached out to three couples (also parents of adult children) and invited them to meet with us, to pray specifically for the minds, bodies, and souls of our adult kids. None of us attend the same church and some hadn't even met each other, but we believed this was the direction God was leading. All three couples agreed and the rest, as they say, is history.

Many years later, I find myself ironically grateful for the crisis in our son's marriage; not grateful for the pain, but for the healing. He and his wife are stronger as individuals and as a family because of what they went through, and we are intensely more aware of the importance of prayer...and fellow prayer warriors.

Let me be clear. The habit of praying for our adult kids hasn't become so important because the words we say are so holy or because they've *fixed* every problem. Clearly not. The habit of prayer has become important because it connects us intimately with the God of the universe and we find peace in his presence every time. HE is the one who knows every intimate detail about the minds, bodies, and souls of our adult kids. HE is the one who loves them more than we ever can. And HE is the one who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us. (Ephesians 3:20)

Our precious YSTK army has praised God from the mountaintops and cried out to him from the valleys: surgeries, broken relationships, pregnancies, sick babies, lost jobs, new jobs, weddings, depression, college graduations, crippling anxiety, miscarriage, substance abuse, promotions, financial hardships, and crises of faith...just to name a few. We laugh. We celebrate. And we cry. We share the burden

of waiting for answers that may never come, we encourage each other to consider things from new perspectives, and we are completely vulnerable about our parental fears and failures...without judgment. What a blessing!

This prayer book is the unintended byproduct of our prayer group's journey. And it's the result of much trial and error, as we worked to get ourselves organized. I'm so excited to share it with you and believe passionately that God will use it to bless you as you trust him with the process.

There are two ways to use the resources and organizational tools provided in the following pages. First, they can guide your personal prayer time for your adult kids. Second, they can help you to establish a mighty army of soldiers who will join with you in surrendering your adult kids into the loving arms of their Creator and praying for God's Spirit to move in their lives. The monthly prayers are based entirely on scripture, allowing every member (especially those who may be uncomfortable praying aloud) to confidently claim God's Word on behalf of their adult kids. We are promised that scripture is *"living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12) What a privilege to have such a powerful weapon at our fingertips, especially in times of crisis.