

## Spiritual Direction for Parents of Children with Disabilities

### Lesson # 1 – Authenticity and Love

*Take off your mask; God loves you!*

Scripture: “Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother’s womb. I thank you, High God – you’re breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration – what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, The days of my life all prepared before I’d even lived one day.” Psalm 139:13-16 *The Message*

Miracle-Gro for the Garden:

- Read the Scriptures on a daily basis and soak up the many ways God tells you He loves you
- Schedule time for yourself, by yourself. Put it on the calendar
- Schedule get-away time for you and your husband on a regular basis
- Pamper yourself occasionally—get your nails done, go golfing, take a long bath
- Find what feeds your spirit and do it!
- Learn all you can about your personality type and celebrate your uniqueness (Myers-Briggs, The Enneagram, etc).

**Life Lesson # 2 – Faith and Hope**

*Find comfort in the rhythms of daily life and nature*

Scripture: “God’s glory is on tour in the skies, God-craft on exhibit across the horizon. Madame Day holds classes every morning, Professor Night lectures each evening. Their words aren’t heard, their voices aren’t recorded, But their silence fills the earth: unspoken truth is spoken everywhere. God makes a huge dome for the sun – a superdome! The morning sun’s a new husband leaping from his honeymoon bed, the daybreaking sun an athlete racing to the tape. That’s how God’s Word vaults across the skies from sunrise to sunset, melting ice, scorching deserts, warming hearts to faith.” Ps 19:1-6 *The Message*

Miracle-Gro for the Garden:

- Keep a journal. Spiral bound. Legal pad. At the end of your day, or the beginning, jot down those places you meet God in the rhythm of daily life.
- Express gratitude for whatever rhythms feed your spirit – out loud, in prayer, or in your journal
- Get outside. Go for a walk. Feel the wind on your face. Look up. Look at the stars. Get in the car and chase a sunset, or a rainbow. Walk in the woods and feel the crunch of leaves and sticks underfoot. Walk barefoot as often as you can.

**Life Lesson # 3 – Surrender**

*Externalize your grief – give it over to God – surrender control*

Scripture: “I waited and waited and waited for God. At last he looked; finally he listened; He lifted me out of the ditch, pulled me from deep mud. He stood me up on a solid rock to make sure I wouldn’t slip. He taught me how to sing the latest God-song, a praise-song to our God. More and more people are seeing this: they enter the mystery, abandoning themselves to God.” Psalm 40: 1-3 *The Message*

Miracle-Gro for the Garden:

- Find a way to get rid of the anger, despair, helplessness, hopelessness
- Write it down in your journal
- Speak it to a friend
- Speak it to a counselor, spiritual director, or pastor
- Pray
- Learn to meditate, to simply sit in God’s presence, soaking in his love
- Yell at God if you have to – He can take it!

**Life Lesson # 4 – Trust**

*Build trust in God's faithfulness by learning to live in the present moment*

Scripture: "Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God!" Prov. 3: 5-7 *The Message*

Miracle-Gro for the Garden:

- Learn to meditate
- Find and read authors that revel in the sacred nature of every day life (see bibliography)
- Begin to practice mindfulness– when washing dishes, let yourself totally get into washing the dishes; when taking a walk, open all 5 senses and soak it all in; when nursing your baby, close your eyes and immerse yourself in the experience

## Life Lesson # 5 – Persistence in Prayer

### Never stop praying for healing

Scripture: “Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, “There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: “my rights are being violated protect me!” He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, ‘I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won’t quit badgering me, I’d better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I’m going to end up beaten black and blue by her pounding.’ Then the Master said, “Do you hear what the judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?” Luke 18: 1-8

Miracle-Gro for the Garden:

- Lay hands on your child, praying for him/her daily
- Ask your small group to pray for your child and for you, including laying on of hands
- Write prayer requests weekly and put them in the offering plate at church
- Take your child to healing services at your church, or to weekly prayer groups
- Send out e-mail requests for prayer

## Books to Feed Your Soul: Bibliography

### Books on Spirituality:

*Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, Henri Nouwen  
*The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth*, Joyce Rupp  
*A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary*. Macrina Wiederkehr.  
*Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers & Reflections*. Macrina Wiederkehr  
*The Song of the Seed: A Monastic Way of Tending the Soul*. Macrina Wiederkehr  
*Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*. Wayne Muller  
*How Then Shall We Live: Four Simple Questions That Reveal the Beauty and Meaning Of Our Lives*. Wayne Muller  
*When the Heart Waits*. Sue Monk Kidd  
*Grace Points: Growth and Guidance in Times of Change*: Jane Rubietta  
*Resting Place: A Personal Guide to Spiritual Retreats*. Jane Rubietta  
*Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality*. J. Brent Bill  
*Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*. Anne LaMott  
*Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. Kathleen Norris  
*Cloister Walk*. Kathleen Norris  
*Memories of God: Theological Reflections on a Life*. Roberta Bondi  
*Ordinary Life*. Poems by Barbara Crooker  
*Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*. Brennan Manning  
*Celebration of Discipline*. Richard Foster

### Books on Disability and Spirituality:

*Adam: God's Beloved*. Henri Nouwen  
*Autism & Alleluias*, Kathleen Deyer Bolduc  
*His Name is Joel: Searching for God in a Son's Disability*, Kathleen Deyer Bolduc  
*A Place Called Acceptance: Ministry with Families of Children with Disabilities*  
 Kathleen Deyer Bolduc  
*The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey*. Henri Nouwen  
*God Plays Piano, Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children*. Brett Webb-Mitchell

### Books on Parenting a Child with a Disability:

*Hope for the Families: New Directions for Parents of Children with Retardation or Other Disabilities*. Robert Perske  
*A Slant of Sun: One Child's Courage*. Beth Kephart  
*Special Children, Challenged Parents: The Struggles and Rewards of Raising a Child with a Disability*. Robert A. Naseef  
*Autism's Hidden Blessings: Discovering God's Promises for Autistic Children and Their Families*, Kelly Langston  
*Finding God in Autism: A Forty Day Devotional for Parents of Autistic Children*, Kathy Medina

Kathleen Deyer Bolduc

Sweeten Life Systems: The Village Fall Family Gathering/Conference

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