

# live

A BAPTIST RESOURCE FOR WOMEN ON A MISSION

## ENJOY GOD

Meet author Ken Shigematsu

## CHOOSE THE BETTER WAY

A hope-filled invitation from Jesus

## KIDS & SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Simple ways to get started



## BEING SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED

Love God with all  
your heart, soul,  
mind and strength



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live

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# Connecting



WELCOME to this issue of *Live* magazine! As you can see, we've welcomed a new designer into our fold – Jennifer Au. Jennifer brings us her wealth of magazine design experience in the non-profit sphere and a deep love and respect for ministries like ours. Welcome Jennifer! We want your feedback on this new layout so please reach out to us. Simply email [rsejames@gmail.com](mailto:rsejames@gmail.com).

This issue launches a series of issues devoted to the targets set by Baptist Women's board. These targets provide focus and direction for staff and volunteer leaders and they are spiritual formation, mission, leadership development, stewardship, social justice and investment in the next generation.

We've devoted this issue to the first target of spiritual formation – the process of being transformed by the Holy Spirit into wholeness in the image of Christ through encounter with God. To that end, enjoy our interview with author Ken Shigematsu, whose book *God In My Everything: How An Ancient Rhythm Helps Busy People Enjoy God* launched this year's book club program. We also interviewed Kendall Vanderslice, public theologian and baker, who will lead a bread-making workshop at our April Conference. New and returning contributors share about their spiritual formation practices and why they matter while Rev. Tanya Yuen invites us to be intentional about spiritual formation in children and grandchildren.

Why is spiritual formation the first target for Baptist Women? Because mission and service that offer true healing and life flow from ongoing

encounters with God and an intentional caring of our souls that we cultivate through spiritual practices (disciplines) and rhythms.

As you read this issue, may one word, or several, an article or a Bible verse invite you to consider living and serving from a place of overflow, opened up to God's presence, guidance and love so that you may bravely live "into the destiny that God has for you." Like Jesus.

On a final note, do take part in our book club by reading Ken's book through April. Here are two insights that nudged us to choose this book to begin 2022's program:

- ① Spiritual disciplines and habits aren't meant to burden us. We practice them simply to support our enjoyment of God and position us to grow in our love for Jesus.
- ② Justice and mission flow from the ongoing relationship we have with triune God.

We've posted several resources to help you gather a few women and discuss this book including a series of questions and a video chat with Ken himself! You'll find all this material on our website's book club page: [www.baptistwomen.com/resources/2022-book-club](http://www.baptistwomen.com/resources/2022-book-club). And of course, enjoy all the spiritual formation resources you'll find on our website including Soul Sisters leadership guides.

Our May–June issue picks up the target of social justice. See you then.

**Renee James**  
Editor



# Hungering Together with God

An exploration into fasting

BY VICTORIA MOK

FASTING IS a compelling spiritual discipline, but many feel it daunting to practice. In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster explains that “the popular belief that it is a positive virtue to satisfy every human appetite...has made fasting seem obsolete,” yet we see biblical greats like Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, Paul and Jesus practicing fasting (p. 48). If you find yourself longing to fast, yet hesitant to do it, you’re in good company.

Like many who grew up in the church, my introduction to fasting was giving up chocolate for Lent. This first Lenten experience compelled me to continue the practice, and over successive Lents since, I’ve fasted from coffee, music, and meat. I once swapped regular meals for the diet of poor communities, and another time, a regular income for the equivalent of a welfare income. Each fast showed me how much I relied on various substances rather than on God, and somehow, I knew there was still more to go.

In his book *A Hunger for God*, John Piper says that “Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God” (p. 17). My Lenten fasts pointed out the things on which I relied instead of God, and this realization created a homesickness to return to God. My hunger for God compelled me to begin a modest fast of one meal each week so that I can spend more time in Scripture and prayer before God.

This brings me to confession time: Every week, I don’t want to fast. I’d really rather eat the meal, and sometimes I choose to eat. Yet each time I go through with fasting, I am refreshed by the time spent with my Heavenly Father who meets me and even transforms me where I ache most. Piper points out that paradoxically, the ones “who feast most often on communion with God” are not the least hungry for God, but the most (p. 25). For me, each fast cultivates a continued desire to keep feasting with God through my weekly fast.

But that’s not all. As I reflected on my fasting journey, God brought to mind the first batch of chocolate chip cookies that I ever baked. What a disaster. All the bottoms of the cookies were burnt. But I wanted to keep baking. I realized that the oven was hotter than prescribed, and with time, I learned to lower the temperature and decrease the baking time. Out came delicious cookies that melted in my mouth, just the way I liked them.

What kept me baking even after torching my first batch of cookies was this: *My dad ate them anyway, and with pleasure.* He took each burnt cookie, scraped off the blackened bottoms, and after eating them, told me they tasted delicious. Incredulously, my dad then requested me to bake him even more cookies because he loved them so much.

Could it be that our Heavenly Father sees our feeble and uneven efforts in fasting and other spiritual practices, and despite the imperfections and burnt bottoms, loves that we’re trying and hungers for us to keep baking Him even more time together? And when we pluck up our resistant wills and fight to keep that difficult spiritual practice regularly, could we actually be satisfying both our own deep hunger to be nourished in the healing presence of God, and also God’s hunger and longing to be gracious and compassionate to us despite our long history of rebellion (Isaiah 30:18)?

We don’t have to be perfect in our spiritual practices to receive the gifts of God’s presence and pleasure. May this empower us to keep trying, knowing that both our own hunger and God’s longing will be communally satisfied. ❶

Victoria is in a season of learning to slow down and rest in the Father’s pleasure. She attended Mississauga Chinese Baptist Church for many years and is a regular contributor to *Live* magazine.

# Primary Influence: *Love*

How love can become your very foundation

What is shaping your life? Can you list the top five things that currently influence your life? How much influence does the love of God have in shaping your everyday life? How much influence *could* the love of God have in shaping your life?

BY KATHY GUST

PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST surprising things about the message of Jesus is that we can live lives where the primary shaping influence is love. Think about it. According to Jesus, powerful things like hatred, war, and the quest for control don't have to be the primary shaper of anyone's life. Neither does death, decay, suffering, greed, pride, or deep pain. Consider the power these things can have in a person's life, the way they can influence how people think about themselves and act in the world. It often seems unbelievable to think that something as seemingly simple as love could be more powerful than these things. And yet, it is what Jesus offers.

Jesus offers people a life where love becomes the very foundation that they walk on. He offers a life that is *actively conscious* of the fact that even terrible pain and suffering will never have the final word about who they are. Jesus gives people the ability to live a life that reflects the deepest reality of who they are – people created by love, through love, for love.

## What does God's love look like in real life?

It looks like many things. From your very breath, to the joy you experience at the laughter and antics of children, to the goodness of friendship – God's love is in it all. The warmth of the sun on your face, the sheer beauty of creation, the comforting embrace of someone you love. All the opportunities you have in life to begin again, learn, and not have any particular circumstance define you are manifestations of God's love. When you hear that still small voice inside your soul that gives solace or comfort or wisdom or peace – that is God's love. It is impossible for a human being to avoid the love of God; it's simply everywhere.

## What does a life primarily shaped by love look like?

Simply, it looks like the life of Jesus. It's a life that exudes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. It's a life that is free to make choices and not be driven to act by things like unforgiveness, harsh judgement, greed, pride, fear, or anything else that isn't love. It looks like being patient, kind, and gentle towards oneself and others. It's a life of many surprises, of deep interior work and attention. A life shaped by love is vibrant and alert to what's true. It's a life walking with and being led by God.

## How do you go about living that kind of life?

- 1 The first step will always be to turn to God. Ask God to give you the grace to live this kind of life.
- 2 Ask God to show you what has more shaping influence in your life than love. Then, once you have greater understanding, ask God to help you re-order what is influencing you.
 

Many things could be primarily influencing and shaping your life. The drive for success or to be seen as important. The desire to be in control. Greed, pride, envy, jealousy. The drive to prove people wrong. A sense of shame or guilt over something that happened in the past. The desire to be happy, or at peace, or to avoid conflict at all costs. The desire to avoid pain and suffering. It can be overt or subtle, harmful, or good. The significant characteristic is that it has taken primary influence in shaping your life.
- 3 Ask God to lead and guide, to help you become more aware and attentive to the love of God in your everyday life. When you notice the love of God in your life, pause to savour it, allowing it to strengthen you. Allow God's love to *inform you about who you are*. Believe God. **1**

Kathy is a spiritual director. She is well known to Baptist Women through her workshops and guest teaching at events. She will be a guest at our April Conference.



# Do We Love God For Who He Is?

The most important commandment

BY **LAURA TIESSEN**

IT STRUCK ME that my focus lately has been much more on loving my neighbour and taking care of myself than on loving God with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:28–31). Global events of the last two years including this pandemic has set me on a course of learning how to love others and myself in new ways. But Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God and we need to put Him first even as we strive to love our neighbour and take care of ourselves. First things first.

Do we take God's love for us for granted? Do we sometimes treat God too casually? Do we love Him for who He is, not just what He does for us? Does our love include awe and reverence when we contemplate His holiness? Hebrews 12:28 says: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." (NIV)

We love God because He first loved us. He created us, He became one of us, He taught us, He died for us, He rose again for us, and He's coming back for us. All of these things He did because He loves us and wants to be with us.

So then, how do we love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength? Christians have been thinking about this for centuries, and often following the example of Jesus, they have developed certain spiritual disciplines or practices. Here's a chart I came up with to help me to figure out ways of loving God more with everything I've got. It may help you too.

## LOVING GOD WITH OUR...

*Symptoms of not  
loving God with this  
part of our being*

*There's a  
**spiritual discipline**  
to help with that!*

*How do we start?*

*But Jesus said that the  
greatest commandment  
is to love God and we  
need to put Him first  
even as we strive to love  
our neighbour and take  
care of ourselves.  
First things first.*

CONNECT TO GOD

<p><b>HEART</b> Centre of emotional, intellectual, and moral activity<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>SOUL</b> Life, personality, inner self, identity<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><b>MIND</b> Reason, intellect, understanding, worldview<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>STRENGTH</b> Capacity, resources, “muchness”<sup>4</sup></p>
<p>Half-hearted love Insincerity Doublemindedness Self-deception</p>	<p>Easily distracted God is distant Forgetting one’s calling</p>	<p>Cynicism Frequent doubts Adopting ideologies Compartmentalism</p>	<p>Self-glory Pride Forgetting one’s calling</p>
<p><b>Confession and gratitude:</b> Repent of sin and accept God’s forgiveness and cleansing</p>	<p><b>Rule of life:</b> Schedule regular activities with God in mind</p>	<p><b>Teachability:</b> Trust God more than your own perceptions or logic</p>	<p><b>Stewardship:</b> Be responsible with the gifts God has given you</p>
<p>Do daily examen Write in journal Confess to others</p>	<p>Prayerfully choose one practice to start. Then do it. Discuss rule of life with spiritual friend, family, or small group.</p>	<p>Study the Bible Study theology Read Christian books about relevant issues Listen to Christian teachers</p>	<p>List 10 of your capabilities, resources, strengths, or opportunities and offer them to God.<sup>5</sup></p>

**WE CAN LOVE GOD WITH...**

**OUR WHOLE HEART** when we are honest with Him, share with Him our faults and weaknesses and ask Him to change us.

**OUR WHOLE SOUL** when we invite Him into every part of our lives.

**OUR WHOLE MIND** when we devote time to get to know Him better.

**OUR WHOLE STRENGTH** when we dedicate to Him the resources He has given us in love. ①

A Tyndale Seminary graduate, Laura has taught ESL to adult immigrants for 28 years.

1 [www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/heart/](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/heart/)  
 2 [medium.com/gregsimas/how-to-love-god-with-all-your-soul-b4555d60f89](https://medium.com/gregsimas/how-to-love-god-with-all-your-soul-b4555d60f89)  
 3 [www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/mind-reason.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/mind-reason.html)  
 4 [bibleproject.com/explore/video/meod-strength](http://bibleproject.com/explore/video/meod-strength)  
 5 [hilltopth.org/blog/2016/08/what-does-it-mean-to-love-the-lord-with-your-strength/](http://hilltopth.org/blog/2016/08/what-does-it-mean-to-love-the-lord-with-your-strength/)



# God Speaks While You Sleep

## Paying Attention

BY ALISON LATTY

On March 10, Alison was a panel member in *CBOQ Now's* online panel discussion on dreams and mission. To view, visit [baptist.ca/cboq-now](https://baptist.ca/cboq-now)

SOME PEOPLE FUNCTION WELL on a few hours of sleep a night. I am not one of those people.

I have always liked a lot of sleep and am happy with the 10 hours I usually get a night! Apparently, for most adults, *at least* seven hours of sleep a night is needed for our minds and bodies to recharge. There is another important aspect to sleep though that is also part of God's design for us to live and function well – our dreams.

God speaks to us through dreams. When Joseph was brought from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he explained that the cows and corn that Pharaoh had seen as he slept had significant meaning, critical for the future of the country. The fat cows and full ears of corn represented abundance while the lean, ugly cows and withered, scorched ears of corn represented famine. There would be seven years of abundance in Egypt, followed by seven years of severe famine. It would happen soon and so Pharaoh needed to take action (Genesis 41:1–7, 25–32).

We see here, and in the many dreams in Scripture, that God speaks through symbols in dreams. The cows and corn represented provision and food, the number seven represented years and the fact that the same point was made twice, with both cows and corn, meant that it would happen soon (verse 32).

God's use of symbols shows us that He loves to hide things for us to seek them out. In Proverbs 25:2 we read that "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of Kings."



This interpretation completely tempered my frustration and renewed my sense of hope and purpose.

There are biblical meanings to many symbols, for example numbers and animals, that help us to interpret dreams and of course, as Joseph did, *we rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal meaning to us*. God delights in our search, because it means we have to draw close to Him, to know His voice.

My initial encounter with biblical dream interpretation came from telling a family member a dream I had had. In this dream, *I was in a kitchen, looking out of the window and longing to be outside. I was given a key and, outside the kitchen, reproached someone for being mean to someone I knew was a leader*. That was it. The interpretation, though, was so profound for me: I was in a time of preparation and training (the kitchen) and, although I was longing to be released from that (window of opportunity/vision) and ‘get out there’ I needed to be patient. There was purpose in that preparation time and I would be given authority (the key) to do what was to come next. There was a stewardship call on my life in the leadership arena (speaking up for the leader). This interpretation completely tempered my frustration and renewed my sense of hope and purpose.

Since that day, over 10 years ago, I have had many more of my dreams interpreted and I have trained in the principles and application of biblical dream interpretation. I now interpret other people’s dreams and watch as God encourages, warns, prepares, heals or delivers them, gives creative ideas to them, and so much more. All through dreams.

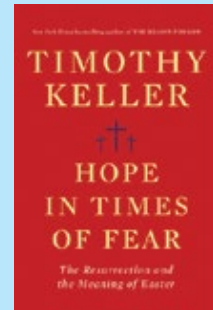
In these last days, God is pouring out his Spirit *on all flesh* and part of this is ‘dreaming dreams from God’ (Joel 2:28). Not all dreams are from God, but if you have a dream that is staying with you and you are curious about its meaning, consider having it interpreted. If you don’t recall any dreams, as you fall asleep ask God to speak to you. Then write down what you dream as soon as you wake. If you want to go deeper, consider training in biblical dream interpretation.

God is speaking. Let’s pay attention! **1**

Alison has led workshops at Baptist Women April Conferences. Along with her husband, CBOQ Associate Rev. Cid Latty, she co-founded Café Church, a significant community outreach done by Baptist churches across England.

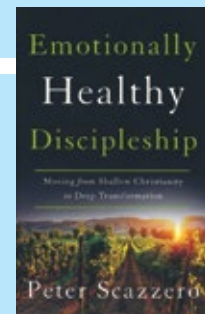


## Bernice's Picks



**Hope in Times of Fear:  
The Resurrection and the  
Meaning Of Easter**  
Timothy Keller

**\$23**



**Emotionally Healthy  
Discipleship: Moving From  
Shallow Christianity to  
Deep Transformation**  
Peter Scazzero

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# SHAPED BY LOVE

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.  
Hebrews 10:23–24 (ESV)*

BY **LINDA ELLSWORTH**

Sometimes I wonder if we have forgotten the very basis of spiritual formation. The God who created us in His image, who redeemed us from our own disobedience and sin, and who provided the comfort of His Spirit to live within us is the *only* One who can transform us into the likeness of His Son, who is Love Eternal!

## Psalm 103

David's knowledge and understanding of his position before his Creator and his need of transformation is very evident in Psalm 103.

**VERSE 1–5**, we are called to active worship because of the benefits God has bestowed on us. List each of the six praise items named here and add a note dating the most recent example in your life of each benefit.

**VERSE 6–7** give us a little reminder of two of God's characteristics, and underscores the reality of those characteristics with historical references (verse 7).

**VERSE 8–14** give us a beautiful description of Love personified. Read each verse in this section several times, reflecting on the meaning of each word. Write a love letter back to the Father, expressing to Him what each God-characteristic meant to you as you ruminated on the depth of God's love for you.

As you did so, did you not experience God's love bubbling and welling up from deep inside?

**VERSE 15–16** are reminders of the temporal nature of life here on earth. Whether in the "green grass" stage of youth, or the "withering leaf" of old age, these verses are a reminder of the saying by British cricketer and missionary to China, C.T. Studd: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last." How does this reminder affect you in terms of your life for Christ, and your love of those around you?

These verses are followed by another inspiring "but" of the Bible.

**VERSE 17–18**. Notice verse 18 gives clarification and precursor to the *but* promises contained in verse 17. Starting with verse 18, describe in your own words, the promises you read here. How are they an encouragement to you at this stage of your life?

**VERSE 19**, David recognizes that the very foundation of love, mercy, gentleness, forgiveness, truth, and justice is based on one solid fact. What is that fact?

**VERSE 20–22**, David calls for an unhindered response, and ends with the beautiful, yet very personal charge: "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

**TRANSFORM** *verb*

To change (something) completely and usually in a good way

**TRANSFORMATION** *noun*

A complete or major change in someone's or something's appearance, form, etc.

## Philippians 2:1-16

**VERSE 1-4.** Paul first challenges the Philippian church to love in action. Describe what the outcome of that love looks like.

These verses certainly hold a great deal of conviction regarding the present self-absorption of today's society! According to your descriptors listed above, explain how each one may be a personal challenge to you.

The bad news is, you can't do it! The good news is, you don't have to do it on your own!

**VERSE 5-11** tell the story of the God-Man who chose to exhibit Love to a fallen creation. Discuss what that sacrifice meant, according to these verses.

Did you notice the beginning of verse 5?

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (NKJV)*

*"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (NIV)*

This is not a suggestion. It is a command.

**VERSE 12-13.** The good news is that as we recognize our need to love others as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, it is God who will shape and form us by His will and for His pleasure...to love and grow in Him.

**VERSE 14-16.** Once again Paul reiterates what our conduct is to be like. List these behaviours and resultant characteristics.

What are *you* struggling with today? List those things, and give it to Him.

In verse 16a, Paul gives a final admonition to fully experience this spiritual formation in our life. What are we to do?

And so, dear women, as God forms the mind of Christ in you, shine on! 📢

Love is an  
action.

Love is based on the  
Word.

Love is born through  
transformation.

It is to be  
pursued and practiced.

The process is  
relationship.

The outcome is  
peace.

The visual is  
obvious to all.

Linda is the member care coordinator for  
Christian Camps International





# E N J O Y I N G G O D

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In January, *Live* magazine sat down with **Ken Shigematsu** to talk about why having a rule of life matters.

Q

**Did you always consider yourself to be contemplative?**

**A:** I'm not a naturally contemplative person – my mind defaults to a busy state...I was a 7/11 man in Tokyo working from 7 a.m.–11 p.m. in the corporate world – so things were pretty crazy. I eventually became a pastor in Vancouver, but I found myself keeping almost as busy and felt like I was constantly treading water.

One day my mentor Leighton Ford invited me to join him on a pilgrimage in Ireland. While there I learned about this way of life that the monks described as a rule of life and enabled them to experience God in all their lives – not just while praying in the chapel. Through this rule of life, they were able to experience God in their everyday work, their relationships, their rest – their everything. Learning about this rule of life paved the long path to a contemplative life.

**Q:** In the book, you talk about how there's a contemplative (a nun) in each of us. How do we discover her?

**A:** You don't need to go on a pilgrimage to Ireland or experience a crisis to have a spiritual awakening. Anything that gets us out of our self-absorption can help to awaken the contemplative in us. Worshipping in community, becoming more fully present to God by exposing ourselves to beauty – art, music, nature – can help foster a sense of being part of something larger than ourselves.

**Q: What is a rule of life and why is having a rule of life so important?**

**A:** The root meaning of the word *rule* in this context— is *trellis*. A trellis is a structure that supports a grapevine so that it receives more sunlight, can be pruned and guided in its growth so that it ultimately produces better grapes and wines.

A rule of life is a structure or rhythm that supports our relationship with Jesus, enabling us to experience more of Him – His character, His life, His fruit. The rule of life also protects our most important priorities and relationships.

**Q: Why does a rule of life matter?**

**A:** It's essential because all of us have so many good ideas [and important values], yet it's hard to live out those ideas week to week. What a rule of life does is arrange our lives so that our most important values are lived out. For example, if you value your relationship with God, you will have something in your rhythm of life that supports that. You won't be thinking and saying one thing and living something else.



**God In My Everything:  
How An Ancient Rhythm  
Helps Busy People Enjoy  
God** by Ken Shigematsu  
launches our book club  
program for 2022.

**Q: What are some of the barriers to setting up and sustaining a rule of life?**

**A:** A huge barrier is trying to cram too much into your rule of life and feeling like your life is heavier, more burdensome.

If you see having this rule of life as a competition, a status symbol or a way of boosting yourself in the eyes of God, it will feel burdensome. But if you see it as an invitation – to do what, deep down, you want to do – then it becomes a joy. It will be transformational and sustainable.

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*There's a direct connection between being exposed to the love and beauty of Jesus and bringing that love and beauty and justice to our homes, work, church and the world.*

---

The key to sustainability is to make sure that your rule is a Spirit-inspired rhythm that will make your life feel lighter. So, start small and keep it simple. Find one practice that will fill you with joy and contentment in God. Then find another practice that connects you to others in relationship or service. Experiment and be gentle with yourself.

**Q: What can we “do” to dismantle these barriers?**

**A:** The goal is not to have a “balanced life” (which is often impossible) but to have a deeply centred life in the love of Christ and in response to God's call for us. Sometimes our calling will involve sacrificial service

on behalf of our family. There may be other times when we'll be called to serve the larger world on mission. The key is responding to how God, the Father, is leading us.

So, let's pray that our life isn't driven out of a misguided need to be heroic but lived as a response to God's call.

**Q: What were (are) some of the barriers for you and how did (do) you dismantle them?**

**A:** I can feel like there are 126 monkeys in my head at any one time. So, I have two practices that help me to tame my busy thoughts. When I practice centering prayer, I consciously breathe in and out and repeat a passage or a word from Scripture to quiet myself before the Lord. I also do an early morning run through my neighbourhood or swim a local pool. The rhythmic motion of running or swimming help me feel more in synch with God and serve to still my mind.

**Q: You say that having a rule of life – that trellis – helps us to reach out in the areas of justice and witness. Tell us more.**

**A:** There's a direct connection between being exposed to the love and beauty of Jesus and bringing that love and beauty and justice to our homes, work, church and the world. The more that we are in tune with God, the more we will have to offer others. Compassion, joy, love will flow out from us. As we are *with* God – we will be *for* others.

**Q: What do you want Baptist women to take away as we read and discuss *God In My Everything***

**A:** I hope that women will discover the joy and the wonder of being able to experience God not just in their times of formal prayer but in their work, family life, friendships, resting and sleep and play. I hope that they will know the confidence, joy and contentment that come from knowing God in their everything. ①

# CHOOSE THE BETTER WAY

## A HOPE-FILLED INVITATION

In Luke 10:38–42, Martha is stressed and overwhelmed. When she finally comes to Jesus, all that’s been building within Martha starts leaking out – bitterness, grumbling, complaining, and self-pity. Jesus has compassion, repeating her name twice to get her attention. “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

BY DR. SHARON SIMMONDS

IN MY WORK with Christian leaders at Arrow Leadership, I observe a natural default for leaders to get caught up in doing great things for God, pouring themselves out for others and often not paying attention to the condition of their own souls. Pervasive weariness is running as an undercurrent in many leaders’ lives, and they have lost sight of the better way. Stress and overwhelm are threats to a leader’s soul and indeed to all our souls. Consuming work, endless opportunities, people’s needs, and guaranteed opposition – we’re up against more than what we can handle on our own (*Ephesians 6:13, MSG*).

How can leaders navigate the tension between what’s needed from us, and what *we* need for us to live and lead well? It involves making better choices through Jesus-centred rhythms and practices.

1

### RE-CONNECTION WITH JESUS

At Arrow Leadership, our starting point in developing Jesus-centred leaders is to get them reconnected with Jesus, experiencing His presence, responding to His invitation:

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28–30, MSG*

Being led more by Jesus is a hope-filled invitation, a daily choice, and an ongoing practice. It grounds leaders in their identity and authority



in Christ, bringing perspective, clarity, and focus. With eyes fixed on Jesus, worshipping Him, leaders become increasingly attentive to the Spirit and more courageous to make better choices for themselves and those they lead.

2

### **SUSTAINED CONNECTION WITH OTHERS**

Another essential practice for Jesus-centred leaders is to be in meaningful connection with a few Spirit-filled companions. In this context, leaders can share honestly about life and leadership. There is mutual regard, accountability, encouragement, and correction as needed. This is a safe, but not soft community – an environment where leaders are attentive to God’s presence and His kingdom purposes. They are also prayerful and alert to the schemes of the enemy, reminding one another to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (*Ephesians 6*). It’s not possible to endure the pressures of leadership without the loving presence and support of others.

3

### **INTENTIONAL SOUL-NOURISHING RHYTHMS AND PRACTICES**

Along with being connected in relationship with Jesus and others, wise leaders intentionally incorporate rhythms and practices to bring them even more alive in who they are created to be. For some, this will mean getting outdoors and appreciating God’s creation. For others, it will involve creative or culinary arts, volunteering with a cause completely different from work, getting back to something that used to be important but somehow got lost in the busyness of life, or learning a new skill. Being involved in a life-giving activity is simply good for the soul.

4

### **JESUS’ MODEL**

Jesus had a large assignment to fulfil and He was wholeheartedly engaged in that mission. He also modelled a compelling ease in leadership by tending to the condition of His soul. He withdrew to quiet places for solitude and rest. He meditated on Scripture and talked with His Father for perspective and guidance. He leaned into community with a few close companions. He enjoyed lingering meals with people He loved. Like Jesus, leaders who thrive are committed to realistic rhythms of rest, community, and work. There’s a place for everything, and everything is in its rightful place.

You and I are up against more than what we can handle on our own: our humanity, the humanity of others, and an enemy of our souls who would like nothing better than to keep Christian leaders distracted, stressed, and overwhelmed. Gratefully, with Jesus, we are well-positioned to choose a better way. ❶

Sharon is the director of programs at Arrow Leadership.

### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

#### **Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry**

— Ruth Haley Barton

#### **The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery**

— David Benner

#### **Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distraction**

— Arthur Boers

#### **The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath**

— Mark Buchanan

#### **Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation**

— Robert Mulholland

#### **The Cultivated Life: From Ceaseless Striving to Receiving Joy**

— Susan Phillips

#### **Emotionally Healthy Spirituality**

— Peter Scazzero

#### **God in My Everything: How an Ancient Rhythm Helps Busy People Enjoy God**

— Ken Shigematsu

#### **Survival Guide for the Soul: How to Flourish Spiritually in a World That Pressures Us to Achieve**

— Ken Shigematsu

# Kids & Spiritual Formation

“Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”

COLOSSIANS 2:7, NLT

BY REV. TANYA YUEN

I WILL NEVER FORGET the experiences I had with a group of three- and four-year-olds, quietly listening for God to speak as we sat in a time of listening prayer after reading the story of young Samuel and the priest Eli. “I heard God tell me he loved me!” exclaimed one young boy excitedly. Another quickly chimed in to say, “Me, too! And He said I am special!” Or the time I watched an eight-year-old gather around with all the adults to lay hands on and pray for God’s healing touch for a woman experiencing some health issues. Her simple, yet powerful prayer was inspiring. I remember when my own three-year-old daughter said we should pray for the sad man she noticed at church that morning. One of my favourite memories is of four young brothers serving muffins and cookies to guests who waited in our church for their turn to go into our food bank, offering smiles and kind words as they moved around the room interacting with



PHOTO MIKE CAMPBELL (UNSPASH.COM)





the adults. I could tell you story after story of the ways children have both ministered to and blessed me as I bear witness and give space for them to express the ways the Holy Spirit is working within them.

Christian spiritual formation is all about the process of growing in relationship with God and becoming more like Jesus and this process begins right from childhood. Often with kids, we put our focus on teaching them about God and instructing them in the ways of the Church, but we forget to intentionally cultivate an environment in which they can experience God and grow in relationship with Him.

Spiritual disciplines are rhythms, like breathing, and they can be the foundation of that spiritual formation culture. Engaging children in spiritual disciplines offers kids a way of training to be like Jesus. Engaging them when they are young sets them on a firm foundation that they can build upon. They begin to have an awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence and to form a relationship with Jesus. It does not have to be complicated but it does require intentionality. Remember that spiritual formation is about the long game. It isn't just a Sunday school lesson or one time teaching. It's how we intentionally live life with Jesus.

Becoming more intentional can be as natural as noticing the presence of God around you and speaking that out loud to your kids and grandkids. It can be as simple as giving short instructive phrases about why you engage in a spiritual discipline, and then inviting them into it with you, or doing it front of them.

Indeed, when it comes to spiritual formation with children, the most important thing you can do is lead by example. If you want your kids to be formed spiritually then you need to be growing in your relationship with God yourself. ❶

Tanya works with CBOQ as their associate for children and family ministries.

## Simple Ways to Get started

**Ages 0-4:** Teach young kids to say "Good morning God" and "Goodnight God" to help them develop an awareness that our days are held in the hands of God. Teach young kids to learn to spend time in prayer listening for God. Invite them to hold their hands out, like they are receiving a gift, close their eyes, say the words "Speak Lord, I am listening." And wait for 30 seconds.

**Ages 5-8:** Attach prayer prompts to existing habits or circumstances. For example, invite kids to use brushing their teeth in the morning as a time


to silently offer a prayer to God that they would speak kind words, offer blessing and encouragement to all they meet that day. Or use the sound of an ambulance or fire engine siren to prompt them to stop and pray for people who are hurt, first responders, medical staff, etc.

**Ages 9+:** Reframe the questions you ask kids to help them develop more intentional awareness on the presence of God. For example, instead of asking "How are you doing or how was your day at school?" ask, "How have you noticed God in your day today?"

**Read:** For simple ideas of ways to weave faith practices into everyday life, I highly recommend Traci Smith's books including *Faithful Families*. Some of her books' topics include different ways to pray and ideas for observing Church calendar seasons including Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter.

For even more ideas and resources, visit [cboqkids.ca/spiritualformation](http://cboqkids.ca/spiritualformation)





***BREAD  
OF  
LIFE***

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PHOTO JEREMY YAP (UNSPLASH.COM)

## *Kendall Vanderslice on how baking bread teaches us about rest, trust and God's love.*

BY RENEE JAMES

**B**

“BREAKING BREAD IS INCREDIBLY HARD on your body physically,” says Kendall Vanderslice, professional baker, writer, theologian and a James Beard Foundation national scholar for her work bridging food and religion. She should know. After college, she worked long hours in a bakery. Bread bracketed her Sundays; long early morning baking of bread capped off by Sunday evening services where bread was broken and shared during Communion. Even as she left the punishing labour of the bakery to focus on writing her masters thesis, she kept baking a loaf of bread every Sunday. “It was a rhythm that healed me,” she remembers.

For Kendall, bread is funny, fabulous, simple, yet at its core – incredibly complex. “There’s so much more to learn about bread and baking bread. Bread is endlessly surprising and there’s almost no end to what it still left for us to learn.” It’s that element of mystery and trust that makes her consider bread the ideal metaphor for our faith and the making of bread a deep spiritual practice.

“It goes back to Christ’s words to John. Christ calls Himself the Bread of Life and in John 1

He’s identified as the Word made flesh,” Kendall reminds me. “So often in Western Christianity we focus on the Word; having correct doctrine; the right words. Our faith happens in our heads, but when Christ says that He is bread, we come to Christ and can know Him with our senses,” she continues. In fact, Kendall believes that many of our spiritual practices – the habits in our lives that support and sustain our relationship with Jesus – need to be ones that we do with our bodies, using our senses. Like baking bread. “In the making of bread, we get to know creation and we get to know the God who calls himself Bread.”

### *REST AND TRUST*

In his book *Out of the House of Bread – Satisfying Your Hunger for God With the Spiritual Disciplines*, Preston Yancey prefaces his bread recipe with these words: “Total time is about six hours, though only a fourth of that requires your direct involvement. You’re waiting the rest of the time. (p. 31).” The bulk of the transformation that turns flour, water and yeast into bread happens while the dough is at rest.

*“Living is all about trust – that Christ is doing what He said He would do.”*

“This teaches us how to live as disciples of Jesus,” says Kendall. “We begin to understand that over time, transformation happens. We can’t see it but we can trust that God is at work in our lives.”


This understanding has shaped Kendall’s journey with God. She delights in the freedom that the surety of transformation over time – during rest – has given her. “It’s given me the ability to go slowly; that even if all I’m doing is just ‘the next step,’ that over time, I’m doing the work.” In fact, as she points out, so much of the work is “outside of her and of us, just like so much of the work with bread is reliant on the yeast, microbes, room temperature and more.” Christ controls our lives. So much is outside of us and so “living is all about trust – that Christ is doing what He said He would do.”

Even so, Kendall agrees – a baker has to know her numbers; has to weigh and measure. She needs to know whether her loaf will rise or not. A wise baker, like a wise disciple, puts things in place that make for a successful loaf and Jesus-centred life. And yet, “she can be correct and right with all these things,” Kendall softly challenges. “But if she doesn’t let the bread rest, she won’t get what she wants. Formation takes time!”

### INTIMACY

Kendall’s relationship with bread has taught her about God’s love of us: He loves us in tactile ways; His act of creation was an act of love; His desire to create humanity in this world and to delight in them was an act of love; the fact that God created us in bodies that need to eat is an act of love.

### COMMUNITY

God also created us to live in community. Breaking bread together remains the most basic expression of that truth. The inability to meet regularly in-person since spring 2020 is hard and it should be hard because it runs counter to how God created us. Even so, Kendall suggests that the distancing can teach us something about how important it is for us to be together. She also points to ways in which we can find respite in the midst of distance. In 2020, she would bake a big box of small loaves. These loaves would be dropped off to every person in her church. Every one would then gather over Zoom to eat their loaves together in a dinner service. As Kendall says, “our very existence is an outpouring of God’s love and He continues to show us that love in the gift of food and in the gift of community.” 



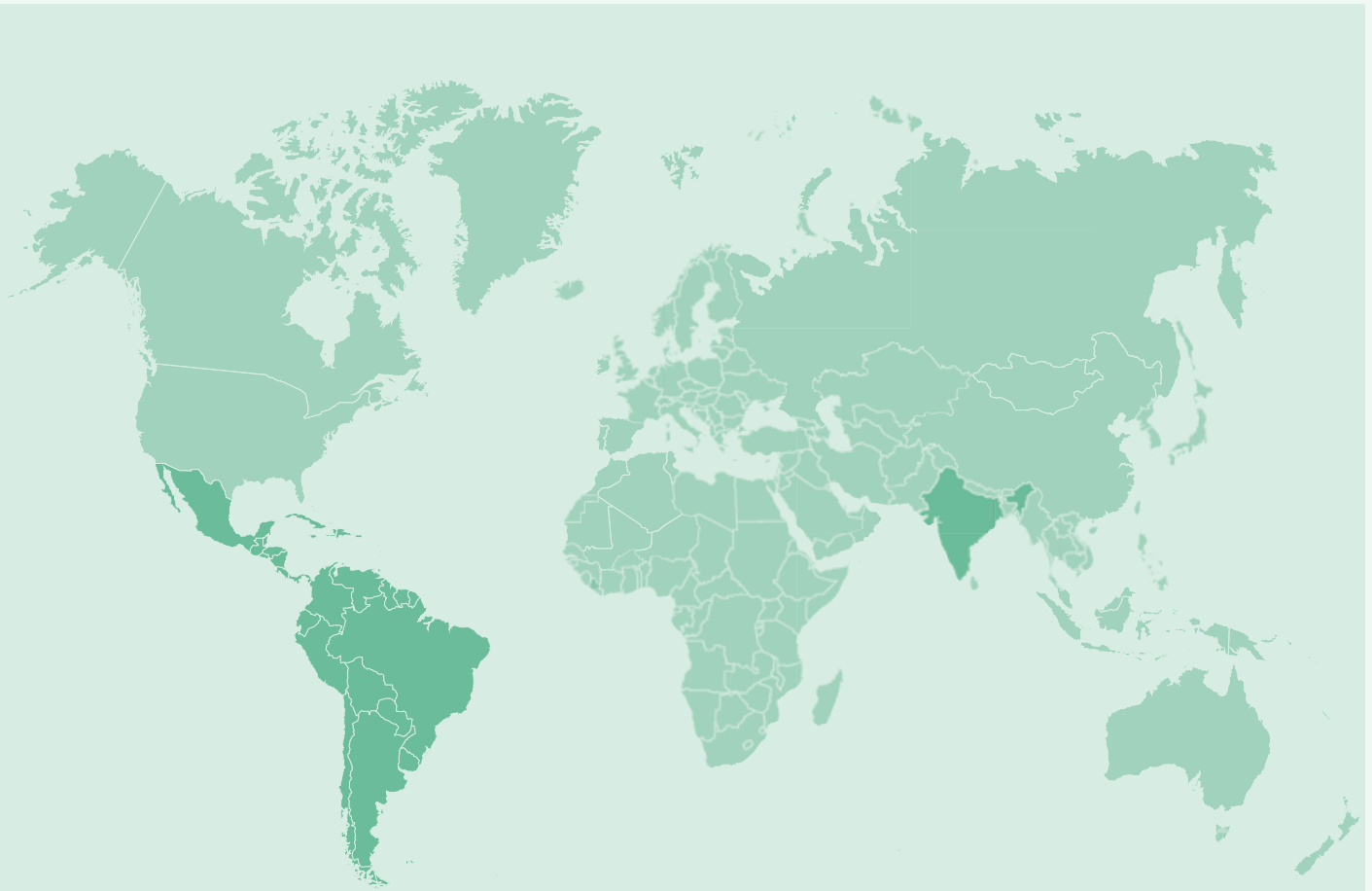
**Kendall’s suggestions on preparing for her Saturday morning workshop at our April Conference *Shaped by Love, Shaped to Love***

**Think** about when you’re in the kitchen. Even you’re being quick, take a brief moment to consider that God is present with you in your kitchen and in the movement of chopping up vegetables and pulling dishes together and sliding them into the oven to bake.

**Listen** to the podcast *Kitchen Meditations*. Kendall designed these 20-minute podcasts for you to listen to while you’re in the kitchen. They may helpful to get you thinking about God while you’re in the kitchen and doing tasks in that space and time.

**Visit** You’ll find that podcast and more at [edibletheology.com](http://edibletheology.com) and at [kendallvanderslice.com](http://kendallvanderslice.com)





## A WINDOW ON LATIN AMERICA

**Pray for our prayer partners –  
Unión Femenil Bautista de América Latina  
(Latin American Baptist Women's Union)**

**PRAY** for each country in Latin America. Pray for the leaders and directors of local and national policy – that in all they do, the justice and mercy of God would be made known and that they would defend the marginalized and oppressed.

**PRAY** for all the Baptist Women leaders across this Union – that God will protect their hearts from pride, fear and insecurity. Pray for a sense of God's delight and favour to be made known to them.

**PRAY** for Baptist women and their work and their workplaces. Pray that in all ways, they will represent Jesus' love.

**PRAY** for women and children who are suffering. Pray for wisdom for the Baptist women who care for them, for the overturning of powers and authorities that keep these vulnerable ones oppressed; for the swift justice of God.

## STRATEGIC GIVING 2022

Remember to support the Mising Tribe and Soura Widows projects in **India**. These projects are overseen by Canadian Baptist Ministries in partnership with the local church. This summer, gather with women from your church community and join our Active In Mission team. It's a fun way to raise awareness and funds for these projects.

Learn more about these projects in the January/February issue of *Live* magazine and visit our website: [baptistwomen.com/causes/international-projects](https://baptistwomen.com/causes/international-projects). 

APRIL 22 + 23

# SHAPED BY LOVE

# SHAPED TO LOVE



**KATHY GUST**  
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION



**JENNA COWANS**  
WORSHIP



**KENDALL  
VANDERSLICE**  
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## A HISTORY MOMENT

# Encounter with God Precedes Mission and Service

## More soul-searching

“THE 1967 FALL EVENTS call women to reassess their commitment and renew their loyalties, the November *Link*\* reports. The Fellowship Weekend in Hamilton “hinges on a disturbing question at a time when there is a collapse of ‘organized religion’, how relevant and meaningful is the work of the BWMS? The Big Chief Retreat finds the answer in its emphasis on *spiritual power through communion with Christ* and...the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit.”

—*Our Heritage Becomes Our Challenge, A Scrapbook History of the Baptist Women’s Movement in Ontario and Quebec* by Esther Barnes (p. 259)

\**The Link & Visitor*, the previous name of this magazine.

## We Remember

Each generation has the opportunity to fuel mission for the next. We are thankful for the following gifts:

### IN HONOUR OF

Bernie Lougheed – *99th birthday*

Ina Evans, Stayner – *99th birthday*

Audrey Morikawa, Scarborough – *90th birthday*

### IN MEMORY OF

Mary Childerley, Hamilton

Lilian Furnivall, Niagara Falls

Linda Rothery, Cambridge

Marilyn Waltho, Arkona



“

**Kneading {dough} is a work of wrestling, of working out something from chaos into something that has form. Intercessory prayer is like that. We are working out with God the mess of things, the chaos of being, and seeing what shape and form it could take on when we turn it over, again and again, back to God.”**

**Preston Yancey**, *Out of the House of Bread: Satisfying Your Hunger For God With the Spiritual Disciplines* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2016, p. 72–73)

**live**

How we connect with each other has had to change, but *Live* magazine keeps our bonds lively and strong. Let a woman in your community know about *Live* magazine. A subscription costs just \$20. Pay at ***baptistwomen.com*** or call the editor, Renée James. Choose from three formats: print, audio (CD) or online.

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