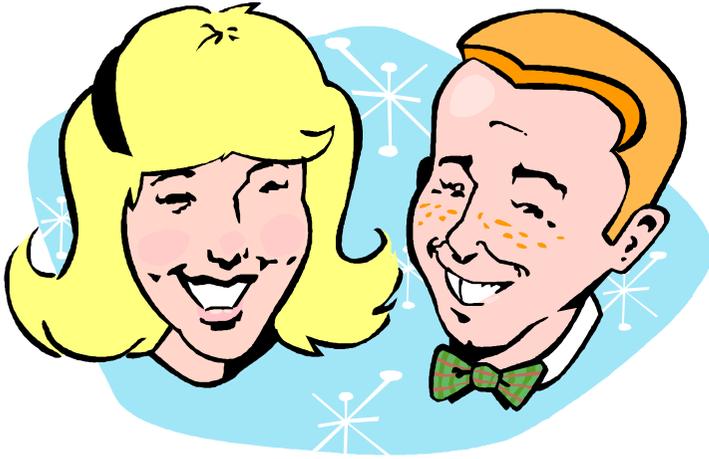


Booklet 6

Helps for Young People



8 Steps

On My Own

Compiled by Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel for its young people

8 Steps to a Better Friendship with God

by Holly Vicente Robaina

"Where's Angela?" I asked. The rest of our family was slumped on the living room couch. Everyone shrugged. Curious, I went in search of my sis.

I checked each room of the house. When I finally found her, she was intensely focused on something. She looked up, revealing the object of her attention—her Bible.

I started to notice that Angela "disappeared" about the same time each day. I wondered how she found time to read God's Word: Between school, choir, church and volunteer activities, Angela's one of the busiest people I know. So I asked her.

"Well, every day I have to make the choice to spend time with God," she said. "It's not easy, but it's worth it—devotions help me to get to know God on my own, to have a real, personal relationship with him."

Angela had some great tips on how she formed her good habit. Here are eight of them.

1. Schedule a devotional "appointment." Write a specific time and location on your calendar, or in your planner or PDA. You might want to choose a time that corresponds with another daily activity: after you get up in the morning, right after school, or immediately after dinner. Try to avoid putting devotions off until the end of the day. "If I wait until bedtime, I usually end up skipping it because I fall asleep," Angela says.
2. Choose your tools. Some basics include: 1) *A Bible*. Biblegateway.com offers 16 versions for you to compare, from that classic King James Version to modern versions like The Message. Or, consider using a student or study Bible—many contain reading plans and practical ways to apply Scripture to everyday situations. 2) *A devotional book*. Some are specifically for students. Many have a "thought for the day" and questions to help you relate the

verses you've read to your own life. 3) *A journal*. Use it to record your favourite verses and reflections on Scripture. Or, try writing a poem or letter to God.

3. Start with prayer. Ask God to keep you focused and to help you understand what you're about to read. "Sometimes, my mind just starts to drift. I tell God I've set aside this time especially for him, and that I choose to focus on him," Angela says.
4. Use your Bible. Even if you use a devotional book with verses printed in it, read the passages in your Bible anyway. "Prove it to yourself that it's really there," Angela suggests. "It helps you to think of that verse as part of God's Word, and not as just an excerpt from some random book." Plus, you might spot another meaningful verse that wasn't included in the devotional book.
5. Read it until you get it. First, read verse by verse—read each verse several times until you understand what it is saying, then move on to the next one. Then, go back and read the entire passage, putting its meaning all together in your mind. Even if you're familiar with a passage, try to read it like you've never seen it before—don't skim. God might give you an understanding of something you've never noticed before.
6. Don't just read the Bible—do what it says (James 1:22). Make a list of personal traits (patience, kindness) or spiritual goals (witnessing, prayer) you'd like to work on. Each week, choose one item from your list. Using a concordance, biblegateway.com or a devotional book, find verses about that topic. Then, try to find ways to apply what you've read.
7. Make a commitment. On a piece of paper, write these words: "I commit to read my Bible every day for the next month." Sign your name and tape the paper somewhere in your bedroom where you can see it.

8. Don't give up. Let's face it: There will be days when you skip devotions. Just try to keep it a high priority and do it whenever you can. "God is not going to abandon you if you don't do a devotion one day—he knows what our schedules are like, and he knows our hearts," Angela says. "Any time that you spend with God, he can use it to teach you and to grow your faith."

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On My Own

*When he was 16, pro hockey player **Shane Doan** was living alone—no parents, no rules. How would he handle all that temptation?*

by Mark Moring

He was 16, living on his own, 600 miles from home, chasing his boyhood dream of playing professional hockey. No parents to answer to, no curfews, no rules. Just hotels and buses and ice rinks and girls. And beer, lots of beer.

But Shane Doan would have none of that stuff. Loose living just didn't fit his moral code. Besides, Shane was all business. He just wanted to play the game. Just give the guy a stick and a puck, and for the most part, he was OK.

But he missed home. He missed Mom and Dad. He missed his brother and sister. He missed Red Wing, his horse back at Circle Square, the ranch where he grew up.

Circle Square Ranch, a Christian camp for kids of all ages, sits on 360 beautiful acres of prairie in Alberta, Canada. There's horseback riding, swimming, riflery, archery, an obstacle course, and campfires every summer night.

Shane's parents ran the place. And Shane ran all over it.

"The ranch was everything a kid could want, the perfect place to grow up," says Shane, who now plays for the National Hockey League's Phoenix Coyotes. "And all in a Christian environment. What more could you ask?"

That's why Shane was so homesick at 16, even with his NHL hopes coming closer all the time. He was in the city of Kamloops, British Columbia, 11 hours from the ranch, to play junior hockey—a big deal in Canada, and often a step to playing professionally.

"I Just Said No"

Shane was pretty much on his own in Kamloops, where some of his teammates liked to party hardy and pick up girls who had a thing for hockey players.

"We were kind of the celebrities of the town," Shane says. "It was pretty easy to get away with just about anything."

Shortly after he arrived in Kamloops, some of his teammates asked Shane to join the gang for a night on the town.

Shane didn't even have to think about it.

"I just flat out said no," he says. "A couple of the guys said, 'Well, everybody's going.' But I stood my ground. My 'no' meant 'no.' And because of that, nobody really asked me anymore."

Shane, who became a Christian when he was 12, says it was important for him to take a stand for his beliefs right from the start.

"It was the first time I really had to stand on my own," he says. "I had to do what I knew was right. I couldn't say, 'Well, my parents won't let me, so I can't,' because they weren't there. I had to decide: Was Christianity my own belief, or just something I got from my parents?"

Shane didn't condemn his partying friends or start preaching at them. He just stood up for what he knew was right—and against what he knew was wrong.

He's always been that way. He wants people to know right off the bat where he draws the line.

"When you're with somebody new, when the first test comes, that's a critical moment," Shane says. "If you can take a stand that first time, it makes each time after that easier and easier.

"If you fold on that first time, your friends will remember that, and they'll keep testing you. But if you take a stand from the beginning, they won't keep testing you. Being that way has helped me in a lot of areas."

A Big Kid at Heart

Shane wants to pass that wisdom on to the campers at Circle Square Ranch. He not only lived there, but worked there as a teenager,

servicing as a counsellor or teaching horsemanship, or wherever he was needed most.

Since making it to the NHL in 1995, Shane still returns to Circle Square every summer after the hockey season ends. (He did miss last summer because his wife Andrea had just given birth to a baby girl, Gracie. But he'll be back at the ranch this summer.)

"I love going back there," Shane says. "And I love working with the kids."

Shane's mom says her son is "a big kid at heart. Kids love being around him. He loves to play games, and loves for the kids to have fun. His attitude is that life is to be enjoyed."

Shane has a few favourite stories about being a camp counsellor at Circle Square, but one especially stands out—one where Shane may have learned more from the camper than the camper did from him.

"I've seen a lot of campers come and go, and I've seen a lot of changed lives," he says. "But a few summers ago, when I was 19, this kid named Brendan was in my group. Brendan was 12. He had no legs, but he was amazing. He didn't use a wheelchair, but he got around everywhere, mostly on his hands. It was unbelievable.

"Brendan did not have one ounce of self-pity, and he didn't want anyone feeling sorry for him. He would do anything everybody else did—and try to beat them at it. That was neat for me to see, a real inspiration."

God's in Control

Shane sometimes thinks of Brendan when things aren't going well for him on the ice.

His first four years in the NHL haven't been as good as he had hoped. He's been a good player for the Coyotes, but not a star. He hasn't

scored as many points (a combination of goals and assists) as he would have hoped. And that has been frustrating.

"I've had some struggles offensively," says Shane, a 6-foot-2, 215-pound power forward. "My career so far hasn't been what I'd call an extreme success. I've had success in spurts, but in general, I haven't had the numbers that I'd like."

As a result of those struggles, and to keep things in perspective, Shane writes Romans 8:28 on all his hockey sticks: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

"I talked to my family and my wife about my struggles," he says. "They reminded me that in *all* things, God works for good. I mean, even if I have no points, God is still in control of everything.

"When I finally started to grasp that, it kind of took the pressure off, because it had been building to the point where I didn't enjoy playing as much anymore. So I decided that even if I score no more goals for the rest of my career, God is still working for the good of those who love him and seek his purpose."

And what's God's purpose for Shane after hockey?

"I think I want to work with kids," he says. "I enjoy that very much. And doing that kind of keeps you young yourself."

Somewhere, some day, some 16-year-old who's been to Circle Square Ranch will be faced with temptation, and he'll decide to walk away from it.

And he'll at least partly have Shane to thank for making that choice. Because that's just what Shane did.

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