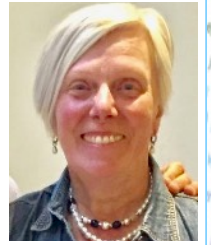


# Canopy of Prayer

December #99-2020

Author

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## Dear Prayer Partners in Europe

**Rom.8:35.** *What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

*Or corona? or lockdown? or... or...?*

*In these unusual times, this scripture from Paul's letter to the Romans has become so meaningful to me and to many. We have had to change our thoughts about many things since this crisis started. And for many it has meant that we have had more time to focus on the love of Christ and on communion with Him. Even our own mistakes or even sins cannot separate us from the love of Christ. He works all things out for our good. And Paul's letter continues to tell us that neither the present nor the future, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

## Effect of the crisis on families and marriages.

Because of my involvement with Marriage Week and issues related to marriages and families, I have been following some of the research done about the effect of the corona situation on relationships and particularly in marriages. I have been surprised by some unexpected facts.

Research in the UK has shown that:

- Contrary to claims in the media, lockdown has been good news for most married parents. Speculation about a coming 'divorce boom' is misplaced.
- Twice as many marriages improved during lockdown compared to those that worsened. Whereas 20% of married parents said their relationship got better, 9% said theirs got worse.
- Although clearly lockdown did cause friction in some marriages, the numbers considering divorce have dropped by a third.
- Cohabiting mothers struggled most during lockdown, with 22% saying their relationship had got worse, three times as many as married mothers. Cohabiting parents were also more likely than married parents to be unhappy, get on each other's nerves or quarrel.
- Although stress levels in parental relationships have risen, lockdown appears to have affirmed the commitment of married parents and exposed the insecurity faced by cohabiting mothers.

Last week a good friend published a dissertation on the importance of families. While thinking about this has changed in the last few years, even amongst Christians, our friend's research showed that a family is still a place of care for each other. Of course it is also a place where you can develop and have fun, but in essence it is a place where people can depend on each other for support. People can provide a lot of support to their partner or family and not get much back for it. This is the power of a family, the strength of it. Research has shown that the care within a family goes further than the support of friends or neighbours. The truth is that everybody is born within a family, whatever shape this family might have. Within networks of social workers, there is a hesitancy to even mention the support of the family, but family support is far more important than the assistance of an anonymous body. There is also a reciprocity between family and society. When there is a problem in the family, there is often also a problem in the work situation. And when you lose your job, it has an effect on the family. One cannot underestimate the importance of the family.

Another unexpected result of the lockdown when children were not able to go to school, is that kids desired to go to school again. They discovered how good school was. They discovered that they loved to have time with their friends. On the other hand, they also enjoyed having more time with their parents and so family closeness improved.

### So here are some prayer points for marriages and families.

1. The forced period of having to spend time in your family has encouraged more quality time between parents and children. Pray that parents will see this as a positive outcome and continue to work on that.
2. The household tasks have been divided more equally between partners. This would be a good thing to continue.
3. Pray that social workers will begin to give more attention to positive encouragement to families and see that they are a positive force for solving problems
4. Pray for the low income families and marriages. For them the corona time has been much harder than for more affluent families. In particular, the children in those families have suffered because they have not been able to keep up to date with their school work, due to not being able to afford computers.

Go for the research to the [marriagefoundation.org.uk](http://marriagefoundation.org.uk)



After what has been a difficult and strange year, let us remember that Christmas brings the promise of new life. Let us receive again the message of the angels over Bethlehem,

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will bring joy to all people". (Luke 2:10)  
May those who are isolated or grieving know this joy also.



### Additional Prayer Points:-

1. Pray that those who are angry over continued Covid restrictions would exercise restraint so that the Christmas period can be enjoyed safely.
2. Pray that the tensions surrounding the Brexit trade negotiations do not result in a breakdown of relationship, important to both the EU and UK.

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