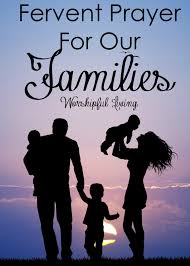
**“How are you coping?”** is the question on many lips today as friends, and loved ones come on the phone. The true person still lies so often hidden beneath the words expressed as they deal with restrictions brought about by the coronavirus. It is only when honest feelings and emotions are shared that real people can be known, loved and helped.

At the centre of the Bible is the book of Psalms. This wonderful collection of songs and prayers was written over a period of almost 900 years, expressing the heart and soul of humanity, as the writers pour out their true feelings and their need of God. As you read them you’ll hear believers crying out to God from the depths of despair. Of the 150 psalms, David, who started life as a shepherd boy, and became Israel’s great king, wrote 73 of them.

Our Church worship and group activity has had to be cancelled and replaced by what the digital age can provide. This is highly commendable, and I have been invited to contribute something from the Psalms on alternate weeks. Mine have to be Psalms with an even number, so I invite you to get out your Bible and read **Psalm 128**. Why was I led to this one so far into the book? Let’s see!

**“Stay at home and keep your two metre distance”** is ringing out loud and clear, if you hope to avoid catching the virus. No school, work from home, school at home, no sports centre, do not visit friends or loved ones…so it goes on…The coronavirus has led to special arrangements being made so that we keep in touch with family, fellow worshippers, and those who are in danger of being isolated. The virus is challenging us to rethink and plan so that our families could benefit. ***Should children and their parents not have a form of worship at home?***  At the end of the day before bedtime, a drink of some kind, put the iPhone away, share stories of the things that excited you today, a Bible story, and a prayer - this could be ‘Messy Church’ at home. And why not lovingly share with your children something lovely about Jesus? I recall my dear old mother on her knees saying her prayers before she got into bed. I knew without a doubt that my name was amongst those she brought to her loving heavenly Father at the end of the day. **Parents - read Psalm 128 again. Mum & Dad, do to you pray together, for each other, and for God’s guidance in your parental responsibility”? Remember - Psalm 128 was a wedding prayer.**

When Bron and I were the Divisional leaders of the Salvation Army in Ireland during the height of the ‘Troubles’ I was Vice Chairman of ‘The independent Monitoring Board of the Belfast Prison’. In the course of my duty I was asked to go into a padded cell and talk to a very young man whose home and lifestyle led him to want to take his own life. The staff could not get to the root of his disturbed life. They had hoped I might to get information that would help them begin a programme of recovery. In this cell there was only a mattress on the floor and no waist band in his pyjamas. I went in, and greeted him. I was not medical staff nor was I part of the prison discipline. It was just me in Salvation Army uniform. We sat on the floor, and in a friendly conversation, wisely worded, non threating, and lovingly searching, he shared with me something of what his parents should have provided in order to fit him for a journey in real life. He gave me permission to share it with the Prison staff, and so his journey of recovery began. **Having read my contribution for this week, now read Psalm 128, and think about when and where make those adjustments that will better fit your family for the uncertain days ahead.** *Bert Menary*