

The Power of a
PRAYING®
PARENT

STORMIE
OMARTIAN



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Becoming a Praying Parent

*I*t's the best of jobs. It's the most difficult of jobs. It can bring you the greatest joy. It can cause the greatest pain. There is nothing as fulfilling and exhilarating. There's nothing so depleting and exhausting. No area of your life can make you feel more like a success when everything is going well. No area of your life can make you feel more like a failure when things go wrong.

PARENTING!

The word itself can bring contradictory emotions to the surface. We try to do the best we can raising our children. Then, just when we think we've got the parenting terrain all figured out, we suddenly find ourselves in new territory again as each new age and stage presents another set of challenges. Sometimes we sail through smoothly. Sometimes we encounter tempests and tidal waves. Sometimes we get so tired that we just want to give up—let the storm take us where it will.

But I have good news. We don't have to be tossed and turned by these winds of change. *Our children's lives don't ever have to be left to chance.*

We don't have to pace the floor anxiously, biting our nails, gnawing our knuckles, dreading the terrible twos or torturous teens. We don't have to live in fear of what each new phase of development may bring, what dangers might be lurking behind every corner. Nor do we have to be perfect parents. We can start right now—this very minute, in fact—making a positive difference in our child's future. It's never too early and never too late. It doesn't matter if the child is three days old and perfect, or thirty years old and going through a third divorce because of an alcohol problem. At every stage of their lives our children need and will greatly benefit from our prayers. The key is not trying to do it all by ourselves all at once, but rather turning to the expert parent of all time—our Father God—for help. Then, taking one step at a time, we must cover every detail of our child's life in prayer. There is great *power* in doing that, far beyond what most people imagine. In fact, don't ever under-estimate the power of a praying parent.

I didn't have the best role model for parenting because I was raised by a mother who was mentally ill and very abusive. I wrote about that abuse and my miraculous recovery from its effects in my book *Stormie* (Harvest House Publishers). I also related how having my first child, our son Christopher, caused me to realize that I had the potential in me to be an abusive parent. I discovered that without God we are destined to repeat the mistakes of our past and to mimic what we've observed. A scene from childhood can flash across the screen of your mind and play itself out on the stage of your life in a moment of weakness—before you even realize what has happened. It

may occur so quickly that you feel powerless to control it, and it can make you do and say destructive things to your children. This becomes compounded by the guilt that inevitably takes root and grows to often paralyzing proportions. Thankfully I had good counseling and support and was able to overcome this problem before any damage happened to my child, but many people have not been so fortunate.

Because I was painfully aware that I didn't have a positive parenting experience to imitate, I was nervous and anxious when my first child was born. I feared I would do to him what had been done to me. I read every book available on the subject of parenting and attended each Christian child-rearing seminar I could find. I tried to do my best with all this good and helpful information, but it was never enough. I had countless agonizing concerns for my son's social, spiritual, emotional, and mental growth, but most compelling of all, I feared that something bad might happen to him. Kidnapping, drowning, disfiguring accidents, irreparable injuries, diseases, sexual molestation, abuse, rape, or death all played across my mind as possibilities for his future. As much as I tried not to be an overreacting parent, every newspaper, magazine article, or TV newscast on crime made me more concerned for his welfare. Plus we lived in Los Angeles, a city where crime was rampant. It was more than I could handle.

One day in prayer I cried out to God, saying, "Lord, this is too much for me. I can't keep a twenty-four-hours-a-day, moment-by-moment watch on my son. How can I ever have peace?"

Over the next few weeks the Lord spoke to my heart about entrusting Christopher to Him. My husband and I had dedicated our son to God in a church service, but

God wanted more than that. He wanted us to continue giving Christopher to Him on a daily basis. This didn't mean that we would now abdicate all responsibility as parents. Rather, we would declare ourselves to be in full partnership with God. He would shoulder the heaviness of the burden and provide wisdom, power, protection, and ability far beyond ourselves. We would do *our* job to discipline, teach, nurture, and "train up a child in the way he should go" knowing that "when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). We were to depend on God to enable us to raise our child properly, and He would see to it that our child's life was blessed.

An important part of our job was to keep the details of our child's life covered in prayer. In doing this, I learned to identify every concern, fear, worry, or possible scenario that came into my mind as a prompting by the Holy Spirit to pray for that particular thing. As I covered Christopher in prayer and released him into God's hands, God released my mind from that particular concern. This doesn't mean that once I prayed for something I never prayed about it again, but at least for a time I was relieved of the burden. When it surfaced again, I prayed about it again. God didn't promise that nothing bad would *ever* happen to my child, but praying released the power of God to work in his life, and I could enjoy more peace in the process.

I also learned that I should not try to force my own will on my child in prayer. This only leads to frustration and disappointment for all concerned. You know the kind of prayer I mean, because we're all prone to it: "God, I pray that Christopher will grow up and marry my best friend's daughter." (*Her parents would be great in-laws.*) Or, "Lord, let Amanda get accepted at this school." (*Then I can feel better about myself.*) Of course we may never consciously

acknowledge the words in parentheses, but they are there in the back of our mind, subtly inspiring us to impose our will in God's ear. I have found it's better to pray more along the lines of "Lord, show me how to pray for this child. Help me to raise him Your way, and may Your will be done in his life."

By the time our daughter, Amanda, was born four and a half years after Christopher, God had taught me what it means to pray in great depth and to really intercede for my child's life. Over the next twelve years God answered my prayers in many wonderful ways, and today I see the results.

My husband and I recognize the hand of God on our children's lives, and they readily acknowledge it as well. For it's the power of God that penetrates a child's life when a parent prays.

What Is Prayer and How Does it Work?

Prayer is much more than just giving a list of desires to God, as if He were the great Sugar Daddy/Santa Claus in the sky. Prayer is acknowledging and experiencing the presence of God and inviting His presence into our lives and circumstances. It's seeking the *presence* of God and releasing the *power* of God which gives us the means to overcome any problem.

The Bible says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). God gives us authority on earth. When we take that authority, God releases power to us from heaven. Because it's God's power and *not* ours, we become the vessel through which His power flows. When we pray, we bring that power to bear upon

everything we are praying about, and we allow the power of God to work through our powerlessness. When we pray, we are humbling ourselves before God and saying, “I need Your presence and Your power, Lord. I can’t do this without You.” When we don’t pray, it’s like saying we have no need of anything outside of ourselves.

Praying in the name of Jesus is a major key to God’s power. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23). Praying in the name of Jesus gives us authority over the enemy and proves we have faith in God to do what His Word promises. God knows our thoughts and our needs, but He responds to our prayers. That’s because He always gives us a choice about everything, including whether we will trust Him and obey by praying in Jesus’ name.

Praying not only affects *us*, it also reaches out and touches those for whom we pray. When we pray for our children, we are asking God to make His presence a part of their lives and work powerfully in their behalf. That doesn’t mean there will always be an *immediate* response. Sometimes it can take days, weeks, months, or even years. But our prayers are never lost or meaningless. If we are praying, something is happening, whether we can see it or not. The Bible says, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). All that needs to happen in our lives and the lives of our children cannot happen without the presence and power of God. Prayer invites and ignites both.

Begin with a Personalized List

I actually started praying for each of my children from the time they were conceived because the Bible says, “He

has blessed your children within you” (Psalm 147:13). I believed in the power of prayer. What I *didn’t* realize at that time was how important each detail of our lives is to Him. It’s not enough to pray only for the concerns of the moment; we need to pray for the future, and we need to pray against the effects of past events. When King David was depressed over what had happened in his life and fearful about future consequences (Psalm 143), he didn’t just say, “Oh, well, whatever will be will be.” He cried out to God about the past, present, and future of his life. He prayed about *everything*. And that is exactly what we must do as well.

To do this effectively, I found I had to make an extensive personalized list for each child. This wasn’t some legalistic obsession that said, “If I don’t pray for each specific detail, God won’t cover it.” I was simply more at peace when I knew God had heard each of my many concerns. So once a year, when we went to the beach for our family vacation, I used those cherished early morning hours before anyone else was up to spend time with God making a master prayer list. I would sit and gaze out over the ocean, pencil and paper in hand, and ask God to show me how to pray for each child over the next twelve months. After all, He was the only one who truly knew what each child needed and what challenges they would face in the future. The Bible says, “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him” (Psalm 25:14). He reveals things to us when we ask. God always met me there with good instructions, and I came home with prayer lists for each of my children. Then, throughout the year, I added to them whenever I needed to do so.

I kept many of those lists, and as I look back at them now and see all the answers to my prayers, I’m overcome

with the faithfulness of God to work in the lives of our children when we pray.

God's Word as Your Weapon

The battle for our children's lives is waged on our knees. When we don't pray, it's like sitting on the sidelines watching our children in a war zone getting shot at from every angle. When we *do* pray, we're in the battle alongside them, appropriating God's power on their behalf. If we also declare the Word of God in our prayers, then we wield a powerful weapon against which no enemy can prevail.

God's Word is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12) and it pierces everything it touches. God says His Word, "shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). In other words, His Word is *never* ineffectual or without fruit. That's why I've included a number of Bible verses following each of the prayer examples. When you are praying for your child, include an appropriate Scripture verse in your prayer. If you can't think of a verse at the moment you're praying, don't let that stop you, but quote a verse or two whenever you can and you'll see mighty things happen.

As you read the Word during your own devotional time and as you pray for your children with the Holy Spirit's leading, you'll find many more Scriptures to include. And you don't have to have a different verse for each prayer. You may have one or two verses that you use repeatedly during a specific season of intercession for your child. For example, when my daughter went through a period of struggle in school, every time we prayed about it

together I encouraged her to quote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). When I prayed about the matter by myself, I incorporated the verse, “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles” (Psalm 34:17).

When we employ God’s Word in prayer, we are laying hold of the promises He gives us and appropriating them into the lives of our children. Through His Word, God guides us, speaks to us, and reminds us He is faithful. In that way, He builds faith in *our* hearts and enables us to understand *His* heart. This helps us to pray boldly in faith, knowing exactly what is *His* truth, *His* will, and *our* authority.

When Jesus spoke to the devil, He rebuked him. Sometimes in doing this He quoted Scripture. For example, when Satan said to Jesus, “If You will worship before me, all will be Yours,” Jesus replied, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve’” (Luke 4:7–8 NKJV/KJV).

Jesus is our role model. We are to observe Him and do what He does. He said, “Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12). He also said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). We can resist the devil more effectively if we pray to God according to His directions found in the Scriptures, and if we understand the power and authority given to us through Jesus Christ. If we . . .

WATCH Him,
WALK with Him,

WAIT on Him,
WORSHIP Him,
and LIVE in His word,
WE WILL WIN this battle for our children.

Whenever you pray for your child, do it as if you are interceding for his or her life—because that is *exactly* what you are doing. Remember that while God has a perfect plan for our children’s lives, Satan has a plan for them too. Satan’s plan is to destroy them, and he will *try* to use any means possible to do so: drugs, sex, alcohol, rebellion, accidents, disease. But he won’t be able to successfully use any of those things if his power has been dissipated by prayer. The Bible says, “How can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man?” (Matthew 12:29). In other words, we can’t have any effect in the devil’s territory unless we first bind him and forbid him any authority there. Thus, we can also forbid him access to our children’s lives.

Of course, Satan can do a lot of damage if we don’t teach our children God’s ways and God’s Word and help them to respect God’s laws, and if we don’t discipline them, guide them, and help them learn to make godly choices. The Bible tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). When we don’t do those things, our children can fall into rebellion and make choices that take them out from under the umbrella of God’s protection. Prayer and proper instruction in the ways and words of God will make sure that does not happen and that God’s plan succeeds—not the devil’s. The Bible says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Binding Satan’s plans in prayer is part of resisting the

devil. Resisting him on behalf of our children can free them to make godly choices.

Satan will always try to make a case against our children so that he can have access into their lives. If we are armed with Scripture, however, he will have to contend with the Word of God. The Bible says, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night, has been cast down” (Revelation 12:10). Jesus’ death on the cross broke the back of the accuser, but the evil one will still harass all who don’t know their God-given authority over him. This is where our prayers come in. Our children will stand accused until we break the stronghold of the accuser in prayer, using the Word of God as hard evidence against him.

A Good Example of Answered Prayer

From the time our son was about two years old, my husband and I had regular prayer groups in our home. Our church had organized small home groups and we led one of them. Gradually we realized that the needs of our group were too great to handle in one monthly meeting, so we added another night each month just for prayer with the adults. During that time we prayed for every kind of need, but the volume of prayer requests for our children was enormous. As a result, I felt that we needed to have an entire day devoted specifically to praying with and for each of our children. This time of intercession, which we called “Interceding for Our Children’s Lives,” became so popular that people requested it again and again. In fact, the foundation for this book began more than twenty

years ago in those very prayer groups. None of us had any idea how important they would become. We only knew we were following the leading of the Lord as we learned how to intercede, and we rejoiced together when we witnessed the many answers to our prayers. (See the Appendix, “Praying Together with Other Parents,” for suggestions on how to organize your own time of group intercession for children.)

The Bible says, “If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My father in heaven” (Matthew 18:19). Also, one can put a thousand to flight and two can put ten thousand to flight (Deuteronomy 32:30). It doesn’t take much of a mathematical mind to figure out, then, how powerful ten to twelve parents can be when they join in prayer and cry out to God for their children.

In the Scripture I used as the guiding verse for this entire book, God commands, “Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children” (Lamentations 2:19). How much clearer can it be that we are to pray with *fergency* and *passion* for our young ones, and look forward to those prayers being answered?

We have had so many answers to the prayers offered during our group times over the last twenty years that I could write a book on those alone, testified to by the parents and children who were involved. However, one specific instance stands out in my mind because it was a direct result of our very *first* prayer time and it was a compelling request for all of us in the group.

Nancy, a single mom, requested prayer for her daughter, Janet, who knew the Lord but was walking away from Him because of her disappointment and hurt over her parents’

divorce. One of the specific things we prayed for was Janet's protection, for we knew that children who choose to walk out from under the umbrella of God's blessing open themselves up to all kinds of harm. Within a few weeks of that prayer time, Janet was driving on the free-way late at night and was hit head-on by a drunk driver who had driven up the off-ramp and was traveling full speed in the wrong direction. The doctors said it was a miracle she wasn't killed, but she did have severe injuries to her head, neck, shoulders, and back.

Eventually, through continued prayer and physical therapy, Janet recovered completely, physically and spiritually. She and her mother and all of us who prayed believe she would not be alive had we not interceded for her life before the accident. Today, Janet is happily married, with a beautiful daughter of her own, and she is a devoted Christian woman. She was our secretary and assistant for eight years, and she will always be our most wonderful reminder of the power of a praying parent.

When the Answers Don't Come

Possibly the hardest part of praying for our children is waiting for our prayers to be answered. Sometimes the answers come quickly, but many times they do not. When they don't, we can become discouraged, despairing, or angry at God. Everything seems hopeless, and we want to give up. Sometimes, in spite of all we've done for them and all our prayers for them, our children make poor choices and then reap the consequences. Those times are hard for a parent to watch, no matter how old the child.

If your child has made poor choices, don't berate yourself and stop praying. Keep communication lines open

with your child, continue interceding for him or her, and declare God's Word. Instead of giving up, resolve to be even *more* committed to prayer. Pray with other believers. Stand strong and say, "I've only begun to fight," keeping in mind that *your* part of the fight is to pray. *God* actually fights the battle. Remember, too, that your fight is not with your child, it's with the devil. *He* is your enemy, not your child. Stand strong in prayer until you see a breakthrough in your child's life.

One of the most encouraging Scriptures I have read with regard to such perseverance is when David said, "I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them; neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. I have wounded them, so that they were not able to rise; they have fallen under my feet. For You have armed me with strength for the battle" (Psalm 18:37–39). He didn't stop until the job was done and neither should we. We should pray through until we see the answer.

If you have anger or unforgiveness toward God or your child—yes, even loving parents can have these feelings—tell God in total honesty. If you feel disappointment and hopelessness, state it clearly. Don't live with negative emotions and guilt that can separate you from God. Share all of your feelings honestly with Him and then ask Him to forgive you and show you what your next step should be. Above all, don't let any disappointment over unanswered prayer cause you to stop praying.

I Said "Praying," Not "Perfect"

When things go wrong in our children's lives, we blame ourselves. We beat ourselves up for not being perfect parents. But it's not being a perfect parent that makes

the difference in a child's life, because there are no perfect parents. None of us are perfect, so how can we be perfect parents? It's being a *praying* parent that makes the difference. And that's something we *all* can be. In fact, we don't even have to be parents. We can be a friend, a teacher, a grandparent, an aunt, a cousin, a neighbor, a guardian, or even a stranger with a heart of compassion or concern for a child. The child may be someone we hear of or read about in the newspaper; the child may even be an adult for whom we have a mother's or father's heart.

If you're aware of a child who doesn't have a praying parent, you can step into the gap right now and answer that need. You can effect a change in the life of any child you care about. All it takes is a heart that says, "God, show me how to pray in a way that will make a difference in this child's life." Then begin with the prayers in this book and see where the Holy Spirit leads you.

At the end of each chapter I have included prayer suggestions for you to use. You may want to pray one each day for a month, or pray one specific prayer for a week, or concentrate on your most pressing concern of the moment until you feel released to move on to another.

Repeat these prayers as often as you like. God didn't say, "Don't come to Me over and over with the same request." In fact, He said to keep on praying, but don't make empty repetitions in your prayers.

And remember, you don't have to keep to any schedule or pray these specific prayers. They are simply a guide to get you going. Begin by submitting yourself to God and asking Him to help you be the parent and intercessor He wants you to be. Pray as the Holy Spirit leads *you*, as you listen to His prompting in *your* heart for *your* child.

I look forward to hearing about the answers to your prayers.



P R A Y E R

Lord,

I submit myself to You. I realize that parenting a child in the way You would have me to is beyond my human abilities. I know I need You to help me. I want to partner with You and partake of Your gifts of wisdom, discernment, revelation, and guidance. I also need Your strength and patience, along with a generous portion of Your love flowing through me. Teach me how to love the way You love. Where I need to be healed, delivered, changed, matured, or made whole, I invite You to do that in me. Help me to walk in righteousness and integrity before You. Teach me Your ways, enable me to obey Your commandments and do only what is pleasing in Your sight. May the beauty of Your Spirit be so evident in me that I will be a godly role model. Give me the communication, teaching, and nurturing skills that I must have. Make me the parent You want me to be and teach me how to pray and truly intercede for the life of this child. Lord, You said in Your Word, “Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Matthew 21:22). In Jesus’ name I ask that You will increase my faith to believe for all the things You’ve put on my heart to pray for concerning this child.



W E A P O N S O F W A R F A R E

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

JOHN 15:16

The righteous man walks in his integrity;
his children are blessed after him.

PROVERBS 20:7

Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

JOHN 14:13–14

Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:4

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

EPHESIANS 6:17–18