



Sharon Jaynes

Praying.

for Your Child
from Head to Toe

A 30-Day Guide to Powerful and
Effective Scripture-Based Prayers



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Books for Courageous Women
from David C Cook



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Chapter 1

The Battle for Our Children

It was one of the most important days of my life. I knew it was coming, had nine months to prepare. But I had no idea the dramatic effect this one pivotal moment would have on my heart, my soul, my very being ... forever.

After almost twenty-four hours of heaving and ho-ing, pushing and pulling, walking and waiting, nurses' cajoling and my husband's consoling, I gave one final push and Steven Hugh Jaynes Jr. came screeching into the world. Honestly, he didn't seem all that happy about it. With a squinched-up face and squalling protests, Steven seemed to be saying, "Put me back in there! I don't like it out here—and get that light out of my eyes!" Two tightly balled-up fists were ready to put up a fight to prove his point.

But when the nurses placed the cotton cap on his still-damp head, swaddled his fluid-covered body in a downy blanket, and nestled the squirming bundle on my chest, Steven surrendered his objections, melding into my body once again.

And I became a mother.

And I thought I was prepared.

And I was wrong.

My husband, Steve, and I had taken a six-week class at the local Red Cross on childcare, but the minute the nurse placed that little human on my chest, I knew motherhood was going to be very different from what I had experienced with that plastic doll. Steven was not made of durable plastic but delicate skin and breakable bones. He did not lie still when we tried to change his diaper but squirmed right out of those sticky tabs. I could not leave him on the counter for a fifteen-minute coffee break but had to give him constant attention. And the poop was real. And so was the love.

An inexplicable bond exists between a mother and her child. While the new life is being knit together in a mother's womb, her very blood is pumped from her heart to her child's. And even though the umbilical cord is cut in the delivery room, an invisible, indelible cord of love holds mother and child together for the rest of their lives. A quote attributed to Elizabeth Stone says it so well: "Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."

God has given moms the privilege and parental responsibility to shape and to mold not just another human being but an eternal soul, for a very short, very fleeting period of time. While our roles and responsibilities change throughout the stages from childhood through adulthood, one constant remains . . . prayer. And though hopefully our children will outlive us, they will never outlive our prayers that are etched in the heart of God.

The Power and Purpose of Prayer

Before we begin, let's look at the power and purpose of prayer. Prayer is an ongoing, continual conversation with God, acknowledging our total

dependence on Him every moment of every day. It is not a way to twist God's arm to get Him to do what we want Him to do when we want Him to do it.

The purpose of prayer is to release God's power on earth as it is in heaven. It's not that God can't act without the prayers of His people. He can do anything He pleases (Psalm 115:3). However, He has established prayer as the gate through which His blessings flow. Charles Spurgeon called prayer "the sender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence."¹

Prayer is not trying to pry God's blessings out of a stingy, relenting hand. He's not hoarding His favor, waiting for us to say the right words. Prayer is simply opening the storehouse of heaven for lavish blessings He already wants to give.

Scripture describes His love and His blessings as being "lavished" on us (Ephesians 1:7–8; 1 John 3:1). John wrote, "See what great love the Father has *lavished* on us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1a). He didn't simply use the word *given* but *lavished*. Webster defines *lavish* this way: "Given or provided with great generosity and abundance, to bestow with large generosity, profusion, a downpour."² Ponder those words separately.

Lavished.

Provided with great generosity.

Abundance.

Bestow with large generosity.

Profusion.

There's nothing stingy about that.

And while He longs to lavish us with His goodness, He often waits for us to ask. Jesus tells us that the Father knows what we need *before*

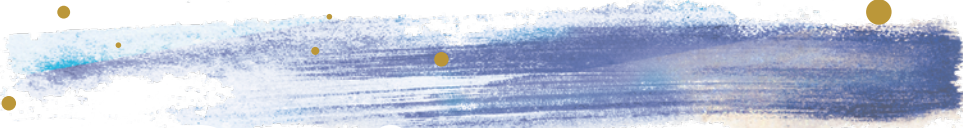
we ask (Matthew 6:8); however, He waits for us to *pray and ask* before meeting the need (Matthew 7:7–8). James reminds us, “You do not have because you do not ask God” (James 4:2b). I am not saying I understand it fully. Prayer is simply the way God chose to engineer the flow of His power and activity from the spiritual realm into the physical realm. Prayer is the conduit through which God’s power is released and His will is brought to earth as it is in heaven.

James wrote, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16b). And if you know Jesus as Savior and Lord, then you are righteous and holy because of what He has done for you and in you (1 Corinthians 1:30). *Your* prayers are powerful and effective!

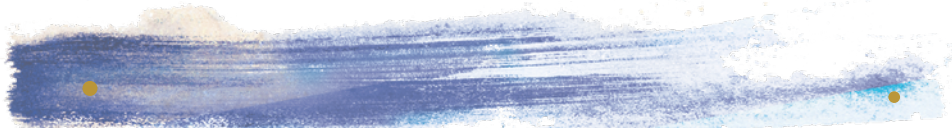
Prayer is not a means of *gaining control* over our children, to whip them into shape and make them the men and women *we* want them to be. Prayer is a means of *relinquishing control* of our plans and asking God to shape our children into the men and women *He* wants them to be.

Isaiah 29:16 tells us, “You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘You did not make me’? Can the pot say to the potter, ‘You know nothing?’”

God is the Master Potter, and He certainly doesn’t need you or me to tell Him how to shape and mold those marvelous jars of clay we call our children. Oh, we’d like to. That’s for sure. But God’s ultimate goal is for that lump of clay to be fashioned according to His design and for His purposes, not ours. We “train up a child in the way he should go” according to godly principles (Proverbs 22:6a NASB), but God molds the hearts of individuals. “We are the clay, you are the potter,” wrote Isaiah. “We are all the work of your hand” (Isaiah 64:8b). I am. You are. Our children are.



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God shapes and molds. We pray and intercede. James 4:3 warns about the danger of praying with wrong motives. “God answers prayer, but He doesn’t follow instructions.”³ Check your desire to control and create a “mini me” at the door of the prayer closet, and don’t let it in.

As you pray, remember that God already has your child’s best interests in mind. Amazingly, He invites you to play a part in the miracle of maturing your child into the adult He created them to be. And as you pray, God aligns your desires with His desires, your thinking with His thinking, and your heart with His heart.

Ezekiel gives us a glimpse into the heart of God regarding prayer. Israel had sinned in every possible way, and her people were doomed for destruction. God said, “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one” (Ezekiel 22:30). God looked for someone to pray, to intercede, to stand in the gap between heaven and earth, but there was no one to be found.

Today God is looking for mothers who will stand in the gap for their children and pray for them to experience the fullness of God’s blessing. I’m so glad He has found such a mom in you.

The Battle for Our Children

All we have to do is watch the nightly news, scroll through the latest late-breaking reports, or listen to our kids talk about what they heard on the school bus to know that we are in a battle for the hearts and minds of our children today. Cultural relativism, sexual experimentation, multiple school shootings, unnatural gender confusion, and moral liberalism infest and infect all that God created and called good. Our children trudge through the land mines of evil every day.

Interestingly, Paul referred to prayer in the context of warfare.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions.... Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Ephesians 6:10–18)

A spiritual battle is going on all around us—always has been and always will be. What began in Genesis 3 continues today. Paul urges us to be spiritually prepared and physically alert. He emphasized this again in his second letter to the Corinthians: “Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3–4).

And what are the weapons Paul is referring to? Prayer and God's Word. Look back at Ephesians 6. Only one part of the armor is not defensive but offensive: "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (v. 17b). How did Jesus win the battle against the devil in the wilderness, recorded in Matthew 4? With Scripture! Every time Satan tempted Jesus to disobey His Father and take control of His own life, Jesus struck down the lies of the enemy with the Word of God. "It is written" was the sword Jesus used to win the war (Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10). And that is what we will be doing as well. When we pray the Word of God, we pray the will of God. His Word is living and powerful. It is sharper than a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

As believers, we have authority over the enemy who seeks to harm our children (Luke 10:19). Through prayer, the enemy's plans are intercepted; the principalities and authorities are defeated. Through prayer, the power and provision of God flow into the lives of His people.

God said, "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it" (Isaiah 55:10-11 NLT). And I can assure you that as you pray God's Word, it will always produce fruit and accomplish what God intends.

Pressing Through When You Feel Worn-Out

I want to give you a holy hug right now and let you know there will be days, months, even years when you feel discouraged because of the lack of fruit you see from your prayers. Your prayer might be, "God, throw

me a bone! Show me something to let me know my prayers are really making a difference!”

Oh, dear sister, I've been there. What I want to tell you is that God is always working behind the scenes in ways we will never know this side of heaven. Jesus said, “My Father has been working until now [He has never ceased working], and I too am working” (John 5:17 AMP). In another book I wrote, “Our limited vision doesn't allow us to see how God is working behind the questionable scenes in our lives, but we must believe that he is... The truth is, God is always working, whether we recognize it or not. In fact, it may be precisely in the moments we sense him or understand him the least that he is working the most.”⁴

Praying for our children does not mean they won't struggle. Often it is through the struggle that God's does some of His most amazing work! It does mean that we are calling on God to miraculously work in the process. We are petitioning Him for wisdom as we parent, and seeking His presence, power, and protection in the lives of our children.

Every parent will feel discouraged and disheartened when their child makes a decision that we know will lead down a rocky path. However, that rocky path could be the very detour God uses to draw them into a deeper relationship with Him. Don't give up when those boulder-sized struggles litter the way. Keep praying. God is always working.

In the Bible there's a story about a distraught father who had an unruly son with multiple physical and emotional problems. Many people said the boy was possessed by a demon. The dad had tried everything, but the boy continued to demonstrate disturbing actions, such as throwing himself in fire and then in water. That sort of behavior, on top of frequent seizures, rolling on the ground, foaming at the mouth, and an inability to talk, made the dad desperate to find a solution. He even took

the boy to some faith healers who were traveling through his hometown. But nothing seemed to work.

Then one day, the father heard Jesus was visiting in his community. He boldly brought the boy to the healer, and with desperation in his voice, cried, “If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

And Jesus answered, “If you can? Everything is possible for one who believes.”

Immediately the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:22–24).

With that profession, Jesus healed the man’s son. (See vv. 14–29 for the full story.)

Oh, how this story stirs my heart. Can’t you feel the father’s pain? How desperate he must have felt every time the child threw himself into the water or the fire. “Why, son? Why do you do these things?” he must have asked. “I don’t understand.”

Imagine the humiliation the whispers brought as the family walked down the streets. “That’s the Smith family. Have you heard about their son? He’s . . .” The stares, the snickers, the off-color comments. Don’t you know there were many days when this dad wanted to give up? Instead, he offers us a beautiful picture of what all parents must do, the ultimate act in parenting: hand our children over to God.

Parenting comes with exhilarating highs and excruciating lows. At times we find ourselves at the end of mental and emotional resources. We feel we have done everything humanly possible and don’t know the best action to take with our children. That’s exactly where God wants us to be—every day, not depending on our own limited strength and ability but on His limitless power and divine sovereignty. It’s when we realize that we will never have all the child-rearing answers and solutions that

we discover the importance of giving our children to God. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century evangelical minister Samuel D. Gordon, in *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, said, “You can do *more* than pray, *after* you have prayed. But you can *not* do more than pray *until* you have prayed.”⁵

Neither you nor I will ever be the perfect parent, but we can be praying parents to a perfect God. Prayer turns an ordinary parent into a powerful force. One of the most magnificent moments in heaven will be when God rolls back the curtain that separates the physical and spiritual realms, and we get to see the connection between our prayers and God’s answers. With that said, let me leave you with this poem by Larry Clark:

The Warrior

This morning my thoughts traveled along
To a place in my life where days have since gone
Beholding an image of what I used to be
As visions were stirred and God spoke to me

He showed me a Warrior, a soldier in place
Positioned by Heaven, yet I saw not the face
I watched as The Warrior fought enemies
That came from the darkness with destruction for me

I watched as The Warrior would dry away tears
As all of Heaven’s Angels hovered so near
I saw many wounds on The Warrior’s face
Yet weapons of warfare were firmly in place

I felt my heart weeping, my eyes held so much
As God let me feel The Warrior's prayer touched
I thought "how familiar" the words that were prayed
The prayers were like lightning that never would fade

I said to God "please, The Warrior's name"
He gave no reply, He chose to refrain
I asked, "Lord, who is broken that they need such
prayer?"
He showed me an image of myself standing there

Bound by confusion, lost and alone
I felt prayers of The Warrior carry me home
I asked "please show me Lord, this Warrior so true"
I watched and I wept, for Mother, The Warrior was you!

Larry S. Clark⁶