STORMIE Omartian

The Power of a Praying® Mom 3 in 1 Collection



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The Power of a PRAYING WIFE

STORMIE OMARTIAN



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All the stories related in this book are true, but most of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people mentioned.

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THE POWER OF A PRAYING® WIFE

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CHAPTER ONE

His Wife

he hard part about being a praying wife, other than the sacrifice of time, is maintaining a pure heart. It must be clean before God in order for you to see good results. That's why praying for a husband must begin with praying for his wife. If you have resentment, anger, unforgiveness, or an ungodly attitude, even if there's good reason for it, you'll have a difficult time seeing answers to your prayers. But if you can release those feelings to God in total honesty and then move into prayer, there is nothing that can change a marriage more dramatically. Sometimes wives sabotage their own prayers because they don't pray them from a right heart. It took me awhile to figure that out.

My Favorite Three-word Prayer

I wish I could say that I've been regularly praying for my husband from the beginning of our marriage until now. I haven't. At least not like I'm suggesting in this book. Oh, I prayed. The prayers were short: "Protect him, Lord." They were to the point: "Save our marriage." But most commonly they were my favorite three-word prayer: "Change him, Lord."

When we were first married, I was a new believer coming out of a life of great bondage and error and had much to learn about the delivering and restoring power of God. I thought I had married a man who was close to perfect, and what wasn't perfect was cute. As time went on, cute became irritating and perfect became driving perfectionism. I decided that what irritated me most about him had to be changed and then everything would be fine.

It took a number of years for me to realize my husband was never going to conform to my image. It took a few years beyond that to understand I couldn't make him change in *any* way. In fact, it wasn't until I started going to God with what bothered me that I began to see any difference at all. And then it didn't happen the way I thought it would. I was the one God worked on first. I was the one who began to change. My heart had to be softened, humbled, pummeled, molded, and reconstructed before He even started working on my husband. I had to learn to see things according to the way God saw them—not how I thought they should be.

Gradually I realized it's impossible to truly give yourself in prayer for your husband without first examining your own heart. I couldn't go to God and expect answers to prayer if I harbored unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment. I couldn't pray my favorite three-word prayer without knowing in the deepest recesses of my soul that I had to first pray God's favorite three-word prayer: "Change me, Lord."

Who, Me? . . . Change?

Don't say I didn't warn you. When you pray for your husband, especially in the hopes of changing him, you can surely expect some changes. But the first changes won't be in *him*. They'll be in *you*. If this makes you as mad as it made me, you'll say, "Wait a minute! I'm not the one that needs

changing here!" But God sees things we don't. He knows where we have room for improvement. He doesn't have to search long to uncover attitudes and habits that are outside His perfect will for us. He requires us to not sin in our hearts because sin separates us from Him and we don't get our prayers answered. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18). God wants our hearts to be right so the answers to our prayers are not compromised.

This whole requirement is especially hard when you feel your husband has sinned against you with unkindness, lack of respect, indifference, irresponsibility, infidelity, abandonment, cruelty, or abuse. But God considers the sins of unforgiveness, anger, hatred, self-pity, lovelessness, and revenge to be just as bad as any others. Confess them and ask God to set you free from anything that is not of Him. One of the greatest gifts you can give your husband is your own wholeness. The most effective tool in transforming him may be your own transformation.

Don't worry, I struggled with all this, too. In fact, every time my husband and I came to an impasse, God and I had a conversation that went something like this:

"Do you see the way he is, Lord?"

"Do you see the way you are?"

"Lord, are You saying there are things you want to change in me?"

"Many things. Are you ready to hear them?"

"Well, I guess so."

"Tell me when you're really ready."

"Why me, God? He's the one that needs to change."

"The point is not who *needs* to change. The point is who is willing to change."

"But God, this isn't fair."

"I never said life is fair, I said I am fair."

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"But I . . ."
"Someone has to be willing to start."
"But . . ."
"How important is preserving your marriage?"
"Very important. The other options are unacceptable."
"I rest my case. Let's get on with changing you."
"Help me to have a good attitude about this, Lord."
"That's up to you."
"Do I have to pray for my husband even if he's not
praying for me?"
"Precisely."
"But that's not . . . okay, okay, I remember. Life's not fair.
You're fair!"
(Silent nodding from heaven)
"I give up. Go ahead. Oh, this is going to be painful!
Cha... change.... I can't believe I'm saying this."
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Painful? Yes! Dying to yourself is always painful. Especially when you are convinced that the other person needs more changing than you. But this kind of pain leads to *life*. The other alternative is just as painful and its ultimate end is the death of a dream, a relationship, a marriage, and a family.

(Deep breath) "Change me, Lord."

God can resurrect the deadest of marriages, but it takes humbling ourselves before Him and desiring to live His way—forgiveness, kindness, and love. It means letting go of the past and all hurt associated with it and being willing to lose the argument in order to win the battle. I'm not saying you have to become a person void of personality, feelings, or thoughts of your own, or be the whipping post for a husband's whim. God doesn't require that of you. (In fact, if you are in any kind of physical or emotional danger, remove yourself immediately from the situation to a place of safety

and get help. You can pray from there while your husband receives the counseling he needs.) Submission is something you give from your heart, not something demanded of you. Jesus said, "He who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39). But laying down your life is something you willingly do, *not* something that is forcefully taken from you. What I'm saying is that your attitude must be, "Whatever You want, Lord. Show me and I'll do it." It means being willing to die to yourself and say, "Change me, Lord."

The Ultimate Love Language

Something amazing happens to our hearts when we pray for another person. The hardness melts. We become able to get beyond the hurts, and forgive. We even end up loving the person we are praying for. It's miraculous! It happens because when we pray we enter into the presence of God and He fills us with His Spirit of love. When you pray for your husband, the love of God will grow in your heart for him. Not only that, you'll find love growing in his heart for you, without him even knowing you are praying. That's because prayer is the ultimate love language. It communicates in ways we can't. I've seen women with no feelings of love for their husbands find that as they prayed, over time, those feelings came. Sometimes they felt differently even after the first heartfelt prayer.

Talking to God about your husband is an act of love. Prayer gives rise to love, love begets more prayer, which in turn gives rise to more love. Even if your praying is not born out of completely selfless motives, your motives will become more unselfish as prayer continues. You'll find yourself more loving in your responses. You'll notice that issues which formerly caused strife between you will no longer do that. You'll be able to come to mutual agreements without a fight. This unity is vital.

When we are not united, everything falls apart. Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Prayer brings unity even if you aren't praying together. I've seen great tension relieved between my husband and me simply by praying for him. Also, asking him, "How can I pray for you?" brings an aspect of love and care into the situation. My husband will usually stop and answer that question in great detail when he might otherwise not say anything. I know of even nonbelieving husbands who respond positively to that question from their wives.

The point in all this is that as husband and wife we don't want to be taking separate roads. We want to be on the same path together. We want to be deeply compatible, lifelong companions, and have the love that lasts a lifetime. Prayer, as the ultimate love language, can make that happen.

I Don't Even Like Him-How Can I Pray for Him?

Have you ever been so mad at your husband that the last thing you wanted to do was pray for him? So have I. It's hard to pray for someone when you're angry or he's hurt you. But that's exactly what God wants us to do. If He asks us to pray for our *enemies*, how much more should we be praying for the person with whom we have become one and are supposed to love? But how do we get past the unforgiveness and critical attitude?

The first thing to do is be completely honest with God. In order to break down the walls in our hearts and smash the barriers that stop communication, we have to be totally up front with the Lord about our feelings. We don't have to "pretty it up" for Him. He already knows the truth. He just

wants to see if we're willing to admit it and confess it as disobedience to His ways. If so, He then has a heart with which He can work.

If you are angry at your husband, tell God. Don't let it become a cancer that grows with each passing day. Don't say, "I'm going to live my life and let him live his." There's a price to pay when we act entirely independently of one another. "Neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

Instead say, "Lord, nothing in me wants to pray for this man. I confess my anger, hurt, unforgiveness, disappointment, resentment, and hardness of heart toward him. Forgive me and create in me a clean heart and right spirit before You. Give me a new, positive, joyful, loving, forgiving attitude toward him. Where he has erred, reveal it to him and convict his heart about it. Lead him through the paths of repentance and deliverance. Help me not to hold myself apart from him emotionally, mentally, or physically because of unforgiveness. Where either of us needs to ask forgiveness of the other, help us to do so. If there is something I'm not seeing that is adding to this problem, reveal it to me and help me to understand it. Remove any wedge of confusion that has created misunderstanding or miscommunication. Where there is behavior that needs to change in either of us, I pray You would enable that change to happen. As much as I want to hang on to my anger toward him because I feel it is justified, I want to do what You want. I release all those feelings to You. Give me a renewed sense of love for him and words to heal this situation."

If you feel you are able, try this little experiment and see what happens. Pray for your husband every day for a month using each one of the thirty areas of prayer focus I have included in this book. Pray a chapter a day. Ask God to pour

out His blessings on him and fill you both with His love. See if your heart doesn't soften toward him. Notice if his attitude toward you doesn't change as well. Observe whether your relationship isn't running more smoothly. If you have trouble making that kind of prayer commitment, think of it from the Lord's perspective. Seeing your husband through God's eyes—not just as your husband, but as God's child, a son whom the Lord loves—can be a great revelation. If someone called and asked you to pray for his or her son, you would do it, wouldn't you? Well, God is asking.

"Shut Up and Pray"

There is a time for everything, it says in the Bible. And it is never more true than in a marriage, especially when it comes to the words we say. There is a time to speak and a time *not* to speak, and happy is the man whose wife can discern between the two. Anyone who has been married for any length of time realizes that there are things that are better left unsaid. A wife has the ability to hurt her husband more deeply than anyone else can, and he can do the same to her. No matter how much apology, the words can not be erased. They can only be forgiven and that is not always easy. Sometimes anything we say will only hinder the flow of what God wants to do, so it's best to, well, shut up and pray.

When Michael and I were first married, I didn't say much if I felt something was wrong. I stuffed my feelings inside. After our first child was born, I became increasingly vocal. But the more I voiced my objections and opinions, the more he resisted and the more we would argue. Whatever I said not only accomplished nothing in the area I wanted it to, it had the opposite effect. It took me a number of years to learn what millions of women have learned over the centuries. Nagging doesn't work! Criticizing doesn't

work. Sometimes, just plain talking doesn't accomplish anything either. I've found that prayer is the only thing that *always* works. The safeguard you have with prayer is that you have to go through God to do it. This means you can't get away with a bad attitude, wrong thinking, or incorrect motives. When you pray, God reveals anything in your personality that is resistant to His order of things.

My husband will not do something he doesn't want to do. And if he ends up doing something he doesn't want to do, his immediate family members will pay for it. If there is anything I really want him to do, I've learned to pray about it until I have God's peace in my heart before I ask. Sometimes God changes my heart about it, or shows me a different way so I don't have to say anything. If I do need to say something, I try not to just blurt it out. I pray first for God's leading.

It took me a long time to figure this out, however. It happened one day when I came across the Proverb, "Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Proverbs 21:19). For *some reason* it struck a nerve.

"But, Lord," I questioned, "what about 'Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed' [Proverbs 27:5]? Don't we wives have to tell our husbands when something is wrong?"

He replied, "There is . . . a time for every purpose under heaven . . . a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1,7). "The problem is you don't know when to do either. And you don't know how to do it in love."

"Okay, Lord," I said. "Show me when to speak and when to just keep quiet and pray."

The first opportunity for this came right away. I had started a new weekly women's prayer group in my home, and it was so life-changing I suggested to my husband that he start a similar group for men. But he wouldn't hear of it.

"I don't have time," was his not-too-pleased-at-the-idea answer.

The more I talked about it, the more irritated Michael became. After getting my "Be quiet and pray" directions from God, I decided to try that approach. I stopped talking about it and started praying. I also asked my prayer group to pray along with me. It was more than two years after I stopped mentioning it to him and started praying that Michael abruptly announced one day he was organizing a weekly men's prayer group. It has been going ever since, and he still doesn't know I prayed. Even though it took longer than I would have liked, it did happen. And there was peace in the waiting, which I wouldn't have had if I had not kept quiet.

Queen Esther in the Bible prayed, fasted, and sought God's timing before she approached her husband, the king, about a very important matter. There was a lot at stake and she knew it. She didn't run in and scream, "Your hoodlum friends are going to ruin our lives!" Rather she prayed first and then ministered to him in love, while God prepared his heart. The Lord will always give us words to say, and show us when to say them if we ask Him. Timing is everything.

I've known people who use the excuse of "just being honest" to devastate others with their words. The Bible says, "A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back" (Proverbs 29:11). In other words, it's foolish to share every feeling and thought. Being honest doesn't mean you have to be completely frank in your every comment. That hurts people. While honesty is a requirement for a successful marriage, telling your husband everything that is wrong with him is not only ill-advised, it probably doesn't reveal the complete truth. The total truth is from God's perspective and He, undoubtedly, doesn't have the same

problem with some of your husband's actions as you do. Our goal must not be to get our husbands to do what we want, but rather to release them to God so He can get them to do what He wants.

Distinguish carefully between what is truly right and wrong. If it doesn't fall clearly into either of those categories, keep your personal opinions to yourself. Or pray about them and then, as the Lord leads, reveal them for calm discussion. The Bible says, "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). There are times when we are just to listen and not offer advice, to support and not offer constructive criticism.

I'm not for a moment suggesting that you become a timid doormat who doesn't ever confront your husband with the truth—especially when it's for his greater good. By all means you must clearly communicate your thoughts and feelings. But once he has heard them, don't continue to press him until it becomes a point of contention and strife.

If you do have to say words that are hard to hear, ask God to help you discern when your husband would be most open to hearing them. Pray for the right words and for his heart to be totally receptive. I know that's difficult to do if you have a few choice words you're dying to let loose. But hard as it may seem, it's best to let God hear them first so He can temper them with His Spirit. This is especially true when talking has ceased altogether and every word only brings more pain. I wish I had learned earlier to pray before I spoke. My words too often set up a defensive reaction in my husband that produced harsh words we both regret. He received my suggestions as pressure to do or be something,

even though I always had his best interests at heart. It had to come to him from God.

When we live by the power of God rather than our flesh, we don't have to strive for power with our words. "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). It's not the words we speak that make a difference, it is the power of God accompanying them. You'll be amazed at how much power your words have when you pray before you speak them. You'll be even more amazed at what can happen when you shut up and let God work.

Believer or Not

If your husband is not a believer, you probably already know how much good it does to keep talking to him about the Lord if he didn't respond the first number of times. It's not that you can't ever say anything to him, but if what you say is always met with indifference or irritation, the next step is to keep silent and pray. The Bible says a wife can win over her husband without saying anything, because what he *observes* in his wife speaks more loudly than what she tells him. "They, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1,2).

God says He speaks of things that are not as though they were. You can do that, too. You can say, "I'm not going to pretend, but I'm going to speak of things that are *not* part of my husband's life as though they *were* a part of it. Even though he doesn't have faith, I'm going to pray for him as if he does." Of course you can't force him to do something he doesn't want to do, but you can access God's power through praying for His voice to penetrate your husband's soul. No matter how long you have to pray for your husband to come to know the Lord, even if it takes his whole life, the time will not be wasted. In the meantime, whether your husband

is a believer or not, you can still pray all the prayers in this book for him and expect to see significant answers to them.

Creating a Home

I don't care how liberated you are, when you are married there will always be two areas that will ultimately be your responsibility: home and children. Even if you are the only one working and your husband stays home to keep the house and tend the kids, you will still be expected to see that the heart of your home is a peaceful sanctuary—a source of contentment, acceptance, rejuvenation, nurturing, rest, and love for your family. On top of this, you will also be expected to be sexually appealing, a good cook, a great mother, and physically, emotionally, and spiritually fit. It's overwhelming to most women, but the good news is that you don't have to do it all on your own. You can seek God's help.

Ask the Lord to show you how to make your home a safe haven that builds up your family—a place where creativity flows and communication is ongoing. Ask God to help you keep the house clean, the laundry done, the kitchen in order, the pantry and the refrigerator full, and the beds made. These are basic things a man may not compliment his wife on every day (or ever), but he will notice if they are not done. My husband may not look in the cupboard for a light bulb or a battery for months. But when he does, he wants it to be there. Nor does he want to come home late from work one night and find that there is no bread for a sandwich. I do my best to make sure it is there. I ask God to help me maintain a house that my husband is pleased to come home to and bring his friends. It's not necessary to have expensive furniture or a decorator in order to do all that. My first home was small and had second-hand furniture I bought from vard sales. I painted the entire place

myself (with the help of a girlfriend) and made it look attractive. It just takes some thought and a little care.

Part of making a house a home is allowing your husband to be the head so you can be the heart. Trying to be both is too much. God placed the husband as the head over the family, whether he deserves it or not and whether he rises up to take his position or not. It's God's order of things. This doesn't mean that one position is more important than the other. They work together. If your husband is to be the head of the house, you must allow him that headship. If you are to be the heart of the home, you still must take the steps necessary to do so, even if you are a major contributor to the financial support. Trying to reverse that keeps a constant struggle going.

This doesn't mean that the wife can't work and the husband can't care for the home; it's the attitudes of the heart and head that makes the difference. There were weeks of time during the finishing of each book I've written when my husband took care of the house and the children so I could meet the deadline. It never minimized his headship or caused me to usurp his position. It was something he did for me. There were times he needed me to work so he could rest. It's what I did for him. It's a delicate balance for most people, so it's best to pray that the integrity of the two positions in the home—head and heart—are not compromised.

Keeping order in the home doesn't mean it has to be perfect, but it shouldn't be out of control. If you are working as hard as he is to bring home a paycheck, the responsibilities should be shared in the home. If he doesn't want to share them, spending a certain amount of money for someone to help you a few hours a week is a lot cheaper than a divorce, a chiropractor, a therapist, a medical doctor, or a funeral. Ask God to show you about that.

Everything I've said about the home goes for your body, soul, and spirit as well. Some effort must be put into maintaining them. I once heard a radio talk show where a woman called in to complain to a popular psychologist that her husband told her he no longer found her attractive. The host said, "What are you doing to make yourself attractive?" The caller had no answer. The point is, being attractive doesn't just happen. Even the most gorgeous women in the world do much to maintain their attractiveness. Queen Esther was one of the most beautiful women in her country and she still spent a year beautifying herself before she met the king.

We have to ask ourselves the same question. "What am I doing to make myself attractive to my husband?" Do I keep myself clean and smelling good? Do I see that my internal self is cleansed and rejuvenated with regular exercise? Do I preserve my strength and vitality with a healthful diet? Do I dress attractively? And most important: Do I spend time alone with God every day? I guarantee that the more time you spend with the Lord, the more radiant you will become. "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

You can't afford not to make this investment in yourself, your health, and your future. It's not selfish to do it. It's selfish *not* to do it. Pray for God to show you what steps to take and then enable you to take them. Invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in you *and* your home.

Letting Go of Expectations

Shortly after we were married, my husband called from work and said he wanted me to prepare a certain chicken dish for dinner. I went to the store, got the food, prepared the dish, and when he came home, he walked in the door and said bluntly, "I don't feel like chicken tonight, I want lamb chops." I needn't tell you the thoughts that went through my mind because I'm sure you already know them. This was not an isolated incident. Similar ones happened far too frequently. I can't count the number of times Michael promised to be home for dinner and called ten minutes after dinner was ready to say he was going to work late and would eat out with his coworkers. I finally learned that it did no good to be angry, hurt, or resentful. That only made matters worse. It made him defensive because he thought I didn't understand his situation. I realized it was healthier for both of us if I rearranged my expectations. From then on, I prepared meals as if only I and the children would be eating them. If Michael was able to join us, it was a pleasant surprise. If he didn't, I could live with it.

I've learned that when disappointing things happen, it's best to remind myself of my husband's good qualities. I recount how he sometimes helps with the household chores and the cooking. He is faithful and does not give me reason to doubt it. He is a believer who goes to church, reads his Bible, prays, and has high moral standards. He loves me and our children. He uses his talents for God's glory. He is a good and generous provider. Things could be a lot worse, so I won't complain about whether he's home for dinner or not.

I think if I could help a new wife in any area, it would be to discourage her from coming into her marriage with a big list of expectations and then being upset when her husband doesn't live up to them. Of course there are some basics that should be agreed upon before the wedding date, such as fidelity, financial support, honesty, kindness, basic decency, high moral standards, physical and emotional love, and protection. When you don't get those things, you can ask for them. When you still don't get them, you can pray.

But when it comes to specifics, you can't require one person to meet all of your needs. The pressure to do that and fulfill your dreams at the same time can be overwhelming to a man. Instead, take your needs to God in prayer and look to *Him* for the answers. If we try to control our husbands by having a big list for them to live up to and then are angry and disappointed when they can't, *we* are the ones in error. The biggest problems in my marriage occurred when my expectations of what I thought Michael should be or do didn't coincide with the reality of who he was.

Let go of as many expectations as possible. The changes you try to make happen in your husband, or that your husband tries to make in himself to please you, are doomed to failure and will bring disappointment for you both. Instead, ask God to make any necessary changes. He will do a far better job because "whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Accept your husband the way he is and pray for him to grow. Then when change happens, it will be because God has worked it in him and it will be lasting. "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5). Your greatest expectations must be from God, not your husband.

With All Due Respect

It's interesting that God requires the husband to *love* his wife, but the wife is required to have *respect* for her husband. "Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). I assume no woman would marry a man she didn't love, but too often a wife loses respect for her husband after they've been married awhile. Loss of respect seems to precede loss of love and is more hurtful to a man than we realize.

The consequences of losing respect for your husband can be very serious. King David's wife, Michal, watched her husband dancing for joy before the Lord in front of the people, without his kingly clothing and in his undergarments, as the ark of the covenant was being brought into the city. Michal not only didn't share his joy, she had contempt for him (2 Samuel 6:16). She was critical instead of trying to understand the situation from God's perspective. She paid a dear price for her lack of respect; God's judgment caused her to be unable to ever bear children. I believe we not only bring defeat into our marriages and our husbands when we don't have respect for them, but it shuts the door to new life in us as well.

In another example, Queen Vashti refused to go to the king at his command. The king was giving a feast for his friends, he was in a party mood, and he wanted to show off his beautiful wife. All he asked of her was that she put on her royal clothes, don her royal crown, and make a royal appearance to the people he was entertaining. She declined, knowing full well it would be humiliating for him. "Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him" (Esther 1:12). The result was that Vashti lost her position as queen. She not only wronged her husband, the king, but the people as well. Unless a wife wants to lose her position as queen of her husband's heart, and hurt her family and friends besides, she mustn't humiliate her husband no matter how much she thinks he deserves it. The price is too high.

If this has already happened to you, and you know you've shown disrespect for your husband, confess it to God right now. Say, "Lord, I confess I do not esteem my husband the way Your Word says to. There is a wall in my heart that I know was erected as a protection against being hurt. But I am ready to let it come down so that my heart can heal. I

confess the times I have shown a lack of respect for him. I confess my disrespectful attitude and words as sin against You. Show me how to dismantle this barrier over my emotions that keeps me from having the unconditional love You want me to have. Tear down the wall of hardness around my heart and show me how to respect my husband the way You want me to. Give me *Your* heart for him, Lord, and help me to see him the way You see him."

Praying like this will free you to see your man's potential for greatness, as opposed to his flaws. It will enable you to say something positive that will encourage, build up, give life, and make the marriage better. Love is diminished if we dwell on the negatives. Love grows if we focus on the positive. When you have God's heart for your husband, you will be able to see through new eyes. There are times when you can't understand where your husband is coming from, what he is feeling, and why he is doing the things he does, unless you have the discernment of God. Ask God to give it to you.

When you are praying for yourself—his wife—remember this model of a good wife from the Bible. It says she takes care of her home and runs it well. She knows how to buy and sell and make wise investments. She keeps herself healthy and strong and dresses attractively. She works diligently and has skills which are marketable. She is giving and conscientiously prepares for the future. She contributes to her husband's good reputation. She is strong, solid, honorable, and not afraid of growing older. She speaks wisely and kindly. She doesn't sit around doing nothing, but carefully watches what goes on in her home. Her children and her husband praise her. She doesn't rely on charm and beauty but knows that the fear of the Lord is what is most attractive. She supports her husband and still has a fruitful life of her own which speaks loudly for itself (Proverbs 31).

This is an amazing woman, the kind of woman we can become only through God's enablement and our own surrendering. The bottom line is that she is a woman whose husband trusts her because "she does him good and not evil all the days of her life." I believe the most important "good" a wife can do for her husband is pray. Shall we?

Prayer.

Lord, Help me to be a good wife. I fully realize that I don't have what it takes to be one without Your help. Take my selfishness, impatience, and irritability and turn them into kindness, long-suffering, and the willingness to bear all things. Take my old emotional habits, mindsets, automatic reactions, rude assumptions, and self-protective stance, and make me patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. Take the hardness of my heart and break down the walls with Your battering ram of revelation. Give me a new heart and work in me Your love, peace, and joy (Galatians 5:22,23). I am not able to rise above who I am at this moment. Only You can transform me.

Show me where there is sin in my heart, especially with regard to my husband. I confess the times I've been unloving, critical, angry, resentful, disrespectful, or unforgiving toward him. Help me to put aside any hurt, anger, or disappointment I feel and forgive him the way You do—totally and completely, no looking back. Make me a tool of reconciliation, peace, and healing in this marriage. Enable us to communicate well and rescue us from the threshold of separation where the realities of divorce begin.

Make me my husband's helpmate, companion, champion, friend, and support. Help me to create a peaceful, restful, safe place for him to come home to. Teach me how to take care of myself and stay attractive to him. Grow me into a creative and confident woman who is rich in mind, soul, and spirit. Make me the kind of woman he can be proud to say is his wife.

I lay all my expectations at Your cross. I release my husband from the burden of fulfilling me in areas where I should be looking to You. Help me to accept him the way he is and not try to change him. I realize that in some ways he may never change, but at the same time, I release him to change in ways I never thought he could. I leave any changing that needs to be done in Your hands, fully accepting that neither of us is perfect and never will be. Only You, Lord, are perfect and I look to You to perfect us.

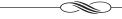
Teach me how to pray for my husband and make my prayers a true language of love. Where love has died, create new love between us. Show me what unconditional love really is and how to communicate it in a way he can clearly perceive. Bring unity between us so that we can be in agreement about everything (Amos 3:3). May the God of patience and comfort grant us to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5). Make us a team, not pursuing separate, competitive, or independent lives, but working together, overlooking each other's faults and weaknesses for the greater good of the marriage. Help us to pursue the things which make

for peace and the things by which one may edify another (Romans 14:19). May we be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

I pray that our commitment to You and to one another will grow stronger and more passionate every day. Enable him to be the head of the home as You made him to be, and show me how to support and respect him as he rises to that place of leadership. Help me to understand his dreams and see things from his perspective. Reveal to me what he wants and needs and show me potential problems before they arise. Breathe Your life into this marriage.

Make me a new person, Lord. Give me a fresh perspective, a positive outlook, and a renewed relationship with the man You've given me. Help me see him with new eyes, new appreciation, new love, new compassion, and new acceptance. Give my husband a new





POWER TOOLS

Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

MARK 11:24,25

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

MATTHEW 7:7,8

Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

PROVERBS 24:3,4

Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

GALATIANS 6:9

The Power of a PRAYING PARENT

STORMIE OMARTIAN



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Becoming a Praying Parent

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 Iesus 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 NKIV/KIV).

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 Iesus 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 *fervency* 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 lanet'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 freeway 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 praved 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.



PRAYER

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.



WEAPONS OF WARFARE

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.

IOHN 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

The Power of Praying for Your Adult Children

STORMIE Omartian



EUGENE, OREGON

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Pray That Your Adult Children Will SEE GOD POUR OUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM

nce you have released your adult children into God's hands and dedicated—or rededicated—their lives to Him (as I described near the end of the introduction), then the first and most important way to start praying is to ask God to pour out His Spirit upon them. It doesn't matter what else you need to pray about specifically; you will be heading upstream against a strong current if you and they are not moving with the flow of God's Spirit.

Every day we want the Spirit of God to come upon us and carry us where we need to go. We want Him to open our eyes to the truth and open our ears to hear His voice. We want Him to fill us afresh with His Spirit so that our lives can be lived for Him and we can move into all He has for us. And that is exactly what we want for our adult children as well.

Ideally, our adult children will ask for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit themselves. But realistically, many young people don't even think about doing that, or understand what it means or why they should. It would be wonderful if our adult children would pray for *all* the things suggested in this book over their own lives, but whether they do or don't, they still need our prayer support.

Pray That They Will Welcome an Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

A glorious promise God proclaimed to His people was first heard in the Old Testament through the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28) and then quoted later in the New Testament by Peter. It says:

"It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that *I* will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17, emphasis added).

We are living in the last days God is talking about. If you are not sure about that, read your Bible and then turn on the TV and watch it for a week. You will see unmistakable signs of it everywhere. The promise for our adult children in the words "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" is that, when the Holy Spirit is poured out on them, they will be able to hear from God. They will have a word from God in their hearts, and it will become the motivating factor in their lives. And God will be glorified in the process.

When our adult children can hear from God, then they will know where He is leading them, and they will understand how He wants them to serve Him. They may not know specifics, but they will have direction. Too often young adults can't figure out the direction for their lives because they haven't heard a word in their hearts from God about it. This can carry on for years until you have adult children who are aimless and don't feel any sense of purpose or calling. But when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them, they can sense direction from God, and He is able to lead them on the right paths and secure their steps in ways they couldn't begin to do on their own.

I have known too many good, godly, believing parents who had an adult child who did nothing for years after he (she) graduated from high school. In each case he (she) refused to go to a college or a trade school and couldn't or wouldn't find a job. The parents prayed and

prayed and threatened and prodded and begged to no effect. Then one day, after they had prayed that God would pour out His Spirit upon him (her), their adult child got up off the couch, turned off the TV, and went out and made a life for himself (herself).

You might be thinking, Why didn't those parents just throw their lazy adult children out? But it is not as easy as it sounds. When you throw them out they can get into a lot of trouble. They can become more vulnerable to evil influences because they are afraid or desperate. You must have the mind of God about this. You have to be certain that throwing your adult child out of your house is what God wants you to do. In some cases it may well be, but it can't be a decision born of human emotions, such as anger. I know some parents who shipped their adult child out because they thought it would do him good, and it turned out to be a terrible decision because he fell under some horrible influences.

We have to keep in mind that *God* can do far more for our adult children than *we* can ever do, and so we must ask *Him* to speak to their hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. They need to be able to hear from God regarding every aspect of their lives, from decisions they make about where they go and what they do to the people they spend time with and perhaps try to emulate.

Some adult children are going to be more open to hearing from God and receptive to the move of His Spirit in their lives than others. Some will not be open or receptive at all. At least not at first. Whether they are open or not shouldn't affect your prayers. You pray what needs to be prayed regardless of what your adult child's attitude is toward the things of God. *Your* job is to pray, and it is *God's* job to answer. Remember, you have released your adult child into God's hands. That doesn't mean you have given up on him or her. You're not saying, "You take him, God. I can't deal with him anymore." Or, "That's it, Lord. I've had it. She's all Yours now." It means you have surrendered the burden you have been carrying for your adult child to the Lord so He can take it off of your shoulders. Then the burden you carry is in prayer.

Pray That They Will Understand the Power of the Holy Spirit

I wrote *The Power of a Praying Parent* more than 15 years ago, and it has served me and others well in all those years. I have seen countless answers to prayer in my own children's lives, and I have heard from thousands of readers about the wonderful answers to prayer they have experienced as well. Those of us who started praying for our small children back then have seen them grow into adults. And we have also watched the world change for the worse in some way every day. We must now have a new strategy in prayer for our adult children. Our prayers for the flow of the Holy Spirit in their lives will become a powerful protective shield from the flood of this toxic culture. They cannot navigate it successfully without God's power.

Today's cultural environment will chew our adult children up and spit them out if they are not strong enough to recognize the destructive, dark, and powerful forces that are in it and be able to resist them. No matter how horrible our own background might have been, we weren't confronted with the outpouring of evil they are facing today. It is becoming so dangerous that even our adult children cannot successfully withstand it on their own. They need the power of the Holy Spirit, and they need our prayers to help them understand how He moves in power on their behalf.

We must not only *politely ask* God for an outpouring of His Spirit on our adult children, we must get on our knees and *cry out* for it from the depths of our being. We must recognize that already a spirit is being poured out on them right now—the spirit of darkness, death, perversion, lies, destruction, and evil—and only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can negate that in their lives before it harms or destroys them. Only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can connect them to the power of God.

Pray That They Will Be Influenced by the Holy Spirit of Truth

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). We all must have Him functioning in that capacity fully in our lives. And this is

especially true for our adult children. The Spirit of truth will bring the truth to light and expose the lies.

I am deliberately not telling many stories about my own adult children in this book, and that is not because there aren't any stories to tell. But Christopher and Amanda are adults, and these are *their* stories to tell. And I hope that someday they will, for the outcome in each case has been great to the glory of God. However, I will say that each one of my adult children at one point presented us with a challenge that made it necessary to confront them about some choices they had made with regard to the path they were on. They each had gotten off the path God had for them because of bad influences in their lives. I am not blaming the bad influences, because obviously something in each adult child allowed them to be drawn toward what they clearly knew was not right.

This happened in separate years and ages for each of them, and they were dealing with entirely different issues. However, in both cases I had previously sensed in *my* spirit that something was not quite right in *their* spirits. A parent can look into their adult child's eyes and see if the Holy Spirit is reflected back in all His purity, or if something has come into their mind and soul that is competing with His presence. And this is especially true when you ask the Holy Spirit of truth to reveal what you need to know in order to pray effectively for their lives.

My husband and I felt something was not right, but we didn't have any hard evidence. So we just prayed that God would reveal everything that needed to be revealed, and that He would not let them get away with anything. We asked God to pour out His Spirit upon them and convict them of whatever was in their lives that was not glorifying to Him. We asked the Spirit of truth to reveal the truth to them and to us.

In each case, not long after we prayed, someone called us to say they were concerned about our adult child and why. We went to each one and told them what the Holy Spirit had put on our hearts. We also told them what we had heard, although not whom we heard it from.

(I never reveal my sources.) They each immediately admitted to what we suspected and were deeply and completely repentant.

This was a turning point for each adult child, because they were different from then on. They were more serious about their lives, their futures, and the Lord. They became far more careful and wise about their associations and actions. The Holy Spirit spoke powerfully to them, and their hearts were opened to a new level of His work in their lives. All this could not have happened without the Spirit of truth penetrating their lives and revealing what they needed to see.

Even though I am not using many stories from my own adult children's lives—except in a few minor instances such as this, where their privacy is not compromised—there are countless parents of adult children with whom I have talked at great length about the problems they have faced with their adult children. These conversations have given me more than enough examples to illustrate what I need to in each chapter. However, so as to protect everyone's privacy, I will not mention any real names or specifics that would allow someone to be identified. Plus, nearly every example I am citing is based on more than one case. So it could be any one of a number of adult children whom I am talking about in this book.

All that to say, I have seen countless answers to prayers for adult children. Were I to tell you all of them, you would be greatly encouraged in praying for your own. I hope the ones I mention will give you the encouragement you need.

If you have an adult child who has grieved or worried you, or caused problems for himself (herself) or for you or others, ask God to pour out His Spirit on him (her) right now. Don't waste time blaming yourself, the other parent, or your child. I am not saying your adult children don't bear any responsibility for what happens in their lives. They certainly do. But the overriding factor is that only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God on your adult children is powerful enough to withstand the onslaught of the spirit of evil coming against them. Asking

God to pour out His Spirit upon your adult children is a simple prayer with powerful ramifications, both for you and for them.

I have asked God to pour out His Holy Spirit on *you* and speak to your heart as you pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your adult children. I can't wait to hear about the results.

PRAYER POWER ~

LORD, YOU HAVE SAID THAT in the last days You will pour out Your Spirit upon all flesh. I cry out to You from the depth of my heart and ask that You would pour out Your Holy Spirit upon my adult children. Pour out Your Spirit upon me and my other family members as well. Pour out Your Spirit on all of their in-laws, both present and future. Pour out Your Spirit upon whatever difficult circumstances each of my adult children are facing. Be Lord over every part of their lives and every aspect of their being.

Speak to my adult child's heart and help him (her) to hear from You. Enable him (her) to understand Your leading and direction for his (her) life. Open his (her) ears to hear Your truth so he (she) will reject all lies. Help him (her) to move by the power of Your Spirit. Enable him (her) to rise above the onslaught of evil in our culture.

Where he (she) has walked away from You in any way, stretch out Your hand and draw him (her) back. Don't let him (her) get away with anything that is not pleasing in Your sight. Convict his (her) heart and bring him (her) back to where he (she) should be. May the Holy Spirit poured out on him (her) completely neutralize the power of the enemy attempting to pour out evil in his (her) life.

I know You can do far more in my adult child's life than I can ever do, and I invite You to do so. But if there is anything I should do—or should *not* do—make it clear to me so that I will do the right thing. Holy Spirit of truth, reveal the truth that needs to be seen both to them and to me. Guide me in my response to them always.

I pray my adult child will never grieve Your Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) but will receive Him as a gift from You (Luke 11:13). Fill him (her) with Your Spirit and pour into him (her) Your peace, hope, faith, truth, and power. Let a spirit of praise

arise in his (her) heart and teach him (her) to worship You in Spirit and in truth.

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In Jesus' name I pray.

→ WORD POWER →

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

Luke 11:13

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Acts 1:8

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

MATTHEW 12:32

Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38