



LESSON 9 // HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR FAMILY

During His earthly ministry, Jesus helped His disciples overcome their prayer challenges. By His example He inspired them to pray and by His teaching He taught them the way to pray.

We see this especially in the “Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6:9-13. As part of Jesus’ instruction in these verses He reminds us to pray “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” In other words, we must be alert and on guard about evil and temptation as we pray—because there are real forces of darkness and “spiritual warfare” working against us and our families!

Let’s look at four things we need to do to protect our marriages and families from spiritual attack.

1. Realize that the devil is targeting you and your family.

One of the major themes of Scripture is the reality of an ongoing battle between two invisible kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, light and darkness! While we can’t see into this realm with our natural eyes, we can see the influence of invisible forces in the visible world.

The New Testament teaches us that the devil and his demons are real and at war with Jesus and His followers in the spiritual realm (Matthew 4:1; Mark 5:2, 9-13; John 10:10; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:25, 26; 1 Peter 5:8).

To live a victorious Christian life and to pray effectively, it’s imperative that we understand this. We are in a spiritual battle, fighting unseen spiritual forces intent on our destruction and the destruction of our families—and there are real casualties in this battle.

2. Become familiar with the methods the devil uses to trap people.

The Bible tells you to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11, NIV). The devil has schemes or methods (Greek *methodeia*) he uses to trick and trap you and your family.

Some of his methods that Scripture describes include temptations (Genesis 3:1-5), imaginations (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), deception (John 8:44), exhaustion (Daniel 7:25a), rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23), intimidation (2 Timothy 1:7), isolation (Ephesians 4:27) and distraction (Philippians 3:3, 14). To avoid being trapped by the devil, we must know what his traps look like!

3. Develop spiritual discernment.

The Bible calls us to develop discernment (see Proverbs 3:21-23)—an acute sense of judgment, the ability to pick up on important cues that are communicating a message to you, cues that may not be obvious or readily observed. Discernment allows you to see that something is different than a normal challenge, temptation or distraction.

Discernment helps us see when we are undergoing spiritual attack. It's the ability to "sniff out" the devil, when he's subtly attacking, plotting or stalking, so that you can respond appropriately.

Some cues that point to these spiritual attacks include the frequency or intensity with which something occurs, the "abnormality" of the situation, and the division, disunity or disharmony it may cause. We need to pray for and develop discernment, "so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11, NLT).

4. Be a protected, proactive believer.

We need to live under proper spiritual protection and engage in proactive spiritual exercise if we are going to avoid becoming a casualty of this spiritual war. How can we do this?

- Submit to Jesus Christ as your Lord—love and obey Him! (Mark 16:17a)
- Know that Jesus is the mighty warrior. (Psalm 24:7, 8; 1 John 4:4)
- Understand the power of the Word, the cross, the blood and the name of Jesus. (1 Samuel 17:45; Psalm 44:5-7; 124:8; Matthew 4:4; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 12:11)
- Understand the spiritual authority Jesus gave you. (Luke 10:19; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9)
- Saturate yourself and your family in the Word of God and prayer. (Matthew 17:21, NKJV; Ephesians 6:13)
- Saturate your environment with thanksgiving, praise and worship. (Psalm 149:6; Acts 16:25, 26)
- Stay connected to God's people.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV) *Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

Be protected and proactive. While it's true that we are targeted by the devil, we also must remember that victory belongs to us and our family in Jesus!

Discussion questions

1. Why is it important to understand the methods the devil uses to attack you and your family? What difference should this make as you pray for your family?
2. What is discernment? How can discernment help you head off and deal with spiritual attacks?
3. Read Luke 10:19, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, 9 and Revelation 12:11. What spiritual authority do you have as a believer in Jesus? How can you exercise this authority in prayer for your family?