

Prayer and the Spiritual Battle

By Dean Ridings

Some might scoff at the mention of a spiritual battle, but the Bible makes it clear that Christians have a very real enemy.

Anyone who seeks to have a vital relationship with God through prayer — ever growing toward greater intimacy with the Father through the finished work of the Son, Jesus — is a prime target for satanic salvos.

The Bible says that there is an enemy who is bent on destruction and will do whatever it takes to leave us discouraged, doubting, and defeated Christians.

In our "scientific" society where nothing you can't see, feel, touch, taste, or smell seems real, some scoff at the mention of a spiritual battle. The Bible, however, makes it clear: We have an "enemy the devil [who] prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

But Jesus promises that His followers can both survive and thrive through the battle: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

Satan Has a Terrible Plan

To get an idea of the activities of the Devil and his fallen-angel followers, just look at the names for them throughout Scripture. Among many descriptive titles, the Devil is called the wicked one, adversary, father of lies. Fallen angels are called evil spirits, demons, unclean spirits. Together, their expressed activities include:

- Tempting (Matthew 4:1)
- Lying (John 8:44)
- Accusing (Zechariah 3:1)
- Corrupting (2 Peter 2:10-12)
- Deceiving (1 Timothy 4:1)

We must realize, however, that God limits the activities of Satan and his demons. Jesus' death on the cross sealed the judgment of demonic forces: "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Colossians 2:15; also see John 16:11; 19:30; Hebrews 2:14).

Though the ultimate war has been won, we are engaged in a daily battle against the prince of this world. We are clearly warned in God's Word of the damage that can be inflicted by the kingdom of darkness. The Enemy schemes against us, throws flaming missiles at us, seeks to devour us, and wages direct warfare upon us (2 Corinthians 2:10-11; Ephesians 6:11-12,16; 1 Peter 5:8) As a result, we are to arm ourselves, stand against, refute, resist, and overcome (Ephesians 6:12-18; Isaiah 54:7; James 4:7; Revelation 12:11). Everything we need to successfully do battle was appropriated on the Cross. We simply need to appropriate it.

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Sharing Your Feelings Is Required

By Dr. Gary Chapman

Communication is the road to intimacy, but communication means more than simply sharing our thoughts. It involves sharing our feelings. [NOTE: especially for men]

Here's a good example. A husband comes home from work and shares with his wife that he had a conversation with his supervisor and was informed that he is to receive a pay raise.

The wife asks, "How do you feel about that, darling?" He may respond with, "Elated! I didn't expect a raise until the first of the year." On the other hand, he may say, "Do you want to know the truth? I feel disappointed. The raise should have been twice as much as it was."

Whichever way he responds, the wife now knows her husband better. Because he has shared his feelings, she now feels closer to him emotionally. That's what intimacy is all about.

We are emotional creatures, and we have emotional responses to things that happen to us throughout the day.

If we are going to build intimacy in marriage, we must learn to share some of our emotions. I say "some", because life is not long enough to share all of our emotions.

But, life is too short not to have intimacy.

To find out more about Dr. Chapman's resources, visit www.5lovelanguages.com.

Summary and Quiz on the Five Love Languages:
<http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Articles/5LL.pdf>

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Quiz to Discover Your Apology Language:
<http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Articles/ApolQuiz6pg.pdf>

11 Things I Wish Every Parent Knew - Part 1

By Dr. Stephen Cowan

After 25 years practicing pediatrics, and caring for thousands of children, I've noticed some patterns that offer me a deeper vision of health. Here are some of those invaluable lessons:

1. Growth and development are not a race.

These days we're in such a rush to grow up. In our mechanized, post-industrialized world of speed and efficiency, we've forgotten that life is a process of ripening. To get good fruit, you need to nourish strong roots. Pay attention to the ground that supports your child's life: Go for a walk with your child, eat with your child, play together, tell him a story about your experience as a child.

2. Creating family traditions encourages strong roots and a healthy life.

This takes time and practice. Personal traditions are sacred because they promote exchanges that strengthen bonds of love and intimacy and build the kind of confidence that will carry your child through this world.

3. We grow in cycles.

There is a rhythm and pulse to each child's life – sometimes fast and intense, sometimes slow and quiet. Just as each spring brings a renewed sense of appreciation for life, each stage of a child's life is a time of new discovery and wonder.

After all, learning is not just a process of accruing information. It's the process of transforming our ideas, and sometimes this requires forgetting in order to see with fresh eyes. Some children will take a step backward before making a giant leap forward.

Growing in cycles means that we don't get just one chance to learn something. The same lesson will offer itself up to us again and again as we pass through the seasons of our life. There is deep forgiveness in this way of understanding childhood, which I find takes the pressure off parents to "get it right" the first time.

4. Encouragement is not the same as indulgence.

We are not in the business of raising little kings and queens. Kings don't do well in our society. Recent studies have shown that indulgence actually weakens your child's powers to survive, deflating motivation and diminishing feelings of success.

Encouragement means putting courage in your child, not doing things for him. Create a supportive context that will open up a path without pushing your child down it. Unconditional love is the scaffolding that encourages your child to take chances, to experiment, and to fail without judgment. Sometimes being an encouraging presence in your child's life means standing a little off in the background, there to offer a compassionate hand when circumstances call for it, but trusting in his innate ingenuity.

There is spaciousness in encouragement. Indulgence, on the other hand, limits freedom by inflating a child's sense of entitlement and reducing the patience needed to work through obstacles when he doesn't instantly get his way. Indulgence leads to small-minded thinking.

5. Pushing your buttons is a spiritual practice... and children are our spiritual teachers.

You don't need an expensive spiritual retreat to become enlightened. Your little sage-teacher is right in front of you, offering you true wisdom free of charge!

Children watch our every move when they're little, studying our inconsistencies as they try to figure out this crazy world. And they will call you on it. When a child pushes your buttons, remember: they are your buttons, not hers. Take the time to listen to what your child is trying to teach you. One of the secrets of parenthood is our willingness to transform ourselves out of love for our child. When you're willing to look at your buttons, you open up a deeper self-awareness that is transformative for both you and your child.

6. A symptom is the body's way of letting us know something has to change.

Good medicine asks, "What is the symptom trying to accomplish?" rather than simply suppressing it. Our body has its own intelligence and yet so much of pharmaceutical advertising tries to convince us that

there is something wrong with feeling symptoms. Much of my medical training was focused on stopping symptoms as if they were the problem. (This is like telling the body to shut up. It's rude!) We don't trust the body's intelligence. We think too much and tend to be afraid of feelings in our body.

But children have taught me that a symptom like fever is actually not the problem. Whatever is causing the fever may be a problem, but the temperature is simply the body's way of trying to deal with what's happening.

Take, for example, the child with a fever. What other symptoms does the child have? If he is playful, you may not need to suppress the fever. It means the body is trying to make metabolic heat to mobilize the immune system. To help it do this, you can give warm (not cold) fluids so it doesn't dry out and nourishing foods like soups to fuel the fire.

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