

Discerning—and Dealing With—the Spirit of Strife

My 2-year-old son Timmy loves to climb. Something's up too high for him to reach? No problem! He'll simply pull a step stool or dining room chair over to whatever he wants to reach and climb up to it. He also climbs up on the bathroom vanity without using a stool (he has incredible upper body strength) so that he can stand on it and reach into the medicine cabinet for his toothbrush and Elmo toothpaste. And he loves to climb onto the top of the plastic playhouse we have in the yard.

The only thing is, you can't help him when he's climbing. "I do it myself!" he shouts if you try to help him. (In fact, that's one of my discipline techniques with him. I say, "Timmy, you better do such-and-such right now, 's going to help you!")

The other day, I was sitting at the computer, and Timmy wanted onto my lap. He climbed over the arm of the chair and onto my lap, wedging himself between me and the keyboard. He was content there for awhile, and then, he wanted to get down. All by himself, of course.

But as he got down, he stumbled, and the sharp edge of the keyboard tray caught him in the belly. As his weight carried him downward to the floor, the tray left him with a three-inch-long, red scrape.

Poor Timmy. He cried, of course, and I comforted him. I felt sorry for him getting wounded in such a tender area.

And the thought came to me that this is exactly how Satan approaches us to tempt us: at our most tender area. In other words, where we're weakest.

Satan doesn't waste his time trying to tempt me to rob a bank.

I don't have any desire to do that, and that particular temptation would be easy for me to resist. Neither does Satan spend any time trying to tempt me to steal a car. I don't want to steal a car, and it's not something I'm likely to ever do. I'm strong in these two areas.

On the other hand, Satan knows very well that I'm much weaker in other areas, and that's where he focuses his time. I'm much more likely to take the bait when the temptation involves such things as being impatient with my children, being lazy with housework, or being selfish.

We all have weak areas, and we all have strong areas. Maybe you're not at all likely to murder someone, or embezzle from your company, or sell drugs to schoolchildren. Oh, but Satan knows that you are likely—perhaps even very likely—to disrespect your husband, purposely disobey traffic laws, or gossip. And he's going to spend his time trying to hit you in those areas, where he can see more results for his work.

You and I are in a battle. It's a spiritual battle. Make no mistake about it: The forces of evil are very real and are battling for our obedience. While it's true that once we become Christians, evil can no longer have our souls, it's also true that Satan's mission is to utterly destroy us and our Christian witness.

Yet we don't protect ourselves as we should.

We've all seen pictures—whether on television or in the newspapers—of SWAT teams ready for action. They carry weapons and protective gear so they can successfully carry out their mission. Their body armor is concentrated on a human being's most vulnerable areas—the head and torso.

Likewise, you and I need to fortify the areas in which we are spiritually vulnerable. Ephesians 6 cautions us in this regard and then gives us a list of all the ways we can do this. Do you know what these ways are? Are you regularly putting them

into practice in your life?

If not, you're leaving yourself spiritually unprotected and vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

The good news is that God has provided armor that is sufficient to protect you from the devil's schemes against you. This armor is free of charge—but it's not automatic. You don't find yourself automatically clothed with this armor (except salvation) just because you are a Christian. You must decide to put it on, and then take action.

Will you do it? John 10:10—"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (ESV)

Ephesians 6:11-13— Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (ESV)

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, Manna for Moms. Megan is the author of Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy and Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*