

How to Pray for Your Prodigal

Pop star Katy Perry may be known for pushing the envelope in her songs and performances, but that hasn't stopped her mother, prophetic evangelist Mary Hudson, from believing her daughter will return to the godly foundation upon which she was raised. Here, Mary shares how to stand in the gap when it looks like your child will never come home.

A cultural Armageddon has come upon our teenagers and young adults. A constant assault of immoral and often perverted messages is being leveled at them through movies, television, music and the Internet. On a simple trip to the mall, girls are assailed with life-sized photos of partly undressed men in popular department stores. Boys are under a continuous barrage from racy commercials and violent, sexually explicit video games.

Satan's assault on our youth is relentless, and they can't fight against it alone. Parents have to walk in their God-given authority—children can't be left to raise themselves.

But when our children become adults, they must make their own decisions about whether they will follow God. That choice isn't up to us. Our children will explore the world on their own and, unfortunately, make mistakes. We have to rest in the fact that we trained them in the way they should go, and even if they stray, they will return to what they know is right (Prov. 22:6).

One morning I opened my Bible after going through a three-month period of depression, and the pages turned to Psalm 113:9: "He makes the barren woman ... a joyful mother of [spiritual] children" (AMP). The words seemed to jump off the page at me.

As I read that verse, I felt the Lord telling me that if I wanted my children to be spiritual, I had to change my

attitude and rejoice in the Lord as never before. I had to thank Him *in advance* for what He was going to do in my family. Adjusting my attitude radically changed my perspective.

When children are away from God, it's natural for us as parents to want to tell them all the reasons they should change *now*! If your child is wayward, doing what comes naturally to you won't capture his or her heart. You face a spiritual battle, and you must fight for your child with superior firepower—with prayer that's bolstered by rejoicing, praising and declaring the Word of God, which is His war strategy for giving you and your child victory.

Don't Worry, Be Happy

When your children decide to follow a path that is diametrically opposed to what you taught them, you can still rejoice. You aren't praising God for what they may be doing at the moment; you are thanking Him for what He has already done and you are appropriating it for what you're dealing with right now. In fact, joy is a vital weapon in the spiritual war of intercession you're fighting.

Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (NKJV). This is not a mere platitude but an actual recipe for victory. Joy is what gives you the fortitude to endure trials and temptations you normally would give up on. It is the bridge that takes you from praying to seeing that prayer answered.

Before the Lord took me to Psalm 113:9 and spoke to me about the barren woman being the joyful mother of spiritual children, I had spent hours in prayer for my family and yet didn't see the desired results. Many of you have done the same thing. You've prayed and prayed for your children, but nothing seems to change.

When the Lord took me to that verse, He showed me what was missing. I needed to get happy *before* there was anything to be

happy about. My attitude had to change. I had to drop the dismal, doubting-Thomas stance to let Him inhabit my praises.

Maybe you've seen the animated film *Happy Feet*. In the movie, an emperor penguin is born into a tribe of penguins that can find their soul mates only by singing. The star of the show, Mumble, is born with a huge social disability: He can't sing! He does have one amazing talent, though: He can tap dance. So instead of living in defeat and assuming he will never find love, Mumble makes a choice to rejoice. He dances his way to the penguin wife of his dreams.

This is what you must do too: You have to *choose* to rejoice, no matter what your situation looks like. God wants you to dance, to praise Him *before* the breakthrough occurs with your child. We see many times throughout Scripture that God sent the victory *after* His people thanked Him (see Acts 16:20-28, 2 Chr. 20:22).

While you're standing on God's Word, waiting for Him to bring the victory, praise Him. Praise is the vital co-ingredient that will push through the answer to your prayer. In fact, I submit to you that unless you thank God *before* you see the answer manifest, your breakthrough will be blocked. Praise is the act of faith that lets God know you trust His promise to come through for you. Putting more praise on your scales will balance out the unbelief and doubt every time.

The alternative—depression—certainly doesn't make anything happen, except create a roadblock to answered prayer. The enemy of your soul wants to put up Hoover Dam-sized walls between your petitions and the manifestation. Jesus said answered prayer would be one of the ongoing sources of our joy: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ... These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:7, 11).

Let Faith Take You to the Top

I know how difficult it can be to watch your children do things their way, especially when it is the opposite of God's way. You want to shout, "Stop!" because you clearly see the danger ahead. Children are foraging through a minefield of demonic influences in this fallen world, and standing in the gap through prayer is part of the primary way you will reach your child.

Instead of just telling your children their choices are wrong, you must appeal to the Source. My father used to tell me, "Always go to the top." That is what we, as Christian parents, have to do if we want to see our children change. We enter God's throne room boldly and plead our case before Him. After all, He is the one who tells us, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you *and your household*" (Acts 16:31, emphasis added).

I know of a couple in ministry whose daughter was born again and filled with the Holy Spirit at age 4. Raised in church, she was always close to her mother and was even her prayer partner as the daughter got older. But during the girl's senior year in high school, she started to become withdrawn and had a strange attitude. Her friends started to influence her away from the Lord.

Her mom decided it was time to begin some serious prayer. When this mother and her husband got up in the morning and started making the bed, they would agree in prayer for their daughter. They would ask Him to open the eyes of her understanding and give the girl wisdom to make godly choices.

A couple of months later the mother was sitting in the den, and as her daughter walked past she suddenly stopped in the doorway, stomped her foot and screamed at her mom, "Stop praying for me! You're ruining my life!"

This woman immediately went to her husband to tell him, and

then said, "Let's continue praying for her and help ruin her life" (the life that was taking the teen away from God).

A few more months went by with no results, but the parents didn't stop praying. When it was time for the daughter to register for college, the girl sheepishly approached her mother and asked if they could pray together about which school she should attend. After they finished praying, the daughter asked her mom what she should do.

"What is God telling you?" the mother asked.

"I'm supposed to go to Bible school," the girl replied. The mother could see her prayer of agreement with her husband was changing things. Fast-forward several years and her daughter is now married and a lead worshipper in a church.

You can have hope that your children will return from the land of the enemy. God has not forgotten your child. God's plans for your children are not annulled because your child is in a wayward state: "For your work shall be rewarded ... and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border" (Jer. 31:16-17).

Say and See

When you start meditating on Scripture, you will lose the defeatist attitude that makes you think your prayers never get answered. When you stand in faith in the truth of God's Word and pray His promises over your children, you will begin to see change.

This is exactly why it's critical we renew our minds in the Word each day. You can't be passive when you are under attack. You have to rise up and fight back when thoughts are swirling around your brain trying to exalt themselves against God's unchanging truth. Cast down thoughts of doom in any area of life to where there is a mandate to aggressively destroy

strongholds that keep you fearful for your children's future.

Have you ever seen this acronym for the word *fear*? **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal. The enemy's most effective weapon is deception. And if you fall for his lie that your child is never going to change and will always live a certain way, you have been duped by one of the devil's oldest tricks. But once you recognize that your enemy is a paper tiger, you can start fighting back with that weapon God has put, literally, right under your nose: your *mouth*.

Start speaking life to your children, no matter what they are up to or what they are up against. You'll start to see life arise in them. A friend told me that when she calmed down and started using this method with her adult daughter, her child was so shocked by my friend's positive attitude that she asked, "Mom, has someone been coaching you?"

Yes, she had a coach—the Holy Spirit! He taught her how to love her child in a new way when she decided to rejoice and speak words of life instead of death.

The situation in my own family was not good and seemed to be getting worse when the Holy Spirit took me to Psalm 43:2: "For You are the God of my strength [my Stronghold—in Whom I take refuge]" (AMP). I began to speak the Word, even though I didn't see any signs of change. And slowly I began to see God bring healing in the situation.

If you are believing God to bring your child back to Him, declare it daily. Ask the Holy Spirit to drop specific Scriptures into your heart that speak to you about His purpose and plan for your child. He will do it, and you will start to see results.

A word of caution here: The people around you, including your child or unsaved relative, are not the ones who need to hear your prayers. Only God needs to hear them. He watches over His Word to perform it. Instead of begging God when you're

interceding for your children, start speaking His Word.

God Never Fails

Second Corinthians 1:20 says, "For all the promises of God in Him [Jesus] are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (NJKV). And we are told in 1 Kings 8:56, "There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses."

God is clearly telling us in these passages that He never fails us, but it doesn't always seem that way. If God never fails, why haven't we seen our children come back to Him yet? If all the promises in God's Word belong to us, why don't we have them?

It's because we live in a fallen world, and the enemy will do everything in his power to rob us of the healing, deliverance, freedom and victory Christ's death secured for us. But as children of God, we have authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). It's our responsibility to exercise that authority by agreeing with God's Word and rejecting the lies.

For example, if a police officer catches someone speeding, he has all the justification in the world to write that driver a ticket. But if the officer doesn't chase that driver down, he chooses not to exercise the authority that belongs to him.

You can read this entire article and glean some great revelation out of it for household salvation and changing your attitude toward your children. But if you don't use what you've already been given, you might as well throw it in the trash. Your gifts will increase when you use them and decrease when you don't.

I pray you will realize that whatever you're going through right now is a drop in the bucket in the light of eternity. No matter how difficult the journey may feel, you have to keep moving. The Bible says God will give you the power to get

through trouble and suffering and reach higher ground if you don't stand still (see Hab. 3:17-19).

God has a great life waiting for you and your family. Just stay in His presence, stand on His Word and begin to rejoice.

*Prophetic evangelist **Mary Hudson** ministers with her husband, Keith, around the world. She also holds Arise conferences that encourage women to embrace who they are in Christ, be bold trailblazers and think outside the box. Authors of The Cry and Smart Bombs, the Hudsons can be contacted via their website, .*