

Why Strife Starts

Imagine this: you're sitting at your computer, scrolling through the latest posts on your timeline, when one of your children tracks you down. "Mommy," she says, "Johnny says he doesn't want to watch what I want to watch. But he got to choose what we watched last time. Tell him it's my turn!"

You close your eyes and sigh. Not again! You try to push away the feelings of discouragement and frustration. You're tired of struggling against them.

They are what you're struggling against, right? What you've been struggling with for a long time?

Wrong.

Please don't misunderstand: I know feelings of discouragement and frustration are very real. So are feelings of anger, loneliness, and sadness. We've all felt them. We've spent time, money, and energy on getting rid of them—and there's nothing wrong with wanting to be free from these emotions.

But they are not what our struggle is truly against.

In the famous passage about putting on spiritual armor instead of merely physical armor, Scripture tells us that we are to don this spiritual armor because the devil is scheming against us. It then goes on to say, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

I've always liked this verse. But it wasn't until recently that I realized just how it can apply to me as a mom. And when I realized it, it immediately began to make a huge difference.

My struggle isn't against my children's bickering, or the

mounds of dirty laundry, or the necessity of teaching the same concepts over and over again. It's not even against the frustration, discouragement, or irritation I may feel. It's against the devil's schemes against me, and the spiritual forces of evil at work in this world.

You see, negative emotions do not have to be our response to our circumstances. But Satan knows that if he can get us to respond that way, he's got us beaten down. He schemes to do whatever is necessary to entice us to respond in a defeated, discouraged, or dejected manner (remember that he's always looking for people to devour; see 1 Peter 5:8).

So when we are tempted to feel discouraged, annoyed, or angry, our struggle is not against that emotion. It's ultimately against Satan himself, who's trying to ruin us.

Check out the Ephesians passage again: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood." That means that our struggle really isn't against people, including ourselves. Our struggle is a spiritual one.

Why is it so important for us to be aware of this? So we can respond differently. If we try merely to battle the emotions, we're missing the bigger fight. And if we fight the same way we always have, we may be using the wrong weapons. Ephesians 6 tells us the right weapons to use, including prayer, faith, and salvation. Why? Because these are the only weapons that will work when we're fighting a spiritual battle.

We need to arm ourselves differently. We need to fight differently.

Fortunately, we serve a God who has equipped us for the battle and shown us how to further equip ourselves. To Him be glory forever and ever.

Ephesians 6:12—For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,

against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (NIV)

*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.*