

Calling the Prodigals Home

✖ As I've traveled around the world, I've noticed the same battle taking place everywhere: Satan is warring against the saints, and he's doing it through their children.

Leaders' children, in particular, seem to be under heavy attack. And those young people who have the highest callings on their lives are the ones the enemy is targeting with greatest ferocity.

Time and time again I've prayed with Christians who have said through tears, "Johnny (or Susie) had a heart after God when he was young. So many prophetic words were spoken over him about his destiny in Christ! But now, it's as if he's rejecting everything he ever believed in."

If your own heart is breaking because your child has turned his back on the Lord, I have good news for you: The situation is temporary. There will be a day when he returns from the land of the enemy. Fear not!

How can I say that with such assurance? Because my husband, Mike, and I had a prodigal too.

I'm just like you. I love my kids, Mary and Daniel. I have tried very hard to be a good mother. I've spent hours and hours with them as they've grown up, praying for them and teaching them the Word. I've tried my best to live a godly example before them, even though I have not always succeeded.

Still, for a time, Mary turned away from the Lord. What happened? For one thing, the kids suffered from having a mother who was a minister when women in ministry were really unpopular.

The unkind things people said about me hurt my daughter especially. Her Christian kindergarten teacher told her I was

a witch because I was praying for the sick; her first-grade teacher told her I didn't love her because I was traveling. The pain from such comments mounted until, as a teen-ager, Mary could no longer stand the church. She thought all Christians were hypocrites.

It was a long, up-and-down battle. At times Mary would look as if she were coming to her senses, only to surprise us a few days later with a comment such as, "Mom, I've been reading a book about aliens, and I think that maybe Jesus was a alien." She would usually say something outrageous like that just as I was going out the door to preach. I'd cry all the way to the airport and struggle with deep feelings of shame.

"Who do you think you are to preach the gospel? You can't even deal with your own daughter!" the enemy would whisper. "You are a failure, Cindy Jacobs—a big failure!"

It's a good thing that when we are weak, God is strong. At those times I had to minister out of sheer obedience because inside I was crushed. Yet somehow God always worked through my grief and pain, and great breakthroughs would take place at those meetings.

Having a Battle Plan

In the heat of our battle over Mary, I discovered how important it is to have a strategy—a solid battle plan that helps you go into war fully equipped. The enemy of our souls wants to discourage us from believing our prodigals will ever turn around. He wants to use our own precious children to send fiery darts designed to erode our faith. But with a plan steadfastly in place, we can stand firm no matter what our kids do or say.

Having a plan does not eliminate the inevitable pain that comes when your son sneers, "I don't believe in your God!" or your daughter cries, "I don't want to have anything to do with those hypocrites in church!" It hurts—terribly. But if we are

firm in our resolve that no matter what happens we are going to stand and keep standing in the gap for them, we may plummet temporarily—but then we will get back up on our feet and start praying again.

Prayer Strategies That Work

The insights I'm about to share with you are tried and tested, and they work! I know, because Mike and I have seen God do a miracle in Mary's life through prayer.

1. Find God's promises in His Word concerning your child and stand firmly on them. Here are two for starters:

* "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Is. 54:13, NKJV).

* "Thus says the Lord: 'Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, 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).

God gave me a specific verse for Mary: "'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt'" (Hos. 2:14-15). This passage was special to me because Mary is a musician. I clung to this verse and others, believing that God was going to completely restore her.

2. Get others to stand in agreement with you (see Matt. 18:19). There is nothing like a believing prayer partner to stand with you during your child's rebellion! This is especially true for single moms and those whose husbands are

not Christians.

I have several close friends who were always there for me when I would call and ask for prayer. They would constantly remind me, "Cindy, you know this is just temporary. God has His hand on Mary's life." Of course I knew that—but somehow just hearing it again and again brought comfort to my heart.

One day at a very low ebb I received a note from my good friend Dick Eastman. He reminded me that he had prayed for Mary every day the year before, and he said he was committing to pray for her every day for the coming year. He said our family was on his "till death do us part" prayer list. What a priceless gift!

3. Pray for God to send laborers across your child's path (see Luke 10:2). Believe God to send other Christians to your child to say those things they will not hear from you. Even after giving her heart back to the Lord, Mary had a hard time returning to church. I knew she needed to be restored to fellowship, but every time she went to a church service she was reminded of all the negative stuff she had experienced growing up. There seemed to be nothing I could do or say to help.

I kept praying that God would send someone she would listen to. Then one day a prophetic friend she trusted got hold of her and prophesied that she needed to go to church. From that day she began going to church more and more.

4. Start a fasting chain. For four years now, Mike and I and Luis and Doris Bush have fasted and prayed for each other's children almost every Wednesday morning. It is a special covenant gift we have given each other, and we are all strengthened by it.

Several times Mike and I fasted for 21 days straight, praying for Mary to turn around. Our prayer partners undertook two 40-day fasts for her. (She was a tough case—strong-willed like

her mother!) I'm convinced these times helped facilitate Mary's breakthrough.

5. Pray with snapping turtle faith. Those of you who are from Texas may know about snapping turtles. They have long necks and strong jaws that strike out and latch onto you. You can kill those turtles, and they won't let go!

That's a picture of "snapping turtle faith." Biblically you could call it persevering prayer. You pray and don't stop praying until you see a change.

When Mary first became a prodigal, I thought it would be only a matter of weeks before she came back to the Lord. But weeks turned into months, and months turned into years before we finally saw a complete breakthrough. It took snapping turtle faith to hang in there.

6. Do spiritual warfare for your child's destiny. This involves the principle of "binding and loosing" found in Matthew 18:18. Bind Satan from blinding your child's eyes to the glorious light of the gospel (see 2 Cor. 4:4). Forbid the enemy from bringing evil companions and wrong relationships into his life. Stand at the gates of hell, and tell Satan that he cannot and will not have your child!

What finally turned Mary all the way around? Old Slue-foot overplayed his hand! One day my son, Mary's fiancé, Thomas, and I were praying for one of Mary's friends. Suddenly the friend started manifesting demonically. We weren't actually trying to do deliverance on him, but he was so full of evil spirits that he just leaked them!

When Mary heard her friend screaming and cursing, she ran into the room. A spirit spoke out of him, "Madison (her nickname), make them let me go."

Mary knew her friend's voice, and she knew that whatever was speaking to her was not him. She pointed her finger at the

demon and said, "I do believe in Jesus Christ, and you're coming out!"

Then she proceeded to go after that spirit, speaking the Word and commanding it to leave her friend. From that day forward she started turning her life back to the Lord.

Listen, my friend. God has His hand on your child even when you can't see it. Don't rely on what you see with your eyes and hear with your ears; that's all subject to change. Rely on God and His Word!

Claim God's promise that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Clamp on with snapping turtle faith, and the day will come when your prodigal, like mine, will come running home to the Father's house.

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