



THE PRAYER CLOSET

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PRAYING FOR YOUR PRODIGAL

Every person has at least one prodigal in their life. It could be a family member or a friend. By the term "prodigal," I mean a person who has turned away from the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. This person was raised in a Christian family. This person made a profession of faith and was faithful for a time. This probably happened when this person was a child or a young adult.

There are times when an older person professes faith in Christ. This person has lived a wicked life. There appears to be a change in this person's life. For a period of time, this person lives differently. This person seems committed and zealous in his or her devotion for Jesus Christ.

Yet, this person has now changed. He or she has turned away from the beliefs and practices of his or her Christian home and upbringing. This person is no longer faithful to church and is sporadic at best. The commitment that this person made seems forgotten or buried in worldliness and indifference. He or she is practicing things that should not be a part of a Christian's life. The joy and hope that you had for this person and his or her relationship to God has now faded into deep sorrow and great concern.

I am sure that you can think of at least one person that you know that is in this condition. You may be able to think of numerous. The person I am describing may be a family member or friend. Because this person is in this condition, you are grieved. Your heart is broken because he or she has turned away from Jesus Christ and His church. They appear to no longer have any interest in spiritual things. Because of this, you are concerned about their condition and their eternal destiny.

In this situation, what can a person do? You have talked to this person. You have loved this person. You have tried to live an example of Christian faith before this person. Yet, he or she does not respond. This person continues to follow his or her selfish, sinful path away from God, His Word, and His church. Nothing seems to work in turning this person back to God and His Word.

Is "hoping for the best" all that you have left to do? Is it possible that there is nothing left to do? Prayer is not one of the ways that you can see this person turned back to God. It is not the last chance effort to see this person delivered and restored. It is the essential key in seeing this person changed. **The crucial element in seeing this person changed and brought into a right relationship with God is prayer!** God will honor your prayers on behalf of a prodigal.

One of the most amazing truths in all of the Word of God is that God uses the prayers of His people to deliver and restore people. God uses prayer to deliver people from their self-destructive course and into a right relationship with Himself. When God's people pray, He does change lives. God does deliver and restore believers to Himself through the earnest and humble prayers of other believers. God does save sinners through the pleading and praying of broken, sincere believers. God is pleased to use your prayers in delivering and restoring people from the grip of sin and Satan.

This truth is illustrated in the life of Abraham. In **Genesis 18**, Abraham is told by the Lord that He is going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 18:20-21**). This burdens Abraham because he knows that Lot and his family are living in Sodom (**Genesis 14:12**).

Lot was a genuine believer (**2 Peter 2:7-8**). Yet, he allowed himself to be drawn into Sodom by his worldliness and lust. Sodom was an extremely wicked city (**Genesis 13:13**). Lot was grieved by the wickedness of the city. However, he had backslidden to the point that he tolerated this and turned away

from his relationship to God. Lot no longer went to the altar to pray, fellowship with God, and seek forgiveness (**Genesis 13:4**).

This is exactly what happens to the prodigal. This person is drawn away from God and His Word by worldliness and lust. This person wants to live life as he or she chooses. This person no longer seeks God as he or she once did. He or she is no longer diligent to serve or follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This person has separated himself or herself from godly influences and is now under the influence of wicked and godless people and practices. This person is preoccupied with the world and not with spiritual things.

Lot was in Sodom and was about to be swept away in the judgment of God. **The only thing that kept Lot from being swept away by the judgment of God is that he had an uncle on the hillside praying for him.** Abraham's praying in **Genesis 18:22-33** kept Lot from being destroyed in the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This should cause you to consider two sobering truths. First, you may be the only thing standing between the judgment of God and the prodigal. God may be pleased to withhold judgment because you are pleading for this person. You may be the only person standing in the gap for this prodigal. This should cause you to continue to be faithful and earnest in your praying. You may be the key to the withholding of God's judgment and the restoration of this person.

Second, you can see that God will deliver people through your prayers. **Your prayers in behalf of others are not in vain!** God is pleased to deliver and restore people through the humble and earnest praying of His people. This should cause you to be recommitted to praying for the prodigals. There is hope for a person as long as God's people are praying for that person.

In praying for your prodigal, there are some basic principles that you must remember and put into practice. **First, you must be committed to the task.** When Abraham began to pray about the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah, he stood still before the Lord (**Genesis 18:23**). Abraham had come to do serious business with the Lord God: he would be interceding for his loved one. Abraham was determined to seek the Lord for the deliverance of Lot and his family. He would not cease praying until he received the answer. You must do the same. You must be committed to the task. You must be determined to seek God with all your being for the deliverance and restoration of the prodigal. You will have to anchor yourself in the presence of God. You must get alone with God and be committed to praying for this person until you receive the answer. You cannot give up. You cannot quit. No matter what happens or how desperate the situation gets, do not stop praying until you receive the answer. William S. Plumer wrote, "**Real prayer seeks an audience and an answer.**" Go into the presence of God, committed to the task of praying for this person and not giving up until you receive an answer.

The next principle of praying for a prodigal is that you must be bold in your pleading with God. Abraham began his prayer by asking God to deliver the city if there were fifty righteous people. He continued to plead until God had assured him that he would deliver the city if there were ten righteous people.

It is interesting that Abraham plead with God until he was assured that God would not destroy the city if there were ten righteous people. The ten that Abraham was thinking about was Lot's family. Lot, his wife, and two unmarried daughters would add to four. Then, Lot had sons-in-law. The Hebrew form of the word in this text is plural and means more than two (**Genesis 19:4**). The number of the sons-in-law has to be more than two. This means that the sons-in-law and the daughters of Lot that they married would total at least ten or more.

It is important that you notice the boldness of Abraham. When he prayed to the Lord, he was bold in making his request. He did it with humility (**Genesis 18:27**). Yet, he boldly prayed to God about his heart's desire.

In praying for your prodigal, you must be bold in your praying. This person is in a desperate and

dangerous condition. God is the only One who can change this person. It is time to be bold. You must be humble before the Lord. Yet, you need to understand that being humble before the Lord does not lessen one's boldness. Sometimes people make it sound like humility before the Lord and boldness in praying are enemies. They are not! Actually, the more humble a person is before the Lord, the greater the boldness that person will have in prayer. **True humility fuels the fire of boldness!** Humility before God means that you are absolutely convinced that you cannot do anything in the situation you are praying about and God is the only one who can change the situation. If you know that you cannot change anything or anybody and only God can, it will make you bold to pray to God. You must plead for this person with all the intensity that you have, absolutely trusting and resting in God for the final outcome. **If God is allowing this person in rebellion to still live, there is hope.** Plead with God with a holy and humble boldness!

The final principle of praying for your prodigal is that you must focus on the character of God. In this prayer, Abraham focused on the righteousness of God. God always does right. He never does what is wrong. Abraham knew this and used this in his praying for Lot. Lot was a righteous man. Yes, he had allowed himself to be drawn into worldliness and compromise. Yet, he was a righteous man. Since God is righteous, He will not allow the righteous to be destroyed as the wicked are. Abraham used this by calling on God to be true to His character. He asks God not to destroy the righteous as the wicked are. In doing this, he is actually praying for Lot. Since Lot was a righteous man and God is righteous in His character and actions, He would deliver Lot from the destruction.

In praying for your prodigal, you need to focus on the character of God. You need to plead with God to be true to His character. God is merciful. You need to plead that God would reveal His mercy by withholding judgment on your prodigal. God is good. You need to plead that God would show His goodness by delivering this prodigal. God has all power. You need to call on God to show that power by restoring your prodigal. As you plead for the prodigal, call on God to be true to His character. Ask God to reveal how great and mighty He is by changing this person. Plead with God to reveal His glory by powerfully transforming the prodigal and bringing him or her into a right relationship with Him!

The following prayer list is offered as a guide to help you in praying for your prodigal. These prayer requests are based on God's Word. You need to read the verses and then plead these to God. **Powerful praying is praying that is based on God's Word!** These prayer requests will help you get started. You need to plead these before God along with other requests concerning this person and his or her situation. Ask God to give you insight in how to pray for this person. Plead with the Holy Spirit to guide you and empower you as you pray for this person. When you pray for a prodigal, you need to pray for the following:

(1) That God would give this person a new heart and make him or her into a new creature (Ezekiel 36:26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:1-16). When you are praying for someone in this position, you have to consider the possibility that he or she has never experienced a life-transforming encounter with Jesus Christ through faith and repentance. It is very possible for a Christian to have periods in their relationship with God where they backslide and are not as diligent to serve and follow Jesus Christ. Yet, these are only for a season. The overwhelming testimony of the Bible is that a true Christian is not going to live in a habitual state of disobedience and sin (**Romans 6:1-2, 17-18; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 1:6, 2:3-4; 3:6-9**). Lot does provide the example of a righteous believer who gets entangled in worldliness and lust. However, it must be remembered that there is only one Lot in the Bible. There is one Lot in order to show that righteous believers can get entangled in sin and still be saved. Yet, there is *only one* Lot to show people that they cannot presume on God in this matter. You need to hear and take to heart the words of A.W. Tozer. Tozer wrote, **"If I find anyone who is settled down too snugly into this world, I am made to doubt whether he's ever truly been born again."** R.G. Lee has stated, **"The faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first."** A person can make a profession of faith and appear

to be changed. Yet, this is no guarantee that one has been born again. When a person gets into this condition, you have to consider the possibility that he or she has not truly been saved. As C.H. Spurgeon wrote, "**A worldly Christian is spiritually diseased.**" This person is spiritually diseased. **This person has a serious problem.** His or her problem may be greater and more dangerous than that of being a backslidden Christian. You have to consider the possibility that he or she has been deceived and is not a genuine Christian. You need to plead that God would work a miracle of grace and save this person if he or she is not a Christian;

(2) That God would be true to His Word if this person is a Christian (John 6:39-40, 10:27-30; Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24-25). It is possible that this person is a Christian. Christians can allow themselves to be trapped into worldliness, lust, and compromise. They can turn for a season from God and His Word due to yielding to temptation and failing to be diligent in pursuing God in a daily relationship. Yet, God has promised to keep His people. He has promised to graciously preserve His people. He will not allow His people to fall away from Him or to abandon Him. A genuine Christian will not totally turn his or her back on Christ and fall away. There may be a period when that believer turns from the Lord through sin and compromise. Yet, God's gracious promise will stand true. He will preserve His people. The life of Peter illustrates this fact (**Study the following passages-John 6:66-71; 18:25-27; Acts 2:14ff**). Not only will God preserve His people, He will also cause His people to persevere in the faith. Despite sinning and failing God, the true Christian is going to keep pursuing holiness. The Christian will continue to pray, confess sin, repent, and follow Christ. This is due to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. God will continue the work that He began in a believer through the Lord Jesus Christ. When praying for a prodigal, ask God to be true to His promises. Plead with God to preserve this person if he or she is a believer. When praying for a prodigal, plead with God to cause this person to persevere in the faith. Call on God to work in this person by His Holy Spirit, creating holy desires and a sincere interest in and desire for the things of God;

(3) That God would cause the consequences of sin to become bitter (Jeremiah 2:19). This person has turned away from the Lord Jesus Christ for some reason—a person, a possession, a position, a pleasure. There is something that has become an obstacle between God and His Word and this person. When praying for this person, ask God to take all the enjoyment out of this obstacle. Plead with God to take away all pleasure that the prodigal has from this. Call on God to make this obstacle a "bitter pill to swallow" for this person. You need to plead with God that He will cause this person to see that the obstacle is just that—a hindrance to a right relationship with God;

(5) That God would remove any evil influences from this person's life (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 1:10-19; Psalm 1:1). When a person gets into this condition, he or she becomes friends with and is influenced by wicked people. These people are influencing the prodigal away from God and His Word in order to do wicked things. These people are going to be a hindrance to this person turning back to God and entering into a right relationship with Him. You need to plead with God that He would remove these evil influences from this person's life. Pray that God will cause the prodigal's relationship to these people to sour. Ask God to remove any comfort, pleasure, or joy from these relationships. Call on God to remove these people out of the prodigal's life either by causing the relationship to fail or through circumstances in which the prodigal and these people no longer have contact.

(6) That God would send believers into this person's life who can minister to and reach this person (John 4:37-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9). As stated above, you need to pray for the removal of evil influences from this person's life. You need to plead with God that He will remove those people who would be a hindrance or an obstacle to your prodigal returning to God and His Word. Following this, you

need to pray that God would send believers into this person's life that will be able to minister to and reach him or her. You may have done all that you can with this person. You may not have any effectiveness with this person any more. Yet, God has someone that can. God uses people to reach other people. In other words, God uses His people to minister to others. God uses believers to lead lost people to Himself. God uses believers to lead those who have strayed from God back to Himself. It must be remembered that this is a process. God uses a variety of believers in this process. You may have done all that you can with this person. Now, it is time for the next step in the process. Now, it is time for another believer to be sent in by God to minister to this person. Plead that God will put believers into this person's life who will have a powerful and positive impact for Jesus Christ. Ask God to send believers that this person will receive, respect, and listen to concerning spiritual matters;

(7) That God would cause the plans and goals of this person to fail until he or she repents and is in a right relationship with God (Luke 15:14-17; Hosea 2:5-7). You need to plead that God will bring failure to all the plans and goals of this person until he or she repents and seeks God. As long as this person pursues his or her sinful and selfish path, ask God to deny any success or pleasure in anything. Call on God to bring about failed financial endeavors and relationships. Ask God to deny the heart's desire of this person until he or she repents and seeks God. Call on God to bring nothing but grief and misery to this person until he or she turns to God. This sounds harsh. **Yet, it is better for this person to have temporary failure than to experience eternal loss and ruin.** Gomer, who is a symbol for the nation of Israel, declares that she is going after her lovers. This is a picture of Israel's delight in and pursuit of idols and false gods. Yet, God says that He will cause her path to be filled with thorns. He would put a hedge in her way. God is declaring that He is going to make the going rough if His people turn from Him. His people may seek other gods but it is going to be costly and painful. When praying for your prodigal, plead with God to make the life of this person costly and painful. Call on God to increase the intensity of this until the person repents;

(8) That this person would recognize God's warnings in his or her life (Genesis 14:11-12). Genesis 14 records an interesting event in the lives of Abraham and Lot. Lot, his family, and all his possessions are taken captive by a coalition of foreign kings. These kings invaded and overwhelmed Sodom. Lot and all that he has are captured by these kings (Genesis 14:11-12). Abraham hears of this and rescues Lot (Genesis 14:13-17). This event was an opportunity for both Abraham and Lot. This was an opportunity for Abraham to declare his faith in God (Genesis 14:18-24) and to have that faith strengthened (Genesis 15:1-6). However, this was a merciful warning for Lot. In mercy, God was warning Lot through this event. God wanted Lot to understand that if he remained in Sodom he would lose everything. God wanted Lot to know that He was displeased with the fact that he had settled down in Sodom and had allowed himself to get into such compromised state. God's mercy is evident in this event. God warns people. He mercifully warns unbelievers and backslidden believers. He does this in a variety of ways. He works through people, tragedy, and circumstances. You need to plead that God would make this person aware of the fact that He is warning them. Plead with God that this person will recognize God's warnings in his or her life;

(9) That God would bind and remove any Satanic or demonic influence from this person's life (1 Peter 5:8-9; Jude 9). Disobedience to God and His Word gives the devil and his demons an opportunity to work in a person's life. You need to plead that God will break any satanic grip that is in this person's life. This is especially true if the person has been involved in drugs and alcohol or explicit sexual immorality. Any time that a person gives himself over to a substance or a desire, this person becomes the perfect target for the devil. You need to realize that there is a tremendous spiritual warfare involved when a prodigal is involved. A person who has professed faith in Christ and was faithful for a time and yet

turns away from this is a powerful weapon in the hands of the devil. The devil can use this person as a hindrance and a stumblingblock to others. He is not going to give this person up without a fight. You need to plead with God to bind and defeat the devil's work in this person's life;

(10) That the convicting work of the Holy Spirit would be deep and unceasing (John 16:7). This person needs a miraculous work of God in his or her life. This is something that only the Holy Spirit can do. Plead with the Holy Spirit that He would work powerful and deep conviction into the heart of this person. Plead with the Holy Spirit to do this without ceasing. Even when this person will no longer listen to you or any other about the things of God, call on the Holy Spirit to bring about deep unceasing conviction in this person;

(11) That God's chastisement would be severe and unceasing until this person repents (Hebrews 12:5-8). God has promised to chastise every child of God. If a person is truly born-again and is a member of God's family, God has promised to deal with His children when they sin and when they turn away from Him. God's chastisement is to teach His children to seek Him and to pursue holiness. Plead that God would chastise this prodigal if he or she is a Christian. Plead that God would be merciful yet also stern enough to bring the person back into a right relationship with God;

(12) That God would assure this person that He will receive them if they return to Him in repentance (Isaiah 1:18, 55:6-7; Micah 7:18-19). Many times when a person gets into the condition that the prodigal gets into, he or she wonders if God will once again forgive and receive him or her. This is also one of the most effective tools that the devil has to trap an individual in this condition. The devil attempts to convince this person that God will not forgive and receive him or her. You need to plead with God that He would assure and convince this person that there is forgiveness and restoration for the individual who comes to God with a repentant attitude and a willingness to surrender to God.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD THAT YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON IN PRAYING FOR YOUR PRODIGAL

(1) His Mercy (Exodus 33:19, 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18; 1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 30:9, 36:15; Psalm 36:5, 57:10, 62:12, 69:16, 78:38, 86:5, 100:5, 103:12-14, 17, 111:4, 130:3-4, 119:156, Proverbs 28:13, Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-32; Joel 2:13). Our God is full of mercy. When praying for your prodigal, you need to call on God to be merciful to this person. Plead with God to be true to His character. Plead with God to reveal His great mercy by delivering and restoring this person. God's mercy is this person's only hope. Call on God with all your being for Him to show His mercy in this situation;

(2) God's Power (Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 3:24; 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; 2 Chronicles 14:11, 20:6, 25:8-9; Job 36:5; Psalm 62:11, 89:8, 115:3, 135:6, 147:5; Isaiah 14:25, 27, 26:4, 46:10-11; Daniel 6:27; Mark 14:36). God has all power and authority in the universe. He is the God of almighty power. Plead with God to reveal His power in delivering and restoring this person. Call on God to exercise His mighty power in turning this person back to Himself. Call on God to make known His power among people by bringing about the necessary changes in the life of this prodigal;

(3) God's Faithfulness (1 Samuel 12:22; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Ezra 9:9; Psalm 36:5, 89:8, Isaiah 49:7, 16; Lamentations 3:21; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Titus 1:2). God is faithful to His Word and His people. He will never forsake His people. He will never allow any of His promises to fail. Plead that God would be faithful to His promises. Call on God to deliver and restore this person if he or she is a Christian. Call on God to be faithful to His promise that He will not allow His

people to perish. Call on God to be faithful to His promise to keep and make His people holy. Ask Him to be faithful to His promises to hear you and to answer you when you pray;

(4) **His Righteousness (Ezra 9:15; Psalm 112:4, 116:5, 119:137, 145:17; Jeremiah 9:24, 12:1; Hosea 14:9; Revelation 16:5).** God is always going to do what is right. He can never do anything that is wrong. He will not allow the righteous to perish as the lost will. Plead with God to deliver and restore this person if he or she is a believer. This is what is right. It is not right for a person to profess Christ and then live in a way contrary to this profession. Call on God to make this situation right. Plead with God to bring this person into a right relationship so that his or her profession will match his or her lifestyle. Plead with God to save this person if he or she is lost. It is an abominable thing to take the name of the Lord in vain, i.e., to profess to know God and not actually have a personal relationship with Him (**Exodus 20:7**). Call on God to do what is right in this situation; plead that He will not allow this person to profess something and then fail to live it out on a daily basis. Ask God to reveal His righteousness by causing this person to live out what he or she professes;

(5) **His Jealousy (Exodus 20:5-7, 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24, 29:20; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2).** God is a God of perfect and righteous jealousy. He will not tolerate any rivals in the lives of His people. He is angered if His people turn away from Him to chase some other god. He is displeased when His people love and delight in anything or anybody more than Him. He has the perfect right to do this since He is God; He is our Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Savior. Call on God to show His perfect jealousy in this situation. If this person belongs to God, He will not tolerate this believer chasing other gods and failing to love and delight in Him above all things. Plead that God will show His jealousy by delivering and changing this person. Ask God to reveal His jealous love by drawing this person back into an intimate and right relationship with Himself.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN FROM SATAN'S SNARE

The small town of Pearl, Mississippi was forever changed when Luke Woodham went on a shooting rampage at the local high school. This shooting destroyed the sense of peace and security that the people had previously known in this town. It shattered the idea that something like this could never happen in Pearl. In a matter of moments, this event brought the harsh realities of living in a sinful world to vivid focus in the eyes of the people.

The horror did not end with the shooting. After a thorough investigation, it was revealed that Woodham and other youths had been involved in Satanic worship. This shooting had been motivated by this involvement in Satanic worship. This event shattered another myth. The myth is that Satan is not after "my family." It forced people to realize that Satan is real and active. People could no longer hide behind ignorance, blind and deaf to the reality of Satan's cruel schemes.

Satan is a cruel enemy who is filled with hate (**Revelation 12:12**). Not only will Satan attack you, but he will also attack your children. **Your children are not immune from the spiritual battle. Satan does not spare the young.** He wants your children. He wants to destroy your children. **Your child is just as vulnerable as any other. YOU CANNOT ASSUME THAT YOUR CHILD WILL ESCAPE UNSCATHED!**

You have to be prepared for this spiritual battle. You have to be equipped to protect your children and train them for this spiritual battle. You cannot hide behind ignorance, blind and deaf to Satan's cruel and destructive schemes. Satan is alive and active and he wants your child.

In order to protect your children from Satan's snare, you need to understand how Satan will attack your child. Satan and his demons are evil spirits of "influence." They will attack your children by attempting to lead them away from God's truth to believe Satan's lies. By doing this, they strive to lead your child into bondage and destruction.

Satan will attack your child in three primary ways. He targets children through three basic avenues. He will attempt to bring your child under his influence through these ways.

The first way that Satan may attack your child is through the occult. This is a very obvious way that children and young people open themselves to Satanic influence. This would include activities such as Ouija boards, fantasy role-playing games, and many of the video games in public arcades and those you can purchase for home use. All of these things open the door for Satan's influence. They give him a tremendous amount of ground on which to build strongholds.

The second way that Satan may attack your child is through entertainment. This is Satan's primary tool. He will attempt to influence your children through television and music. Pastors preach the Word of God from pulpits; the devil is declaring his message through television and the radio. He is declaring his message of rebellion, sin, and destruction. He is doing this through sitcoms, soap operas, specials, and talk-shows. He wants your children to watch these and believe his lies that oppose the Bible and will lead them away from God and His truth. I realize that television can be used for the good of God's kingdom. **YET, IT IS TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO WAKE UP AND REALIZE THAT THE DEVIL IS PACKAGING AND SELLING HIS MESSAGE THROUGH TELEVISION!** You must exercise extreme caution in this area. **What you "sample" on television, your children may "devour," allowing the devil to devour them (1 Peter 5:8)!**

Not only can the devil use television to attack your children, he will also attack them through music. The Bible reveals that evil spirits respond to music. David drove the evil spirit from Saul by playing for him (1 Samuel 16:23). Music has the unbelievable power to influence lives. Satan will attempt to use music to influence a person to believe his lies. He strives to move a person to accept his lies or at least make you tolerant of his lies through your "favorite" songs. People may not want to hear this; they may not want to receive it. I seriously doubt if Christians will ever come to complete agreement on what is proper and acceptable when it comes to music. Yet, the fact remains: **Any form of music which does not glorify and exalt God and His truth and focus your mind on these things can be used by Satan to influence you and your children.** Also, it has been my experience that when the enemy wants to control and eventually destroy a person, music is often the weapon.

A third way that your children can come under the influence of the enemy is by the exploitation of their childish fears. Satan will attempt to encourage these childish fears. We may think that a child's being afraid of the dark or afraid that something under the bed is cute. Yet, these types of childish fears can give Satan an avenue to work and influence your child. Children will have a natural, childish fear of things like a fear of separation or of a dark room. However, Satan wants to use these things to damage your child emotionally and put spiritual obstacles in their way that could be a factor later in his or her life.

These are the primary ways that Satan will attack your child. As your child becomes a teenager, the danger grows stronger. Satan can still attack through these areas. Yet, the greater threat now comes from Satanism and other occultic activities. Satanism, witchcraft, and a wide variety of occultic or psychic activities are bombarding American youth as we approach the end of the century.

The teenagers at risk for involvement in Satanism and other occultic activities come from a variety of backgrounds and families. They may have been raised in a Christian family or they may have never been exposed to anything spiritual. They may be from poor neighborhoods. However, they are more likely to come from middle-class, suburban families. Wealth does not protect them. Frequently, their vulnerability is enhanced if the parents are divorced. Yet, the traditional family does not guarantee sure protection from Satanism and the occult.

The following list will show you what type of teenager is at risk to be involved in Satanism or occultic activities. The teenager may have one of these risk factors or a combination of these factors. Many of these are closely connected and are dependent on each other. Some of these factors are not necessarily unusual or even negative in themselves. Yet, they provide a fertile ground for a growing involvement in Satanism and the occult. These factors will help you recognize if your teenager or those you know could possibly be involved in Satanism and the occult:

- (1) **Extreme alienation**-This refers to the fact that the teenager is withdrawn from others his or her age. He or she feels totally inadequate, isolated, and alone from his or her peers. The teenager does not feel that he or she belongs or fits in with his or her peers;
- (2) **A rejection of all adult authority**-Most teenagers greet rules with this statement, "That's not fair!" Those in danger of being snared into Satanism and the occult say, "I don't care what's fair. I'll do what I want to and you can't stop me!" This attitude is continual and habitual;
- (3) **Morbid fascination with horror**-The teenager at risk becomes overly fascinated with a wide range of destructive, violent, bloody, and occulticly-characterized materials. The person at risk becomes obsessed with destroying things;
- (4) **Drug and alcohol abuse**-Continued drug and alcohol abuse is in itself highly destructive physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It also makes a person vulnerable to Satanism and the occult. **The more a person loses control of his or her life to a substance, the more vulnerable a person becomes to demonic activity;**
- (5) **Difficulty with "the system"**-The young person at risk doesn't seem to "fit in" in the system. He or she has extreme difficulty excelling in the standard social, athletic, and academic structures. They cannot seem to do well "in the system." This leads them to give up on the system and almost become proud that they are labeled "bad kids";
- (6) **A sense of powerlessness**-The teenager at risk does not feel that he or she has any power. He or she feels that everyone is trying to control his or her life. Because of this, the teenager becomes desperate for power;
- (7) **The need to control**-The teenager at risk feels the necessity to have absolute control over his or her life and even the lives of others. This control is the evidence that he or she is not powerless. Many young people enter Satanism looking for the spiritual power to feed their need to control others;
- (8) **Creativity and intelligence**-Those involved in Satanism are characterized by high intelligence and creative imaginations;
- (9) **Attracted by the mysterious**-Those who enter Satanism and the occult are attracted by the mystery that surrounds it. The uniqueness and strangeness of Satanism and the occult seem to draw teenagers to experiment with it and to dabble with its power.

Satanism is primarily a solitary, secretive, and self-centered religion. Most Satanists are self-styled, i.e., they put together their own system of beliefs and practices. They practice their faith alone or with a small group, many times no more than twelve in a group.

Because Satanism is so secretive, it is very hard to gain accurate, precise statistics. There is an estimated 6,000 people worldwide who would describe themselves as "Satanists." However, this does not account for the secretive groups which remain hidden from the authorities. There is a disturbing trend of more Satanic worship among small groups of people, especially teenagers. It does not matter if a person calls himself a Satanist or if a person is simply dabbling in the occult and Satanism. No matter how serious or curious a person is about Satanism, it is utterly dangerous to be involved in this. Satan is not a being that one can toy with and there not be serious consequences. He is out to destroy souls.

Teenagers are a prime target. As John Cooper states, "Satanism blesses and encourages the expression of all that is natural to adolescent development-rebellion, defiance, and specialness-yet it lacks a positive, rational framework and totally disregards relational, social, and religious boundaries and values." The teenager is at the most exciting, yet most dangerous time of his or her life. Satan will do anything that he can to gain a stronghold in his or her life. You must be ready to do battle and provide protection for your child.

STEPS TO PROVIDE SPIRITUAL PROTECTION FOR YOUR CHILDREN

- (1) **You must be diligent to pursue a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.** Your children are in danger when you are not daily and diligently seeking God in prayer and through the Word of God. You are the first line of defense for your children. You must be pursuing your relationship to God. A spiritually weak parent provides an open door for Satanic involvement in your child's life. Satan attacks children mainly when the parents are giving ground. This is why you must be diligent in God's Word, in your relationship to God and His church, and dealing with your sin. You must also do everything that you can to maintain a godly marriage. Do everything that you can to maintain a sound, loving relationship with your spouse. In doing these things, you can provide protection for your family and build a home where godly influence abounds;
- (2) **Dedicate your home and the ground that it stands on to the Lord Jesus Christ.** Ask God to help you create a spiritually safe home where godly influence abounds. Plead with God to make your home a lighthouse to the community you live in. Call on God to place a hedge around your home;
- (3) **Pray for God's hedge of protection around your children.** You can't always be with your children. You certainly cannot follow them everywhere they go. Yet, you can plead with God to put a hedge of protection around them (**Job 1:10**). Ask God to bind and rebuke the power of the enemy from the life of each family member (**Mark 3:27**);
- (4) **Establish a family altar in your home.** Establish a time during the week when the family can gather together and read the Bible, talk, and pray. You can use this time to teach your children about the spiritual warfare and the provisions that God has provided to win this war. Use this time to worship the Lord, draw your hearts closer together, and to deal with any avenues that the devil is attempting to gain in your lives;
- (5) **If you suspect enemy involvement in your children's lives, you must take action.** You must take your authority as a Christian and as a parent and command the enemy to go where the Lord Jesus Christ sends him. If your children are very young, you can pray over them as they sleep. If your children are having nightmares or are hearing and seeing things that no one else hears or sees, you need to act. First,

cleanse your home through prayer. Prayerfully walk through your home, asking God to reveal anything that can be used by the enemy to attack your children. Destroy any suspicious items. Second, explain to your children that God always sees them and are never out of His care or sight. Read passages like **Psalm 3:5, 4:8, 127:2; Genesis 16:13; Proverbs 3:24, 26**. Pray with your children asking God to send His angels to protect them and to keep them from having nightmares or hearing and seeing things that no one else hears or sees. If your child is older or in the teenage years, you can do the same things. Yet, if your child has been involved in any occultic activity or has come into contact with music, literature, symbols, jewelry, or other paraphernalia that the enemy has used to influence or to gain a stronghold in your child's life, your child must destroy these. You cannot destroy them for him or her. Your child must destroy them. By doing this, your child is revealing that he or she is renouncing any ties to evils spirits and their influences. Pray with them that Jesus Christ will set them free, protect them, and live totally for Him. If your child is deeply involved in the occult and Satanism, get help. This is not something that you can ignore and hope that it will go away. The only way to be set free from this is Jesus Christ and His Word;

A PRAYER FOR PROTECTION

The following prayer is offered as a guide to help you in praying for the spiritual protection of your children and family. This is a guide and you can use this prayer or develop your own.

Heavenly Father and Almighty God, Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ has won the victory over Satan and his evil forces through his death and resurrection. Satan is a defeated foe and he cannot stand against my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I ask You through the name of Jesus Christ and His precious blood that You will bind and rebuke the power of the enemy from (name of the family member)'s life. I also plead with You through the name and the blood of Jesus Christ to place a hedge of protection around (family member's name). Protect (family member's name) from all the temptations and schemes of the devil. I plead for these things through the name and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

ADVANCING THE KINGDOM

This month I want to challenge you to pray for the nation of **CHINA** and the believers that live and minister there. China's human rights record is one of the worst in the world. It has been reported that authorities sell the organs of its executed prisoners to meet the demand for its transplants. Its system or "re-education" through labor camps detains hundreds of thousands each year without even a hearing or trial. There are more Christians in prison in China than in any other nation in the world.

In 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong declared the People's Republic of China, establishing the Communist form of government and ideology in China. Under his leadership, Chairman Zedong attempted to mold every aspect of Chinese life according to Communist philosophy. He sought to purge society of anything that would point to religion.

From the mid-1950's until the 1970's when the Cultural Revolution ended, the Communists attempted to destroy Christianity out of Chinese society. Mao Zedong was a hard-line atheist who did not want anything that pointed to religion in China. This especially meant the Christian faith. After Mao Zedong's death in 1976, there were reforms and the persecution of Christians eased.

The persecution of Christians began to increase in intensity at the start of the 1990's. This new wave of intense persecution flowed as a result of two shocking historical events: the collapse of

Communism in the Soviet Union and the rallying of Chinese students for democracy in Tiananmen Square. The Communist Party and the old men who run it feel threatened by the powerful attraction of Christianity. **The collapse of Communism in Europe is perceived by these men to be the result of "religion" (in other words, Christianity!!).** Because of this, strict controls are maintained over all Christian organizations. All churches and activities that are not registered with the government are opposed and the government will seek to stamp them out. There is a state-sponsored church that is legal. However, it is a pawn of the Communist government and is used to declare the message of Communism rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

China is the largest nation in the world with over 21% of the world's population. It is the oldest surviving Communist government in the world. The elimination of all religious groups has always been the ultimate aim of the Communist government of China. You must pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will bring China under His reign through His people and His gospel. Please pray for the suffering believers that are there. Use the prayer list provided in the June issue of **The Prayer Closet** to intercede for these believers who are paying the ultimate price for the faith. There are some other concerns that you need to pray about concerning your brothers and sisters in China and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in China. I want to challenge you to intercede and do battle for the gospel and these brothers and sisters in Christ. These prayer requests are:

(1) Praise God for the work that He is doing in China. Prayer is changing China. You can be a part of this. Begin by praising Him for the breakthroughs that have already taken place. There could be one hundred million believers in China by conservative estimates. **The gospel is demolishing the gates of hell in China!** This is bringing intense persecution but the church is constantly growing;

(2) Pray for the Christian families in China. There is widespread divorce, forced abortions on a massive scale, female infanticide, violence, and suicide. The Christian family is under attack in China; pray that God will strengthen these families and enable them to show the example of a Christian family. Pray especially that the children of believers may follow in their parents footsteps, despite mockery, discrimination, and a constant barrage of atheistic propaganda. **China's 500 million children and young people under 18 are officially forbidden to be exposed to the gospel;**

(3) Pray that the gospel will continue to gain ground among the intellectuals in China. The growth of the gospel has been primarily among the poor and the rural population. The intellectuals have rejected the old religions of China but are now attracted to the claims of Christ;

(4) Pray for the provision of Bibles. Pray that the flow of Bibles might increase in China and that every Christian might have access to a copy of God's Word. There are some areas where it is reported that there are 1,000 believers or more for every Bible. Importation of Bibles is not illegal but is prevented for ideological reasons. Pray that every believer in China would have a Bible.

PRAYING THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:8

The Pure In Heart

Holy and Righteous God, You are the Holy One of Israel. The angels that surround Your throne continually cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." I want to join them in this praise to Your holy character. You are a holy God. There is none like You in all of heaven and earth, time and eternity. I praise You because You are absolutely free from sin. You cannot be tempted and You do not tempt anyone. O God, give me a single-minded devotion to pursue holiness. I want my whole being-my

thoughts, my words, and my actions-to be holy and pleasing in Your sight. Burn within my heart the desire to rid sin from my life. Stir within me holy desires! Lord God, You have broken the power of sin in my life through Your Son, Jesus Christ. I now plead that you will enable me to drive out every sinful thought, word, and action from my life. Amen!

PRAYING THROUGH DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD

Every Christian has experienced this. Believers have thought it and felt it, but very few ever admit to it. This experience that believers have and feel deeply, but never admit to is disappointment with God. They feel that God has failed them in some way. They feel that God has let them down. They are disappointed with God.

In the mind of the person who is disappointed with God, there are thoughts like these, "God could have done this," "God should have done this," "Why didn't God work this out?," "I prayed, worked, and believed. Why didn't God do what I asked?," "I have lived for God and served God. Yet, this doesn't seem to matter with God," "God is so unfair." These painful thoughts flow from a soul who feels disappointed with how God is working out His plan.

What seems to make matters worse is that God seems to be silent during this period. You feel disappointed with God but He is offering no explanations for why He is doing what He is doing. You feel crushed and God is not offering any reasons for why things have turned out like they did. You simply wish that God would give you some answer to why He is doing what He is doing. However, God has not and is not giving you any answers.

There are numerous reasons why people feel disappointment with God. **Sometimes God does not grant success to some cherished goal or plan.** There are times when God says "no" to a plan or a goal that a believer strongly desires. The believer plans, works, struggles, and believes that God will establish and bring to pass this plan or goal. Yet, the plan fails; the goal is never realized. The believer strongly desired this and prayed about this endeavor. When God allows it to fall to the ground, the believer spins into doubt about and disappointment in God.

Sometimes God does not give success in a desired relationship. Many believers develop strong feelings for a person. They fall in love with this person. This person is all that the believer could have ever wanted in a man or a woman. This believer prays about the situation and feels that it is God's will. Yet, the relationship crumbles. The relationship never materializes. The believer feels bitter and angry toward God. Disappointment sets in because God didn't allow this relationship to materialize.

Sometimes God does not act in the way that a believer feels that He should. It could be that God did not answer a prayer for healing. The believer becomes convinced that God is going to act in a certain way. The believer is convinced that God is going to work out something in a particular way. Yet, God seemingly does the opposite. It so happens that God does the very opposite of what the believer thought and desired.

How can you deal with disappointment with God? What do you do when God fails to work the way that you desire or feel that He will? **You must seek God with all your heart through prayer. This is not the time to turn away from God. If you turn away from God at this time, you are turning away from your only Source of peace, comfort, and help!**

One of the most amazing lessons in the book of Job is that he never stopped seeking God. He never abandoned his faith in God. He poured out the bitterness of his soul to God. He openly declared his disappointment with God. In this book, you see the soul of a disappointed believer laid bare. Yet, in all of this, he never stopped seeking God. He never stopped looking to God for the resolution of the situation and the answers that he needed.

If you are disappointed with God, you must do the same. The easiest step would be to simply quit seeking the Lord. This is what the devil wants you to do. This is what the world will tell you to do. The world will tell you that it just isn't worth serving God. Your flesh will cry out for you to turn your back on trusting in God and start living for yourself, because, after all, God let you down. In spite of all this, you must press through the pain to submission to God and trust in His love, His sovereignty, and His power. **You may not always be able to understand God's ways. Yet, you can always trust "in God." When you can't trace God's hand, you can always trust God's heart.**

The following prayer list is offered as a guide to help you pray through disappointment with God. When this takes place in your life, you must learn to pray through the pain, the bitterness, and the anger that you feel. The following prayer list can help you do this. You can also use this to pray for someone who is going through this type of suffering. Even though you may not know what to say to this person, you can know how to talk to God for this person. When praying through disappointment with God, you need to make the following requests of God. These requests are based on the Scripture. Plead these before God. You can trust that God will answer because God is going to be true to His Word.

(1) Pray that God will strengthen your faith in Him (Mark 9:24; Romans 8:28; 10:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 11:2). Genuine, biblical faith trusts God for what He has purposed. Presumptuous faith trusts God for what you feel is best. Genuine, biblical faith trusts that what God has purposed is the best and the wisest course of action. Presumptuous faith believes that what you have purposed is the best and wisest course of action. Plead with God to strengthen your faith. Ask God to enable you to trust Him for what He has purposed, His all-wise purpose;

(2) Pray that God will teach you what you need to know through this experience (James 1:2-4). James declares that we are to "let patience have its perfect work." This means that we are to be submissive to God in the midst of the test of our faith. God wants to teach you when your faith is tested. The most valuable lessons you can learn is when your faith is tested. Disappointment with God is a test of your faith in the all-wise, all-powerful God. Plead with God to teach you what you need to know from this situation. Don't waste your suffering. Submit yourself to God and plead with Him to show you what you need to see in this test of your faith'

(3) Pray for a greater understanding of God's love, wisdom, and sovereignty (Love-Deuteronomy 7:7-8, 13; Proverbs 15:9; Psalm 103:13, 146:8; John 3:16, Romans 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; Sovereignty-Psalm 99:1, 115:3, 135:5-6; Lamentations 3:37-38; Daniel 2:20-21, 4:35-37; Wisdom-Job 12:13, 16; Psalm 147:5; Jeremiah 10:7, 12; Daniel 2:20, 1 Timothy 1:17). In His love, God always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom, God always knows what is best for us. In His sovereignty, God always has the power to bring it about. Ask God to reveal these truths to your heart during this time;

(4) Pray that God will prepare you for what He has planned (John 11). In John 11, the Lord Jesus Christ delayed going to a sick Lazarus. Because of this, he died. Martha and Mary had desired that Jesus would come and heal him. Yet, He denied this so that He could give them the gift of the greater, the resurrection of Lazarus. When God denies your plans, it is to offer you His better and perfect gifts. Call on God to help you see this and prepare you for what He has.

(5) Pray that you will overcome Satan's schemes against you during this time (Genesis 3:1-3). Satan will use this time of disappointment to move you to doubt and deny God. When Satan tempted Eve, he questioned God's goodness. He asks Eve if they could eat from all the trees of the garden. What he was really saying was, "If God were really loving and good, he would let you eat from ALL the trees of the

garden.” This is the same line of attack that Satan will come with at you. He will say to you, “If God were as really as good and loving as you say, He would have given you what you desire.” His purpose is to cause you to doubt God and turn your back on God. Call on God to protect you and help you fight against this satanic scheme;

(6) Ask God to deal with your pride and to create a deeper humility before Him (James 4:6). Disappointment with God often flows out of pride. We think that we have a better plan that God has. We think we know better about how to run our lives. Ask God to help you deal with this pride and grant you the grace to be humble before Him;

(7) Ask God to heal your broken heart (Proverbs 15:13). When this situation happens, it breaks your heart. Yet, we serve a God who heals broken hearts as He does diseased bodies. Call on Him to do this in your life;

(8) Pray that God will use this time to deepen your relationship with Him (Psalm 9:10). Call on God to make your relationship with Him more intimate during this time. We are to serve God not because of what He can do for us, but because of who He is. The more intimate relationship to God the less trust that you will place on material and spiritual blessings. God is the great blessing; our relationship to Him will endure;

(9) Ask God to give you peace (Philippians 4:6-7). When you cannot understand why, plead with God to give you the peace that passes understanding;

(10) Plead that God will teach you to be content with what He gives (Philippians 4:12-13). Paul states that he “learned” to be content in whatever his circumstances were. This contentment must be “learned.” God must teach you to be content. Plead with Him to do this during this test of your faith;

(11) Ask God to show you that He has not abandoned you (Hebrews 13:5). This verse can be literally translated, “I will not, not leave you, neither will I not, not forsake you.” You can trust God for this!! In this short verse, God uses five negatives. He wants to emphasize to you that He will never leave you or forsake you. This is something that you can trust no matter how you feel. Call on God to be faithful to His Word in this matter.

This issue has dealt with the dangers of Satanism and the occult. If you are a parent and feel that your child is at risk, there is help and there is hope. If your child is already involved in these things, he or she can be delivered. You may be reading this and find yourself in bondage to these things. If you need help with these areas, please contact this ministry. This ministry can provide counseling, information, and prayer. This ministry will pray for any person that you submit and strict confidentiality will be maintained. When you submit a person for prayer, please give a description of this person’s life, the circumstances surrounding his or her involvement in these things, and the length of time that he or she has been involved in these things. If you need help or if you simply need someone to talk to about these matters, please contact Dr. Meador through the address, email, or telephone number that is shown on the first page of this newsletter.

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a network of intercessors who pray for believers who have spouses that are not Christians. This network of intercessors pray daily for believers who are in this situation. These intercessors have been trained and are committed to praying for believers who find themselves in this type of marriage. If you would like to be added to this prayer list or if you know of someone who is in the situation and would like to place them on this prayer list, please contact Dr. Kevin Meador. Please provide the following information:

Name of the family members
Church affiliation
Any special requests

Any information that is submitted will be kept in strict confidence and the privacy of the individuals will be protected.



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