

Wednesday's Prayer ebook

WEDNESDAY'S PRAYER

By Steve Chapman

A Guide to Praying and Fasting

for

Childrenand Grandchildren

This book is dedicated to the two
people who have motivated
me to pray more than
anyone else in my life and
I have done so, gladly;
Nathan and Heidi,
my beloved children.

Wednesday's Prayer

Father God to You I come
In the name of Your Son
I bring my children to Your throne
Father hear my cry

Above all else, Lord, save their souls
Draw them near You keep them close
Be the shield against their foes
Make them Yours not mine

Give them peace in Christ alone
In their sorrow be theirs song
No other joy would last as long
Father calm their fears

Guide their feet, Lord, light their path
May their eyes on You be cast
Give their hands a kingdom task
A purpose for their years

And as my flesh cries out for bread
May I hunger, Lord, instead
That my children would be fed
On Your words of life

So....Father God to You I come
In the name of Your Son
I bring my children to Your throne
Father hear my cry

Steve Chapman/Times and Seasons/BMI 1998

Introduction

The evening was to be an enjoyable time of reconnecting with some friends at a local restaurant. When we gathered in the waiting area, Annie and I knew immediately that something wasn't right. There was a tension in the air between the couple as we made small talk.

As our meal was disappearing and our time together faded, the urgency we felt in asking if things were okay with them bore down on us. Finally, Annie went to the bottom line.

“How are you two doing?”

That question forced the door open to some serious conversation that lasted nearly until closing time. Annie and I tipped the waiter very well for the extra time we spent in the booth with our precious and hurting friends.

We discovered that their teenage daughter was giving them fits. Her rebellion and associating with some young people who had questionable moral standards caused this couple to feel that their child was slipping away into the abyss of hopelessness.

Annie, who is incredibly perceptive asked, “How is this affecting the two of you?” The wife responded with an alarming answer. “We can’t stand each other! Every time we look at one another we see only blame for the condition our daughter is in. Something has to change. Otherwise, our family is going to completely fall apart!”

Our hearts were moved by their desperate cry for comfort and encouragement. We knew their marriage was first on the list of things that needed healing...and rightly so. They agreed to make it a priority to seek counseling regarding their relationship. But as much as their marriage needed attention, I felt a gnawing need to address their daughter’s situation.

A Plan of Attack

The dad was at a loss about how to reach his first born of three kids. Too many arrivals back at home after midnight and far too many of her friends leading her into unacceptable types of entertainment had sapped his strength and willingness to think about his wife. With that knowledge, I decided that the tyranny of the urgent dictated that the dad and I go to God on the girl’s behalf. The course she was on was too deadly to ignore. That’s when I was impressed to make the dad an offer. “Let’s begin praying in earnest for your daughter,” I said, “and to show God that we’re serious about this, I am

willing to fast at least once a week with you on her behalf!” Little did I know that just a few days prior, the Lord had impressed on his heart to add fasting to his prayers for his child. Though he had never faced that type of challenge, he was confident that God was leading him to do so. So, without hesitation, he enthusiastically responded.

“Let’s do it. I really want to see God do a mighty work in my daughter.”

The mother sort of laughed at the idea of us fasting for all our kids. I don’t believe her reaction to our plan was malicious. Instead, I am convinced that it indicated just how hopeless she was feeling. In spite of her discouraging outlook, we set out to reclaim a teenager.

That night the dad and I agreed that Wednesdays seemed to be the best day for both of us. It was mid-week and church night, as well as the least busy in both our work schedules. Thus began a journey for the two of us that lasted several years.

Nearly half a decade has gone by and the report we can give is glorious. The daughter made a spiritual “one-eighty!” It didn’t happen in an instant but like a big ship turning around she slowly began to show signs of moving toward the Lord. Gradually her friend base began to change and the influence of godly young people replaced the bad company that had corrupted her good morals. Her late night escapades ceased and she became

more accountable in terms of her whereabouts. Today, she is a totally different person.

One of the sweetest moments I have ever experienced in a church service was on an Easter Sunday about three years after my friend and I started “doing Wednesdays” together. Annie and I had taken our seats in the balcony of the church. As the worship music filled the room, Annie nudged me and quietly pointed toward our friends. What I saw filled my heart with indescribable joy. Standing next to her dad was the daughter who had been the object of many a Wednesday past. The memory of the hunger pangs that accompanied the fasting disappeared as I saw her lift her hands in praise to our Father in heaven. He had heard our prayers. What a beautiful sight it was!

Admittedly, it was an emotional roller coaster ride through the years invested in our quest for her soul. **We had to face some facts.**

- **The daughter, like all the rest of us, was born with a sinful nature** and because of it, she was prone to sin (Romans 3:23; 7:18).
- Satan was ready at all times to target her weaknesses. “...as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness...” (2 Corinthians 11:3)

Ultimately, we realized that our struggle was not against flesh and

blood, but against the unseen forces that sought to deceive her.

(Ephesians 612). Yet, a confidence in the Lord's ability to overcome the "god of this world" remained.

- **The accountability to one another as men was necessary.** We occasionally "checked up" on our commitment to our routine of prayer when we met at church or at the woods to go hunting. Not much was said other than, "Still doin' Wednesdays?" The answer was always a smile and a determined, "Yep!"

The thing that seemed to encourage us the most was seeing the little changes in the daughter or hearing a sweet word that she had not said in a long while. These indications that she was coming home to Christ did more to spur us on than nearly anything. **Watching God at work was a spiritual delight. Add to that the dad's absolute and unconditional love for his teenager and the result was glorious.**

Though the outcome has been extremely gratifying to us both, we have agreed that it is more important now than ever before that we continue in our prayers and fasting for our kids. **Satan does not cease his pursuit of our**

children and neither should we let up in the battle. So the Wednesday's prayer goes on...and we hopefully persist until our last day on earth.

Perhaps at this time in your role as parent you see the need to get serious in your prayers for your kids. Maybe your child is:

- Yet to be born
- A babe in arms
- A toddler
- A teenager
- A college student
- Grown and out of the nest
- Or is a grandchild that needs prayer support

At whatever state of parenting you might be, if you are concerned about the spiritual destination of your children and want to establish a regimen of prayer and fasting for them, the following pages are for you.

This book is a non-exhaustive, quick read, designed to simply jump-start you on the rewarding journey you will make on your knees. **As you stand your ground against the enemy may you draw upon the confidence that God is more than willing to hear you and to intervene on behalf of your children...and your grandchildren.**

Why We Must Pray

I believe my sanity, safety and even the salvation of my soul is an answer to the prayers of my parents. I was born in 1950 just three years after my folks were married in 1947. Soon after they vowed to a life together and before my sister and I came along, my mother, who had lived her life independently of God was radically converted at a local revival near the town of Chapmanville, West Virginia. God used her salvation experience to eventually influence my dad to his own decision to become a devoted follower of Christ.

I have no recollection of not being in a church family. It is no exaggeration that every time the doors of that church opened you would find us sitting on the front row. My dad ultimately responded to a call on his life to become a preacher and took a pastor's position in the town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, along the Ohio River.

By the time my sister and I had reached our teen years, we were essentially the entire music staff at our church. My mother taught me to play the guitar and I started learning piano as well. I enjoyed mimicking

the piano style of the late, great instrumentalist, Floyd Cramer. With his influence and some self-training, I had developed limited skill on the keyboard. (I was known to play one of his popular songs, “Last Date” during altar services...at least until someone recognized the melody!) Jeannie, my sister, and I eventually became vital parts of our parent’s ministry.

However, as the enemy of our souls will inevitably do, he made a play for this Chapman kid. **In my early teens I began to slide down the slippery slope of the world’s enticements. It was in that era of time that my mother shocked me one morning with a prayer I will never forget.**

I was lying in bed around 8 a.m. when she came bursting into my room. As I attempted to rouse myself from a sleepy stupor, she dropped to her knees and grabbed my forearm. The words I heard next are in the chorus of the following song I wrote about the incident a few years later. I affectionately call it, “Mama’s Brave Prayer.” You must keep in mind as you listen to the lyric I had watched my mother’s prayers be answered sometimes within minutes. She had a connection with God that was nothing less than intimidating. And it was this sweet, humble woman...my mother...who did the following to me:

Mama's Brave Prayer

One day in my early teenage years
Mama came into my room with tears
She said, "I've put it off too long
What I've got to do seems wrong"
Next to my bed she fell on her knees
She laid her hard workin' hands on me
Looked up to Jesus and told Him she cared
That's when I heard my Mama's brave prayer

"If you see he'll die a sinner
If you see he'll trade the right for the wrong
Then all I ask of you, sweet Jesus
Go ahead, right now, and take him on home!

She said, "Amen," and the room grew still
I'll not forget the fear I could feel
And the moments passed
So have the years
And I'm glad to say that I'm still here
Now lookin' back I can see it's true
She loved my flesh and my spirit too
Now Heaven waits us and I believe I'll be there
And I'll be forever grateful for my Mama's brave prayer

"If you see he'll die a sinner
If you see he'll trade the right for the wrong
Then all I ask of you sweet Jesus
Go ahead, right now
And take him on home!

(Steve Chapman/Times and Seasons Music/BMI)
From the CD, "The Silver Bridge"

Needless to say, that morning is the day I learned what "cold sweat" was all about. I honestly thought my life was going to come to a screeching halt after my mother finished her cry to heaven. But like the lyric says, "I'm glad I'm still here!"

So why would anyone offer a prayer like my mother's? My answer is—my mom prayed such a prayer because she knew the worst thing that could ever happen to one of her children was not that they would flunk out of school, marry a jerk, or even fall prey to a deadly disease. While those things are indeed awful, **the very worst thing that could ever befall a child is that they would die without Christ in their hearts and as a result, suffer the consequences of the eternal and unquenchable flames of hell, forever separated from God and those who love them.** (see Mark 9:48) That's why we should join my mom on our knees and pray with the some kind of fervor for our kids!

To further emphasize the urgent need to call out to God for the salvation and spiritual well-being of our children, consider the dream a father had about his child that was written into the following lyric:

Daddy Dip Your Finger in the Water

I had a dream and it seemed so real
I can't explain the sadness I could feel
I heard my child crying somewhere in the dark
And what I heard, Lord it broke my heart

“Daddy, dip your finger in the water
Come and touch my tongue
These flames around me are getting hotter
And I have nowhere to run
Come and touch my tongue!”

I ran to the voice and I came to the edge
Of a canyon deep and I stood on the ledge
And far below me where the darkness never ends
I heard my child crying out again

“Daddy, dip your finger in the water
Come and touch my tongue
These flames around me are getting' hotter
And I have nowhere to run
Come and touch my tongue!”

I knew between us was a great divide
I could not cross to the other side
And as I fell down on my knees
I heard my child say these words to me

“Daddy, tell my sisters and my brothers

This truth we somehow missed
Jesus is the way there is no other
Who can save a soul from a place like this..”

“Oh! Daddy, dip your finger in the water
Come and touch my tongue
These flames around me are getting’ hotter
And I have nowhere to run
Come and touch my tongue!
Just come and touch my tongue!”

(Steve Chapman/Times and Seasons Music/BMI
From the CD, “At the Potter’s House”/Steve and Annie Chapman

Surely none of us want this to be the outcome of our children’s lives.
And far be it from any of us who are fathers and mothers that we would
be guilty of ignoring our son’s and daughter’s greatest need for knowing
Christ. Based on my experience with the prayers of my own parents for
me, **I do believe that it will take fervent, serious and persistent
prayers to insure that our kids will accept Christ and know His
salvation. I am convinced that because of Him, they can pass
through time confident in their salvation and filled with joy that is
unspeakable.** And someday, when time is no more, we will join with

them on the other side around the throne of God to celebrate His deliverance through the “Red Seas” of life.

Why Add Fasting To Our Prayers?

It is likely that you have driven slowly by a serious car wreck on the highway and felt that squeamish feeling. Do you remember how it stayed with you, haunted you and caused you to drive very carefully for the next several miles? Then at some point down the road the memory of the tragedy fades into the distance. The next thing you know your “RPM’s” are in the red range again. That’s a vivid picture of my teen years as they passed after my “Mama’s Brave Prayer.” It shook me for a long time. **Then, as I entered my late teens and journeyed on into my 20’s, enough years had gone by that I felt comfortable about putting aside godly fear and began to think of those “pleasure of life” that I had not been allowed to experience.**

By then I had decided to postpone college and I joined the U.S. Navy. Unlike my time at a nearby university where I was still physically close to family and friends, **I was practically alone in the military. It was a tempting environment** filled with plenty of untried sin that I sadly admit I chose not to resist.

As a sailor I was moved around to the naval bases in the big cities of Chicago, Memphis and Norfolk. It was in these places, out of the eyesight of those who loved me and held me accountable to a good moral standard, that I chose to “carry out the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). A very wise gentleman once said, **“Character is what you are when there ain’t nobody lookin!” That is a truth I mocked during my military days.**

I was on my way to becoming that “spiritual wreck” that others would drive by and feel that unnerving sensation at the sight. To put it another way, I had entered what I called, my dark ages. While it was sadly true that the enemy had only escalated his battle tactics that were aimed at my destruction, **my folks had also kicked things into high gear in terms of their prayerful determination to see their kid in heaven.** They were very familiar with the words of I Peter 5:8. “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” They were not about to let the enemy win nor intimidate them with his toothless growls. **Their hunger to see their son return to the safety of a walk with Christ consumed them.**

My folks embraced 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4 as truth. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” They knew that the fight would be won only with God’s help. **Having no where else to turn but to the Lord, they poured their hearts into praying for me and bravely, they became acquainted with hunger, an activity that is challenging for sure but has its rewards...**

* Fasting has a side effect that actually aids a person in their prayers. When that gnawing in the belly of the flesh begins to get one’s attention, it can be like the proverbial “string around the finger” that is a reminder to pray. That tinge of hunger is the tug on the hem of God’s garment...so to speak. **The eyes of flesh are better able to see the eternal purpose of prayer when they are focused on heaven and not on the pot on the stove.**

* Fasting seems to help open one’s spiritual eyes to the battles that rage in the other world which flesh and blood cannot touch. I am personally familiar with **the higher degree of spiritual insight that a parent can gain when they have replaced eating with the eternal**

welfare of a child. I came face to face with this type of supernatural understanding when once again God used my mother to rescue my life from the stronghold of Satan's death grip. I was re-captured on another morning, eight years later, in the same bedroom where she had prayed that "brave prayer" over me when I was thirteen. By then, I was in my early twenties and dabbling in drugs as a sailor in the Navy.

I came home one weekend on a three-day leave from Norfolk, Virginia to visit my folks and found that they were away attending a church convention several miles away. **Their absence left me alone in the house. In the solitude of the kitchen, I took out my pipe, put the windows up and proceeded to smoke some dope. The drug-induced paranoia was severe and began to ravage my mind.**

I got really nervous about the possibility that my folks would return unexpectedly and catch me in my sin. Though I knew what I was doing was wrong and **I feared devastating my folks with the knowledge of my involvement in drugs, I continued in my foolishness.** Before putting my pipe away I cleaned it using the fuzzy, white, flexible wires designed for the job. As I sat trance-like in the kitchen, I looked at the evidence of my wrong doing scattered on the table. **I decided I needed**

to carefully hide the half dozen, brown-stained cleaners so I methodically set out to conceal them using the following steps:

- First I wadded them up in a tiny ball and wrapped them in a paper napkin.
- Then I ripped the lid off of a Campbell's Soup can that was empty.
- I then stuffed the pipe cleaners into the bottom of the can.
- After that, I opened the mouth of an empty, half-gallon waxed milk carton and crammed the soup can containing the cleaners into the bottom.
- Then I took all the trash out of the waste basket under the sink and put the "loaded" milk carton in the very bottom. Next I put the trash back on top and shoved it confidently back under the sink and confidently went back to Virginia where I was stationed.

Two weeks later I went home again to see my family for the weekend. Sunday morning came and once more it was time for me to

head back to the naval base. Before I got up, my mother came in and sat down next to me on the edge of the bed.

She said, “Son, are you going to go to church with us this morning before you leave for the ship?”

I wanted her to hear my resistance to the idea, so I answered with a half-hearted, “Oh...I guess I will.”

Then, with a slight waver in her voice that always told me something significant was about to be heard, **she asked, “Son, whose pipe cleaners were those in the trash can?”**

I’m convinced that her question originated in heaven and reverberated in the halls of hell. The enemy’s camp was roused. And needless to say, I was in total shock!

I had no time to prepare a defense. I was caught red-handed and had no other choice than to confess my sin. She cried...I cried...all God’s children in the Chapman household cried. I was almost relieved in a way. **There would be no more need to hide behind my wall of fleshly, outward virtue that I had learned to display when around my loved ones.**

Eventually, I came to see that it was God’s mercy that had allowed my mother’s spiritual eyes to be opened to my transgression. It was His love

and grace that had granted me the opportunity to let Him deal with my sin within the walls of time instead of at the judgment that will follow my appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27). **I repented and changed directions. I was also deeply grateful when my folks assured me that while they could never condone my actions, they loved me because I belonged to them.** That day I learned what unconditional love truly meant.

In light of the fact that Satan is so subtle, plus the fact that our children are bent toward sinning, you can see why I believe in adding fasting to our prayers for our kids. **I want to see them in heaven and I desire for the Lord to take me serious when I take them to His throne in prayer.**

Maybe you are seeking the Lord about a child who is yet to surrender to Christ. As you pray for them to come to know His forgiveness, may God make you mighty in the Spirit and strengthen you as you face the challenges of concentrated prayer and the companion pangs of hunger.

Perhaps you are thinking of a child who is dangerously teetering on the brink of a spiritual oblivion. Then may I encourage you to join the army of those who are praying for their children. **Let God see your invisible hunger for their salvation and deliverance by pushing away**

the visible plate for a while. As you pray for your children, remember the Psalmist David's words, "Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications" (Psalm 28:6). Let the knowledge that God hears your cry, strength you to continue in your prayers.

It might take some time, but don't give up in the battle. **A little while here on earth is no comparison to the unending expanse of eternity. I hope you will be encouraged by the lyric that follows.** As you read it and listen to it, please understand that no matter how distant your child is from God, there is hope. Consider the widow of Nain in Luke 7:11-17 who had brought her only son to Jesus. The boy was dead. Yet, Jesus had compassion on the mother and told her, "Do not weep." Then He touched the coffin and spoke to the son. "Young man, I say to you, arise!" And the dead man arose and began to speak. After that, Jesus gave him back to this mother. What a beautiful picture of what we must do for our sons and daughters who are spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 1:1-5).

And remember, **Jesus didn't come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people alive...including your children.**

For that reason we *must* take them to Jesus for He alone can make them “alive” again! Please be encouraged because your child is reachable!

Reachable

There's a boy in his mother's prayers
Cause lately she's been aware
That he's been drifting, too far from the shore
And she's beginning to believe
The boy is getting out of reach
Weary mother, don't you worry anymore

Cause...

The boy is reachable, I know he's reachable
And to God he's visible, and all things are possible
Cause if the Lord can reach His hand of love through time
And touch a cold sinner's heart like mine
The boy is reachable...I know he's reachable

There's a girl on her daddy's heart
Cause lately they've drifted apart
And the company she's keeping
Leads her further away
And he's beginning to believe
The girl is getting out of reach
Oh, weary father
Heaven hears you when you pray

Cause...

The girl is reachable, I know she's reachable
And to God she's visible, and all things are possible
Cause if the Lord can reach His hand of love through time
And touch a cold sinner's heart like mine
The girl is reachable, I know she's reachable

(Steve Chapman/Times and Seasons Music/BMI)

From the CD, "Family Favorites" Steve and Annie Chapman

The First Step

"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in truth." These words, found in 3 John 4 were, of course, referring to spiritual children. But when applied to the role of the parent, the sentiment is the same.

Proverbs 23:15 also speaks well for the parent whose child is walking with God. "My son if your heart is wise, my own heart will also be glad; and my inmost being will rejoice; when your lips speak what is right." It is true that a deep and glorious joy fills a parents' heart when their son or daughter chooses to follow Christ. **It is an indescribable gladness that wells up inside when I see my children choosing God's way instead of the way of the world.** I know when they set their eyes on the "things

above,” and not the vanity of that which is below, they will find true and lasting joy in all their days.

If it is true that so great a joy is found in a child choosing to follow Christ, then would it not be fair to say that a great sorrow comes when we see them rejecting the truth? In Luke, the 11th chapter, you’ll find the account of the prodigal son. Imagine what anguish his father must have felt when he would think of his wayward child. I can almost see him crying as the waves of sadness rushed onto the shores of his heart. The first verse and chorus of the song, *Turn Your Heart Toward Home*, attempt to describe what the scene might have looked like in the home of that hurting dad:

Late in the evening, when everyone was sleeping
The father of the wayward son slipped out into the night
And looked toward the city, and wiped away the tears
And prayed his son could hear his father’s cry

Turn your heart toward home
Turn your heart toward home
You’ve been gone so long
Turn your heart toward home

(Steve Chapman/Dawn Treader Music/SESAC)

From the CD, “At the Potter’s House) Steve and Annie Chapman

Oh! How that dad must have prayed for his lost son. In the same way that I believe it was the result of the prayers of my parents that brought about my return, I consider it likely that it was God's answer to that father's earnest supplications that caused the young man to suddenly come to his senses in the pig-pen and begin his journey homeward.

Someday, when I meet that well-known prodigal in heaven, we can rejoice together in thanks to God for parents who stormed the gates of hell on our behalf.

The "soldier parents" who are fighting for their children on the front line of prayer have responded to a call issued to their hearts by the Heavenly Father, a summons they consider to be extremely urgent. With a sense of alarm, they have awakened to the fact that there is no time to waste in reclaiming a child for the Lord. **One dad said, "Until I saw the emergency, I didn't feel the urgency!"**

Sadly, however too many fathers and mothers are slumbering in their spiritual recliners, oblivious to the deadly serpent that has slithered into their home, and ultimately into the hearts of their children. The venomous viper is clever in his ability to find his way into our lives. **He rarely comes crashing through the front door of the home. That**

tactic would get too much immediate attention. He is much more shrewd than that. Instead he looks for less obvious ways to get into our homes such as continuous bickering and bitterness born out of unforgiveness in a family member.

Unfortunately, the breach in the fort around the family through which the enemy passes is often found in the heart of a parent. **Sometimes, without ever knowing it, a mom or dad can create a crack in the wall of the home with things that seem innocent on the surface.** However, upon closer examination, that which seems harmless is really the tool that Satan uses like a crowbar to pry open an entry into the home. **A prime example of that type of opening is the entertainment a mom and dad allows and endorses.** Permitting a steady diet of the brain-numbing nonsense that comes through network television, cable channels, low standard movie rentals, and unwholesome books and magazines can slowly chisel away at the hearts of the family members.

Most of Hollywood is not just an entertainment source, it is a machine designed to reshape and remold the minds and hearts of its captives. And so often, what we parents consider mild and acceptable in terms of content is ultimately the bait that is used by the destroyer to entice our kids to the trap of the more sordidly immoral material. One

wise observer noted, **“What parents accept in moderation, the children will embrace in excess!”** That is a sobering thought and one that is very true!

Far worse than what the whole family might devour in terms of worthless entertainment is what the parent may consume in secret. And in many cases, he or she does so with the foolish assumption that it affects no one else, including his or her kids. **To the contrary, whatever a mom or dad does, whether openly or in secret, will eventually have an effect in the lives of their children.** Consider the truth in Lamentations 5:7. “Our fathers sinned and are no more; it is we who have borne their iniquities.”

It is an undeniable reality that a parent’s transgressions will have a negative effect on the life of a child. To illustrate this fact, I heard from some friends of ours (whom I will call Bill and Sheri) about the desperate call they received one evening from a mom. She begged them to come as quickly as they could. Our friends hurried to the home and when they arrived, the dad was in an uncontrolled frenzy. Bill and Sheri quickly learned that the son had a pregnant girlfriend and the mother feared that her husband’s intense anger would lead to actions that would do more harm than good.

During the evening, a necessary lull in the heated conversation took place and while they broke for a few minutes to allow the frazzled mom and dad to quickly tend to another matter, Sheri sat down at the family's personal computer. **With permission to do so, she began to toy with it. Within moments a devastating discovery was made.** Sheri, who happened to be a wiz with the operation of a computer, punched a few buttons and the history tab revealed that someone had been accessing several Internet sites that featured the lowest grades of pornography. Sheri brought the couple's attention to what she had found. She did so assuming that it was the son who had been the one dabbling in the raunchy material.

The mother quickly called her boy into the room and confronted him about the matter. **With an expression of horror, he said nothing then looked at his dad with stark fear. The father stood quietly by but the look on his face was that of total shock.** Suddenly, the sickening truth fell on everyone in the room. The dad was the guilty party.

Everyone in the room turned to look at him. He initially claimed innocence. **All of a sudden, he realized there was no way out of the corner he was in and he began to weep.** With a stream of tears running down his face, he admitted that in the deep of the night he had been

secretly surfing the web, indulging in the sin that had so easily captured his mind. **He had no idea that another pair of eyes was watching and that an unintentional consent to feed a youthful lust was given to his son.** The poison of pornography had not only corrupted the dad but it had also devastated his boy's young life.

Bill and Sheri pointed to the father's indulgences as the route by which Satan had gotten to their teenager. **They prayed with the family and encouraged the dad to close the breach by repenting of his sin, ceasing his visits to the web trap and allowing himself to be accountable to a counselor in terms of his lustful nature.**

That dad's story is a sobering reminder of what we parents must do in preparation for praying for our kids...

- **We should first allow God to purify our hearts, be “transformed by the renewing of (our) mind, (Romans 12:1, 2) and we must take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:5)** Whether it's the garbage heap of entertainment or any other transgression, we cannot ignore the long term damaging effects of sin. Think carefully about the admonition found in Isaiah 59:2. “But your iniquities have made a

separation between you and your God. And your sins hid His face from you, so that He does not hear.”

- **With our hearts filled with the confidence that comes from a clear conscience before God, we can then fall on our knees and do battle in prayer for the souls of our precious children.** How can we ever see the critical needs of our kids if our spiritual eyes cannot see over the wall of our own sin? And how can we be heard in heaven when our prayers are hitting the soundproof barrier of our iniquities?

Years ago I wrote the following lyric with everyone else in mind. After I finished it, I felt a unique “nudge” in my heart that whispered, “That’s not for everyone else, Steve. The lyric is for you!”

Needless to say, it was an “heart opening” moment for me. I had to deal with some places in my heart that were not submitted to God, and needed to do so before I could effectively and rightly lead my own family. I offer this song lyric to you now as an encouragement to let God go in to the places in your life that needs to be purified and filled with the light of His love. If you will, you can say with David who, after repenting

of sin in the first twelve verses of Psalm 51, said in verse thirteen, “Then
I will teach transgressors Thy ways!”

The Secret Place

My heart is like a house
One day I let the Savior in
And there are many rooms
Where we would visit now and then
But then one day He saw that door
I knew the day had come too soon
I said, “Jesus I’m not ready
For us to visit in that room

Cause that’s a place in my heart
Where even I don’t go
I have some things hidden there
I don’t want anyone to know”
But He handed me the keys
With tears of love on His face
He said, “I want to make you clean
Let me go in your secret place.”

So I opened up the door
And as the two of us walked in
I was so ashamed
His light revealed my hidden sin
But when I think about that room now
I’m not afraid anymore
Cause I know my hidden sin
No longer hides behind that door

That was a place in my heart

Where even I wouldn't go
I had some things hidden there
I didn't want anyone to know
But He handed me the keys
With tears of love on His face
He made me clean
I let Him in my secret place

(Steve Chapman/Careers-BMG Music Pub./Shepherd's Fold Music/Star Song

From the CD "Family Favorites"/Steve and Annie Chapman

How and When To Pray

As the concern for the salvation of your children grows daily in your heart and you face the increasing reality of the literal lake of fire that they need to avoid by trusting in Christ alone (Revelation 21:8), you will want to do more than just pray casual and occasional sentence prayers for them. **You will want to cry out to God for your kid's sake. It is possible that you now see the desperate need to defy the flesh for the sake of this spiritual cause.** If that is true, there is no better way to accomplish that than fasting.

Many of us wince at the idea of missing a meal. Our love for a good gastronomical jubilee is enormous. The very thought of passing up any opportunity to feed our appetites is depressing enough to make us run out and grab a Big Mac and chocolate shake to console our threatened taste buds.

We all know there's nothing wrong with food. God, in His wisdom put the yearning for it in our system. Then, He supplied the resources for growing and harvesting that which would fuel our bodies. **Food not only meets a biological need, but it also helps fill the emotional need for companionship as we converse across the table at dinner time.**

Breaking bread together has been a symbol of friendship since man has walked the earth. We need food for many reasons.

If man's need for food is so great, why then, would God see our forsaking of it as an honorable sacrifice? **Could it be that through the discipline of closing our mouths to food, we open our hearts to Him?**

When you consider Nehemiah's response to hearing about the great distress of the Jewish exiles, you can see that fasting is indeed a fleshly display of an intense hunger to be heard by the Lord (Nehemiah 1:4, 5).

For the sake of a balanced approach to fasting, I offer the following thoughts...

- **Going without food is by no means a replacement for the finished work of Christ. There is no dispensing of saving grace through any of our human efforts.** “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” (Ephesians 2:9)
- **Nothing human should ever get the glory for what is accomplished by the hand of God.** “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth.” (Psalm 115:1) Any impressive results from our simple sacrifice in the form of fasting and prayer should never be to serve our egos. **Instead, may we humbly say, “May God be praised!”**

With that in mind, if you are ready to take the first step in the extra mile that fasting adds to your prayers for your children, then brace yourself for an exciting journey. **As you begin this walk of sacrificial love for your kids, keep in mind that your flesh *will* constantly resist the idea.** You will find that you are capable of coming up with some of the lamest excuses imaginable to avoid the process. From, “I have a

headache” to “I need the energy for my aerobics class.” No doubt, your resolve will be tested. And, it’s likely that you’ll succumb at times. **Still your determination to stick with the regimen must be driven by a greater need than the one your belly screams about!**

It’s hard to understand it, but some parents of troubled kids are ready and willing to take out second mortgages to get a child into a re-hab center. They would sell all they have to invest in expert counselors yet all the while ignore the available effectiveness of consistently taking their kids to the altar and hungrily presenting them to God.

The invitation to begin doing just that, if you haven’t started already, is extended even at this moment. Shall we pray...and fast!

The following are my recommendations regarding the challenge of adding a fast to your prayers. In no way am I implying that these suggestions are the best and only techniques. The fact is there is no set method for prayer and fasting. While there are biblical precedents such as Jesus’ forty day fast (Matthew 4) and “Daniel’s fast” (Daniel 1:8-13) the sacrifice you make for

your kids should be done according to your conviction and a wise assessment of your circumstances.

1. Make sure you are medically able to fast.

A person, for example, with a known medical problem that would preclude them from changing their dietary habits, should first consult a physician. In that case, going without specific foods such as sweets or caffeine or even sacrificing other delights such as entertainment, would be a worthy alternative.

For those who are sure that fasting would not present a health risk, then food is definitely first on the list of the things to forsake. **Whether your fasting is restricted to non-food items or you are able to forego the tasty morsels, don't forget that the purpose of the fast is to remind us to humbly demonstrate the seriousness of your requests before the Almighty and to admit that your kids are far more important than your own gratification!**

2. Choosing when to fast

As for choosing when to fast, that too should be a personal decision. At first, I chose to begin at 8 a.m. on Wednesdays. I quickly realized that I was

capable of making it too easy by being sure to eat a hardy breakfast prior to starting time. Wanting more out of the experience I decided to start the fast at bed time the night before. Many times, it is tempting to stuff myself before I retire on Tuesday night in order to avoid the Wednesday growls. I know to do so, however, would be defeating the purpose. **The thing I look for and sincerely need on Wednesdays is that attention-getting hunger pang in the gut about mid-day to remind me of my kids.** It simply will not happen if my stomach is still full from the previous evening's four course picnic I consumed.

I also discovered that **it was very easy to forget my commitment to Wednesday's prayer and fasting.** Several times I would bounce out of bed, grab a granola bar and coffee, and head off down the road in my pick-up, sipping and eating as I drove! Suddenly, a few miles and burps down the highway I would realize what I had done and feel terrible. In that case I would set my sights on Thursday.

In this quest for a serious prayer regimen, *flexibility* is a must. Sometimes a business luncheon falls on Wednesday or family arrives unexpectedly at noon from a far away city. When circumstances such as these are beyond my control and it changes my strategy, I know its time to make alternate plans. **If I know in advance that Wednesday will be blocked, I opt for**

Tuesday, a day earlier. Sometimes, spreading the process over a two day period (fasting until noon both days) is necessary.

However it's done, denying the flesh for a season in order to attain a spiritual goal sometimes requires a willingness to accommodate the rest of the world around us. **Oddly enough, once a parent begins to see the encouraging results in the children that fasting brings about it, it may cause a firm resistance to revising the schedule.** Still, adaptability will be a valuable virtue. (Of course, if fasting becomes impossible during a particular week, by all means don't forget to pray.)

3. Deciding when to break your fast is also a personal choice.

For me, ending at 4 p.m. seemed to be the best time because my family usually eats our evening meal somewhat early. **On some occasions, if I want to extend my abstinence from food for a little longer at the end of the day, I feel free to do so as long as Annie knows in advance.** Though changes in your schedule will occur, I suggest that you pick a time to pray and fast and make it as regular as possible. **This is a courtesy for the sake of the family's schedule as well as the person who may be preparing a meal.**

4. Be aware of the enemies of fasting.

Speaking from experience, you must keep in mind that all of us have two enemies; the flesh and Satan. Both will not want you to see victory in praying and fasting for your kids. **Your fallen, sinful nature will be tempted to be prideful about going without food.** To do so will only weaken your weapon. Instead of heralding the fact that you're fasting, be careful to follow the instructions given in Matthew 6:16-18. "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

If a period of fasting is done well, only your family will know about it. What is done privately will be rewarded openly. And in this case, the reward will show in the lives of your children.

Our other enemy, Satan, will try to deceive you with a guilt trip if you fail even one time to follow through with your commitment. He'll want you to grovel in remorse and waste your energy. Even your salvation may

be the target of his warfare. Instead of falling prey to his tactics, enlist the encouragement from the Psalmist David in Psalm 32:5. “I acknowledge my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord’; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.”

With your hope only in Christ, continue on with a determination to not squander another opportunity to bless your children by taking them to the Throne of God with prayer and fasting.

When Do I Pray and

What Shall Be Said?

When to pray...

You may be wondering, “How can I pray for my kids while I go about my daily business?” Or, you may ask, “Should I kneel or bow my head while I’m at work?” “How can Wednesdays or whatever day I chose, be devoted to praying if I’m obligated to perform a job?

- These are legitimate concerns. **By no means would I suggest that a boss be cheated out of his time while you pray for your**

children. The wise thing to do instead is to be a “weaver,” threading your prayers through the holes of time that come available to you throughout the day.

- **On your way to work,** for example turn off the radio and pray.
- **During a break at your job,** take a walk (if you can) and pray.
- **During a lunch hour,** when it will be extra difficult to conceal your fast, find a quiet corner and read the scriptures. The reinforcement that an encouraging passage can offer will be timely.
- **On the trip home,** instead of singing along with your favorite singer’s CD, turn them off and make your own music by singing your prayers for your kids out loud to the Lord (if you’re alone in the car, of course!).
- **Generally, devote the free moments** of your schedule to the interest of your children. It may seem fragmented and insignificant at times but be assured the accumulation of your efforts will not go unseen or unheard!

During the day there will likely be stretches of time when you cannot verbalize a prayer. The beauty of fasting is that even though you

may not be lifting your voice aloud to the Lord, your attitude of devotion is noticed in heaven. **The silent cry of praying that God hears takes place in those moments when you feel the bumps of hunger in the road on your way to supper.** Rejoice in the pain because the purpose for which you sacrifice and pray is frequently brought back to your attention. Fasting fills in the gaps.

What to pray...

And now, what shall be said when you do pray? I suggest first of all that you **decide on two or three desires that you have for your kids and make them a part of your prayers each week or every time you go to the Lord on their behalf.** It is not a bother to God to approach Him with an ongoing request. In Luke 18:1-7 we find this comforting account:

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him saying, *Give me legal protection from my opponent.* And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, *Even though I do not fear*

God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wears me out. (My margin says, “hit me under the eye!”) **And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now shall not God bring justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?’”**

The widow in this passage was commended for her persistence. As a result of her unwavering petitions, her request was granted. Don’t be backward about doing the same for your kids. **Too many times we actually feel that we are “pestering” God with our repeated prayers. Instead, He takes delight in them.**

Early on there were two primary requests that I settled on for our children that I made a part of every Wednesday’s prayer. I asked God that He would give them *peace* and *purpose*. First, **the peace I desire for them is found only in knowing and following Jesus Christ.** Secondly, **that He would grant them a purpose in His kingdom here on earth.** I am confident that if these two things are true for them, they will be people who are content, disciplined and valuable to their family, their community, their church and their nation. Several times through the

day on Wednesdays and throughout the week or whenever they come to mind, I will utter these simple words, “Please give my children peace and purpose.”

As time went on I added some things to the list of what I wanted God to do for and with my children. Eventually I wrote that list into a song lyric shown at the beginning of this e-book. It is titled, *Wednesday’s Prayer*. For your convenience I am placing it once again at the end of this text. I encourage you to read through it carefully and if it represents the cry of your heart for your children please feel free to use the lyric as you pray for them.

Finally, **I also include other requests that are often dictated by whatever they may be going through at the time.** When our children were still living at home, I would pray about tests at school, a problem with a friend, safety on the highway or a choice regarding a social event and other needs they may be facing. Now that our kids are grown with families of their own, I pray about stresses at work, for the good health of their spouse and children or the joyful, safe arrival of a baby yet to be born. **The reality is, there are as many things to pray about as there are children to pray for.** I guarantee that you will not be lost for subjects when it comes to praying for your kids.

Write A Note!

In closing, I suggest that you write a special note to your child (or children) telling them of your plan to pray. Believe me, whether they show it or not, they'll be grateful for such a display of your love. Your note might read:

“Dear (child’s name),

As your dad (or mom or both), I am committing to pray and fast for you on (the day you choose) of each week. I love you and I know our Heavenly Father loves you too. Please let me know if you have any specific needs and want me to include when I take you to God’s throne in prayer.

From my heart, Dad (or Mom or both)

May God richly bless you and your family, as you embark on this marvelous journey of dedicated, concentrated prayer for your child.

Steve Chapman

Wednesday's Prayer

Father God to You I come
In the name of Your Son
I bring my children to Your throne
Father hear my cry

Above all else, Lord, save their souls
Draw them near You keep them close
Be the shield against their foes
Make them Yours not mine

Give them peace in Christ alone
In their sorrow be theirs song
No other joy would last as long
Father calm their fears

Guide their feet, Lord, light their path
May their eyes on You be cast
Give their hands a kingdom task
A purpose for their years

And as my flesh cries out for bread
May I hunger, Lord, instead
That my children would be fed
On Your words of life

So....Father God to You I come
In the name of Your Son
I bring my children to Your throne
Father hear my cry

Steve Chapman/Times and Seasons/BMI 1998

More Ash Wednesday Prayers (19). Prayer for Aid in Fasting - Hanging as a vine upon the Wood, O Christ our Anglican Ash Wednesday Collect - Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing Prayer for Ash Wednesday - I already feel that I have entered into the A Prayer for Ash Wednesday - Gracious God, today begins a period of inner Ash Wednesday Prayer - Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of my Come all who are thirsty - Come, all who are thirsty says Jesus, our The National Day of Prayer is an annual day of observance held on the first Thursday of May, designated by the United States Congress, when people are asked "to turn to God in prayer and meditation". The president is required by law (36 U.S.C. Â§ 119) to sign a proclamation each year, encouraging all Americans to pray on this day. The modern law formalizing its annual observance was enacted in 1952, although earlier days of fasting and prayer had been established by the Second Continental Congress from