

*The*  
**PRAYER  
SATURATED  
FAMILY**

*How to Change the Atmosphere  
in Your Home Through Prayer*

**CHERYL SACKS**



**Chosen**

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

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To my grandsons,  
Luca and Rocco Reginelli,  
with love.

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PART ONE

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FAMILIES PRAY

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# 1

## Becoming Prayer Saturated

### *The Best Investment You'll Ever Make*

**O**ur six-year-old grandson, Luca, and his dad, Marco, are avid sports fans. They love watching sports on television together and attending games whenever they can.

One rainy Sunday afternoon Luca and Marco attended a San Jose Earthquakes soccer game near their home. Dressed in his yellow raincoat and boots, Luca proudly carried the big umbrella his parents had given him. When they entered the stadium, the ticket taker told Luca, “No umbrellas allowed! You’ll have to leave your umbrella outside of the entrance, and just so you know, we can’t watch over it for you. There’s no guarantee it will be here when you come back.”

Luca tearfully gave up his prized umbrella. He was afraid that someone might steal it and he would never see it again. After he

and his dad were settled in their seats, Luca turned to Marco. “Dad, could we please pray that my umbrella will still be there after the game is over?” Marco put his arm around his son, and together they asked God to take care of Luca’s umbrella.

That night when they walked out of the stadium and looked through the pile of umbrellas, Luca’s was still there! When he arrived home, instead of rushing to tell everyone about the game, Luca couldn’t wait to talk about this exciting answer to prayer. No doubt he had watched his parents pray together and had been a part of family prayer, but this day he had initiated the prayer; Luca was launching into a prayer life of his own.

You may think that a soccer game is a strange setting for talking about family prayer. Yet this is just what it means for a family to be prayer saturated—talking and listening to God anytime, anyplace—during scheduled intentional times of prayer and as a lifestyle.

Years ago when my husband, Hal, and I first became parents we decided to raise our daughter, Nicole (Luca’s mom), in an atmosphere rich with prayer and worship. Did we have the perfect family? Of course not! But we believe our commitment to these practices has made an impact, even beyond our generation. Nicole and her husband, Marco, are now raising their own family to know God and to think of prayer as a natural part of everyday life. What a wonderful reward!

Our friends Ben and Kara are the parents of five children, ages six months to nine years old. They say that praying together is the best investment their family could ever make.

“We’re raising our kids the very best we can,” said Kara. “Yet no matter how much energy we put into parenting, sometimes we will fall short. Still, we know if we teach our kids that God is their source—that they can run to Him with everything—then they will be equipped for whatever they face in life.”

Ben and Kara pray in the morning when their kids wake up and before they all go off into the day. As any parent knows, the mornings are usually hectic, so they don't make it complicated or religious. They give the kids freedom to talk to God the way they want to communicate, so they will know how easy it is to pray. The two-year-old is usually sitting on the floor playing, but he is watching and listening.

“One day one of our kids was not feeling well,” Kara said. “So we gathered around and laid hands on her and prayed for God to heal her. The two-year-old came over and laid his little hands on her, too. I know at the time he was only doing what he saw us do, but he also was being trained that we go to God when we have a need—that He is our source.”

If their prayers get interrupted, Kara said, or they don't have much time, she and Ben don't make a big deal of it. Whether their family prayer time is two minutes a day or ten, it is an investment that can grow.

I love Marco and Luca's story of spontaneous prayer at a soccer game, and Ben and Kara's story of free-flowing morning prayer, because both examples illustrate how simple, yet profound family prayer can be. Inviting God into our families is life changing for everyone involved; and while it takes effort, it is easier and more powerful than you might think. Connecting with God regularly can strengthen relationships and build faith more than any single thing your family can do.

## God's Presence in Your Home

We may go to church services or conferences looking to be refreshed and expecting to encounter His presence, yet we can have the same vision for regularly encountering Him in our homes. The gospels show us how much Jesus *loves* spending

time in people's homes—so much so that He even invites Himself sometimes!

Jesus taught in the temple and synagogues, but far more often we see Him teaching and doing miracles in homes: Levi's house, the centurion's house, Mary and Martha's home, Simon the Leper's home, Zacchaeus's home, Matthew the tax collector's home, Peter's house and the Upper Room, to name just a few.

We see Jesus meeting the most pressing needs in every household, bringing healing, deliverance, freedom and forgiveness. This same miracle-working power is available to our families, too.

### God's Original Design—Heaven on Earth

Wouldn't we all like our homes to be a little slice of heaven here on earth? We long to live in a place where we can love and be loved, where there is harmony, camaraderie, security and acceptance. Did you know this is exactly the way God designed family to be?

The first home was set in the context of a garden. God's original design was that home would be like heaven, saturated with peace and joy. Truly, it was heaven on earth.

Adam and Eve were to fill their days communing with God, walking and talking with Him and tending the garden, seeing that it was fruitful and protected. The Garden of Eden was a picture of how God created our homes to be. His tangible presence was there. Adam and Eve had everything they needed in abundance.

God gave Adam and Eve an assignment to watch over their garden home and to pay careful attention to everything He told them. Sadly, they failed in that assignment. The serpent came in—the most cunning of all creatures (see Genesis 3). Satan, through the mouthpiece of the serpent, cast doubt on God's

love and goodness and persuaded Adam and Eve to abandon their post as guardians of the garden. As a result, Adam and Eve lost their happy, God-filled home.

There are many similarities between that first home and ours. God desires for us to live in peace and unity, and for our homes to be a place of love and fulfillment. He wants to fill them with His tangible presence. And He certainly wants us to follow all His instructions carefully to keep out destructive forces.

Marriage and family were God's idea, each a part of His original design. It was His plan that marriages would succeed, that families would grow together, enjoy each other, be a blessing to each other, multiply and bless the world around them. So doesn't it make sense that He would have a plan to see that this happens?

### **Why Pray As a Family?**

In a 1986 homily delivered in Australia, Pope John Paul II said, "As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live." The nuclear family has come under attack in recent years in this nation. There are evil forces beyond anything we can even imagine trying to pull families apart and distorting the concept of what a family is. These forces are spiritual, and it is futile to fight this kind of battle with natural weapons. We need supernatural assistance to overcome them. The statistics of divorce, single parenting, families in poverty and crisis and other pressing concerns can seem overwhelming sometimes. Families desperately need to be strengthened.

We cannot do this in our own power! If we are going to experience lasting change, we need to push back against the opposing forces of our culture and invite God's transforming presence into our homes.

God has an answer. He is in the business of healing broken families and turning them into pillars of society and a mighty force for His Kingdom! The power released through praying together is what can make the difference.

### *Praying Together Strengthens and Heals*

A couple on the brink of divorce scheduled an appointment with the pastor who married them. They asked the pastor what advice he could give them that would save their crumbling marriage. The pastor asked if they had been faithfully meeting every day to read the Word of God and to pray together. They confessed that they had not. “Go home and give your marriage one more try,” he said.

One night after the couple had been praying and reading God’s Word together, the husband ran across verses that said, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:4–5). With tears in his eyes, he laid down the Bible, put his arms around his wife and begged her forgiveness. He apologized for the cruel things he had said and done to her. The young couple prayed and sobbed in each other’s arms as they experienced the meaning of Jesus’ words when He said, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).<sup>1</sup>

### *Praying Together Impacts Future Generations*

Children who grow up in a home in which they experience the power and presence of God through family prayer are more likely to build their own homes around family prayer and devotions. The result assures that the knowledge of God is passed

down to our children and our children's children. "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. . . . So the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born. . . . Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds" (Psalm 78:4, 6–7).

Nate Dorn tells how this principle has guided his family for three generations.

Every night when they were very young, I looked across the dinner table at my beautiful children. Whenever I looked into their eyes, I was overcome with the thought that each of these children had an eternal spirit—a God-given destiny.

I asked myself this question: *How much does the destiny of this child matter?* Each child's destiny, I realized, would last for eternity. Everything else in my life would fade away but those children had eternal spirits. I had already co-created them, so what was my spiritual responsibility to them now?

When I first thought about setting aside regular times of prayer and worship with my family, I reasoned that our work schedules would make it impossible. As a biology professor at a university, I had a demanding work schedule. My wife, Meegan, home-schooled the children and worked outside the home at night.

Despite our hectic lives, I felt compelled to make family prayer a priority. I became even more convinced as I was reading about the ministry of the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter who encouraged parents to be responsible for the spiritual upbringing of their children. He likened the home to a miniature representation of the Church.

I asked myself, *If God, if the gospel, if prayer, if family is important to me, or anyone else for that matter, how will my children know it?*

I thought back on my own upbringing. My father and his father before him always prayed and read the Scriptures or a

devotion, every night, usually after dinner. I knew that if our children were to carry on the heritage of a godly family, I would need to instill the same devotion to Jesus that had been passed on to me.

Between my own experience and what I had been reading about spiritual parenting, I decided we had to do something. At the time we had two little girls, ages two and six, and a six-month-old son. One night when the baby was in bed, I said to the rest of my family, “Let’s get in a circle and sing some songs together.” That night, we sang Christian children’s songs, and then we said some prayers. We later added readings from a Bible storybook and devotionals to our family prayer and worship time.

I didn’t really know what I was doing at the time, nor did I promise we would continue. But now our family has grown to seven children and our prayer time has been going on for eight years.

### *Praying Together Ignites Nationwide Revival*

A family praying together in agreement has the spiritual authority to ask anything within God’s will and believe for change in individuals, the Church, cities and nations (see Matthew 18:19).

Jesus said, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. If two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:18–20).

The praying family is the first line of defense against strongholds of the enemy and our greatest defense against chaos in our homes, schools and nation. If the families of believers were in the habit of meeting together regularly in prayer and worship,

we would see the powers of darkness bound. We would see the power of the Holy Spirit released to bring a revival flood to the Church and spiritual awakening to the world!

Often a mom or dad will say, “Everyone in our family prays and reads God’s Word, but not together. Isn’t this just as good?”

It is absolutely powerful whenever *anyone* prays: “The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results” (James 5:16 TLB). However, exponential power is released when we pray together. Notice the condition to having access to this power in the following verse: “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

### *Praying Together Shapes Young Lives*

Children are deeply influenced by the spiritual patterns practiced in their homes. Regular family prayer and worship help build spiritual steadfastness and dependability into a child’s life. And this attitude toward life and the things of God will remain with children long after they leave home.

Family prayer not only affects the happiness of every individual in the home—its effects reach beyond the four walls of the home and extend to the moral, social and civil life of the nation and the world. Every young person steps from the door of home into the field of life. And the way our young people learn to conduct themselves at home is the same way they will conduct themselves in culture, transforming it for better or worse. Our homes give us the men and women who become the bricks and mortar of the nation.

The family is the linchpin of society, both economically and socially. God established the family as the bedrock of society, the basic building block of nations. If we have stronger families, we will have stronger schools, stronger churches and stronger communities with less poverty and less crime.

### Small Investment—Huge Impact

A few things in life *really* matter. One of those is family. The other is our relationship with God through prayer.

One of the most powerful life truths is called the “80/20 Principle.” This principle asserts that only a small number of factors are responsible for most results. Family life is a prime example of this; it is the small and consistent things couples do to affirm each other, and that parents do to invest in their children, that produce a lifetime of fruit, even into the next generation. Small but targeted efforts can produce massive results.

In his excellent book, *The 80/20 Principle*, author Richard Koch points out:

- Most people put *average* effort into too many things, rather than superior thought and extraordinary effort into a few important things.
- Most people spend most of their time on activities that are of low value to themselves and others.
- People who achieve the most are selective, as well as determined.<sup>2</sup>

For so many of us, the things that matter most are at the mercy of things that matter least. By applying Koch’s conclusions, we can see that the decision to make family prayer a top priority in the home is one of those small decisions that will produce massive results. It can bring about the things that matter most: a vibrant relationship with the Lord, a close-knit family that is growing spiritually and a home where patience, joy and love are practiced and the presence of God is experienced.

God’s answers for our families are simple, humble and incredibly powerful. His promise to stressed-out families is, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you

rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Time and effort given to your family’s growth in the Lord and the spiritual climate of your home will turn out to be the best investment you can ever make! Like all good investments, you will sow a small seed and reap a big return.