

The Spiritual War in Your Home, Part 12 | how your family is to engage the flesh

I. Making the flesh and blood the enemy.

- I've told my child to finish eating his vegetables. The child, who's been having a bad attitude all evening, tears up and starts throwing a fit. In this scenario, it's very easy for me to be annoyed. You're a five year old whose life is a cake walk. You have everything your heart could desire, you're been spared the atrocities that are meted out on billions of children across the world. All I've asked is that you finish two and a half bites of green beans, and you're acting like it's the end of the world. You're disobeying and dishonoring me — rolling up our relationship and throwing it the trash — because you can't bring yourself to eat ten green beans? Not only that, but I still have to get your siblings in bed and hopefully spend a sniff of quality time with my spouse before I collapse in bed and repeat this madness again tomorrow.
- That's what my human, physical eyes can see when they look on this situation. Those are the conclusions to which my mind will come when it focuses merely on the physical problem. No doubt other people might come to different conclusions than I. Of course I hope I would have the self-control not to verbalize those conclusions, but I don't want you to be too smug. I believe you've experienced similar sentiments in similar situations.
- So once I've identified the target as my child — all I have to do is force their square peg into the round hole of my expectations — I must choose which weapon I'm going to use. And there are countless physical weapons I can bring to bear on the situation. But though each of them would target a *facet* of my child, none of them will target the right facet.
 - A violent parent with no self-control may smack the child across the face, attacking the body.
 - A sharp tongue may be used to whittle down the emotions.
 - A ridiculous over-consequence could be hurled out to overwhelm the child's thinking so they know who's boss.
 - Perhaps some promises of tasty treats may be employed to manipulate his immature desires.
 - An anger-competition could commence to duel it out in a battle of wills.
 - And yet absolutely none of those weapons targets the real problem . . . the spirit.

II. Making the Flesh the enemy.

- Okay, so same situation, only this time, as I watch my child begin to meltdown over his 2.5 helpings of green beans, I remember why I'm here. God put me into this child's life to introduce him to God. Every parenting opportunity — no matter how hard it may be — is a beautiful opportunity to magnify Christ and glorify the Father.
- I pray. "Dear God, give me wisdom and patience. Help me point my child to you."
- In my mind I open my parenting Bible — the passages I've committed to memory for situations just like this — and I remember the various biblical lessons I've taught my child concerning this very situation.
- So I lift the spiritual weapon to my eye because I don't yet know at what I'm really supposed to be aiming. As I stare at my child through the Gospel I see him for what he is. In this illustration he's unsaved. His own comfort and satisfaction is the only thing he's capable of worshipping.
- It actually makes sense for him to act the way he does. He's immature, foolish, and prone to zombie behavior. He can't begin to understand the joy that comes from submitting to God. Of course, if I'm being honest, I too often fail to appreciate the joy of sacrificing my selfish desires for God's will.

- Using God's Word, I can clearly see how my child has been tempted on the battleground of the Pride of Life and has lost. And though I may have missed that split-second battle as it was waging, I can clearly see the carnage left by the attack on his Lust of the Flesh. In fact, if my child is an unbeliever, I know that he didn't even put up a fight. His behavior — coupled with God's Word — makes it perfectly clear what's happened. My son was *"carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust . . . conceived, it [gave] birth to sin."* And — if left unchecked — that sin will eventually bring forth death: relational death and potentially eternal death.
- As I continue to stare at the situation through the lens of the Gospel, I'm reminded of the lethal nature of sin and the fact that only Christ can give us life. I'm reminded of the fact that — even now — I'm impotent to do the right thing without the power of the Holy Spirit. I have nothing but worthless, destructive physical weapons outside of God's grace. And it's here and now that God wants to mature me as I point my child to his greatest need.
- And it's at that moment that I can see the enemy.
- see the foolish, sinful beliefs my child is trusting. I see how those beliefs have subconsciously lied to him and told him that whatever he gains from this behavior is better than having to choke down those green beans. I see how his desires have been tainted and how they have motivated his behavior, I see the self worship, and I see that — without God — he will never be able to live for anything more than his own perceived comfort.
- And that's it.
- The real enemy can be traced back to the fact that — in that moment — my son sacrificed God's Truth for his own puny little delusion. He leaned on his own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 both say *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* According to Proverbs 28:26, *"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool."* That's what happened. He misplaced his trust.
- That's what I need to target: the speculation, the lofty opinion, the thought that raised itself up against the knowledge of God. That's the enemy. That's the fortress that needs to be destroyed by God's spiritual weapon.
- I'm not going to try to brow beat or nag my son. I'm not trying to use bad shame to make him feel worthless. I'm not trying to "show him who's boss." I'm not trying to scare him or manipulate him into submission.
- I'm moving through the first three of the Parents 5 Jobs. As an Ambassador of God, I've taught my child the truth — he knows what's right and what's wrong — and now I have to help him see that he's wrong. I need to help him understand his sin. I need to reinterpret the situation for him so that he understands how he's rebelled against God. I need to lead him in confessing his sin, apologizing, and repenting.
- I can see it so clearly through the lens of the Gospel.
- All that's left to do is righteously deliver the life-saving Truth to the situation . . . the divinely powerful knowledge of God that destroys fleshly delusions and Failure Philosophies and misplaced beliefs and takes every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- I pull the trigger in faith, trusting God to guide my words as I use His Word, and believing that His Word will not return void.
- That conversation, my friends, is going to sound and look very different.