

SPIRITUAL
WARFARE
for Your
Family

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN

Leighann McCoy



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Dedicated to my husband, Tom

You were wise enough to know that having children might be harder than either of us could ever imagine and patient enough to battle with me through infertility to conceive them.

You've been steadfast, passionate, compassionate, and strong as both a godly father and husband.

We cry, we laugh, we bow down, and we rise up . . . together.

Mikel, Kaleigh, and TJ are God's best idea for us!

And we're His best idea for them.

God's got some strange ideas.

Here's to His thoughts and not ours, His ways and not ours.

Here's to "three for three" for the glory of God!

"A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will
not snuff out, till he has brought
justice through to victory."

Matthew 12:20

Home is

Where you can be silent and still be heard

Where you can ask and find out who you are

Where people laugh with you about yourself

Where sorrows are divided and joys are multiplied

Where we share and love and grow

My mother-in-law, Sterline McCoy, gave me a cross-stitched wall hanging with this poem on it. May God grant us homes like this.

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Introduction

If you are reading this, you either know spiritual warfare is real or you are curious as to whether it might be. But that's not really why you picked up this book. The real reason is that the people you love most are causing you the most grief (or you are afraid they might cause you grief in the future). If you introduced them to me, I'd call them your family. You might call them crazy. We might both be tempted to label our families "dysfunctional." I haven't met a "normal" family yet. But more than anything, you want to know there is hope for your prodigal, for your child or children, grandchildren, and/or for your spouse, and I want to shout to you, "THERE IS!"

This is a book about hope. It's a book about victory and success. It's also a book about spiritual warfare.

Wow! Even the words make my skin crawl. I'm not one of those people who thinks there's a demon behind every smart remark your preteen utters. I never watch movies that exalt spiritual darkness. But I do believe in a fourth or fifth dimension that Scripture calls "the heavenlies," and I know that these places are very real. I have put my faith in God, who gets involved in the details of my life. And as I've grown to experience Him more, I've also come up-close-and-personal with the "roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8), who is intent on stealing my faith and destroying my witness.

I'm here to tell you that what you are experiencing in your family is not the normal stuff of life. It's a battle—a spiritual battle—and there is a way for you to win this fight. If you are not experiencing the battle yet, you will, and I'm glad you have the foresight to get yourself prepared.

I intend to tell you in this book how to win.

You may want to shout aloud, "How can you be so sure?!"

Here's how. I serve the Commander in Chief of heaven's armies, and He's already won this war. The God whom I serve has no equal in power. His understanding is perfect (meaning that there isn't anything lurking in the shadows that He's not already fully aware of). He's not only strong, He is also crazy in love with you. And because He loves you, He's going to teach you how to fight to win. The almost laughable thing about this is that He's going to use me to guide your training.

I'm not a drill sergeant, nor am I a decorated war hero. I'm just a pastor's wife (of all things) from Middle Tennessee, who's lived through her share of battles and learned how to fight.

When my children heard me say I was about to start writing another book on spiritual warfare, they exclaimed, "Are you kidding me?!" They are bracing themselves for attack. In fact, we are recruiting prayer partners to stand in the gap for us as I take on this project. My husband, Tom, just smiles knowingly, and I often shake my head and mutter under my breath, "What am I thinking?"

Then I remember that we worship what we fear most, and I am determined to allow my esteem of God to override my fear of the Enemy of our souls. I'm also determined to trust Him more and to stand on the tried-and-true fact that every attack from the Enemy brings with it a divine invitation from the heart of God to know by experience what Love does. This was the theme of my first book on spiritual warfare, *Spiritual Warfare for Women*.

When I came to my "laughing place" (an eighty-year-old farmhouse in the North Carolina mountains where I go to write) to begin my work on *Spiritual Warfare for Women*, my daughter (eighteen at the time) interrupted that getaway by moving into

an apartment with her boyfriend. Just a few weeks later we discovered she was pregnant. That was only the beginning of what has become our new “normal.” But during those enemy attacks, I tested the things I thought I’d learned about spiritual warfare and found them to be true. I put those truths on paper. I could pretend that was easy and bolster your confidence in me, but to be quite honest, I birthed that “baby” amid some serious moans and groans. But in the process, I discovered a whole lot more about God than I would have ever learned any other way. I wrote about most of those things in *A Woman’s Guide to Hearing God’s Voice*. That manuscript was written while I fought a recurrence of colon cancer that involved having half my liver removed and six months of chemotherapy.

So as I stare at my signed contract with Bethany House and sit in front of the wood stove with my computer before me, once again at my laughing place, I am closing my eyes and whispering a prayer: “Dear Lord, stop me right now if this isn’t where you’re going and please, please, *pleeease* bring those I love to the other side intact.”

With that said, let me tell you what I plan to show you in this book. Spiritual warfare is real. We live on a battlefield; our life on earth is like a deployment. But victory is yours, not just in the end but in the now. I don’t care how hopeless your situation seems, don’t be snookered into thinking you cannot win these battles! Don’t worry if you don’t know how; that’s why you’re reading this book.

There are many battlefronts in this spiritual war, but there is one battlefield that wounds us deeper than any other, and that is the battle the Enemy levels against our homes. In this book, I intend to tell you how to win the battles that rage against your family.

I’m going to start by explaining what spiritual warfare is and why it continues today. I’m going to clarify for you the legal transaction that took place when Jesus died on the cross for your sins. And then I’m going to explain the effect of that legal transaction on your life now. After that I’m going to show you what you’re doing wrong. Don’t worry, there are only three things, and once

you know what these are, I'm going to tell you how to fix them. After that I'll share three truths that will give you a definite advantage on the battlefield. These things are true whether you know them or not, so Satan can't do a thing about their reality. He can, however, keep you confused over these truths so that you don't use them to your advantage. Once you understand these truths, you will also gain tools to implement them in the trenches during the fight. I'm praying already that you don't lose this book just before you read these chapters. The devil doesn't want you to know what I've written there.

Knowledge is power. In the next part of this book, I will share what I've come to know about the Enemy's targeted attack on our thought lives and show you that the battle really is "all in your head." This will lead to a discussion of the "high places" we tend to construct when we put our confidence in something or someone other than God. You will learn to define the arguments, pretensions, and strongholds that must be destroyed in order to take back possession of blessings and guarantees the Enemy may have stolen from you. You will learn about three of the incredible divine powers God has given us to demolish the devil's strongholds. At the end of this section, you will learn how to operate the divine weapons He's provided.

In part 5 of the book, I will identify your children's vulnerable places based on their life stages and then help you create a strategy for making them strong. In part 6, I will discuss several issues that are common to families today. While these issues aren't necessarily spiritual attacks, the devil does use them to get an upper hand in our families. If you are in crisis right now, flip through part 6 and see if you are struggling with one of these issues. You might want to read that chapter first and then read the rest of the book.

I originally had an appendix planned, but decided that these resources would be more accessible to you online. Therefore, you can find some incredible tools for your family's spiritual arsenal on my website at www.LeighannMcCoy.com/SpiritualWarfareTools

and at bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/spiritual-warfare-for-your-family/378360. These tools include several more issues that are common to families, a downloadable worksheet for developing your family's core values, and links to some of the best sex education tools for parents.

If you are still reading this, then I know you are serious about winning the war in your home. I've got a few warnings and promises: I warn you that you may cry a time or two while you read this book. I promise you will laugh. I warn you that you might be stretched and even broken in this journey. I promise you that when you arrive at the end you will be stronger than ever before. I warn you that it's going to get messy (most likely it already has). I promise you your messes are the special ingredient in God's miracles. It's time to win these battles. Are you ready?

PART 1

The Battle Is Real

We live in a perpetual battlefield. . . . The wars among the nations on earth are mere popgun affairs compared to the fierceness of battle in the spiritual unseen world. This invisible spiritual conflict is waged around us incessantly and unremittingly. Where the Lord works, Satan's forces hinder [God's work]; where angel beings carry out divine directives, the devils rage. All this comes about because the powers of darkness press their counterattack to recapture the ground held for the glory of God.

—Billy Graham, *Angels*

1

You're Not Crazy; There Really Is a Battle Waging

It was 2:32 a.m. I'd just finished swabbing up the blood from my nosebleed. I was so weak from not eating that I could hardly keep my hands from shaking as I tried to sip the lukewarm water I'd put on the nightstand when I went to bed. I hadn't swallowed anything cold for more than two months. The chemo I was receiving created a heightened sensitivity to the cold, stole my appetite, gave me high blood pressure, and left me feeling nauseous and achy. I was sick, I was tired, and I felt half dead.

I prayed to God, "Am I going to die from this cancer?"

His answer was unexpected, as it often is. Instead of saying, "No, Leighann, you're not dying. You're going to be okay. I'm going to let you live a long and prosperous life," He said, "You can if you'd like. You can leave all this behind and come to where there is no chemo, no suffering, no heartache, and no pain. You can join me where I am and live forever!"

"Or," He continued, "you can stay on the battlefield a bit longer. But know that if you do, it's going to be hard, very hard. Your life is going to involve suffering and disappointment."

His answer sounded much more like an invitation than anything else. It was as if God were inviting me to go ahead and play my get-out-of-jail-free card!

I contemplated my response. I could leave and be done or I could hang around and stop whining.

Seriously, I could stay and choose to be used by God, spent for the well-being of those I loved and those God loved, or I could go on to eternity, where it really doesn't matter so much whether you live ten, fifty, or ninety years on earth in comparison to the ten thousand years that make up the first season in heaven.

I chose to stay. I thanked God for His kindness and submitted to His warning. Now when those no-good, horrible, terrible, very bad things happen, I am reminded that God assured me they would. I am on assignment. I am here to fight.

We are soldiers living in hostile territory. The day will come when we get to go home, but until then we have battles to win.

As you read this book you are going to discover that not only are your battles real, they can be won, and you can experience the victory of God as you're winning them.

Let's start by defining spiritual warfare in general and then in the way it manifests itself in your home.

Spiritual Warfare Defined

Spiritual warfare is the ongoing resistance that Satan launches against God by exerting his arrogant desire to be God.

It is real.

It is vicious, violent, vile, and brutal.

Until you discover what a warrior you are!

The war began in the heavenlies and will end there as well. But it's fought mostly on earth today, and your family is smack-dab in the middle of the battle. Satan has a long history of attacking families. Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Sarah and Hagar, Joseph and his brothers—the list goes on and on.

Tony Evans, a respected pastor and frequent teacher on the subject of spiritual warfare, said this:

We have to help people understand the cause-effect relationship. There frequently is a strong link between the spiritual and physical. That is, what we are dealing with in the physical realm often can be determined by what is taking place in the spiritual realm. Our failure to deal with the spiritual cause of the problems we encounter can really mess us up.¹

Perhaps you purchased this book because you are dealing with some “messed-up” stuff in your life. I’m here to assure you that you are not alone. There is a distinct connection between the experiences, circumstances, difficulties, and relationships in your life and the spiritual world.

In fact, Jesus warned us that we would be at war with this world if we chose to follow Him.

If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? “A slave is not greater than the master.” Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me.

John 15:18–21 NLT

The world will hate you. You can expect persecution, and both the people and the situations in your life can be used by the forces of evil to distract, discourage, and defeat you. Because the family was ordained by God as the single most important building block for human society, and the family of God (the church) takes its structure and form from the structure and form of the family unit, the devil targets families for attack.

Because there is God the Father and Jesus the Son of God, when relationships between children and their fathers are not what they

are designed to be, the world cannot understand the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. When we are “born again,” we are born into the family of God, where once again God is the Father and we are His sons and daughters. We are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15–17). When the relationships between children and parents are destroyed, the world cannot understand the privilege of being children of God.

Not only does Satan seek to confuse biblical truth, but if he can gain a foothold in your home, Satan can distract your attention from the work God has for you to do. He can discourage you and drain your emotional energy so that you lose the strength to persevere. And his main objective is to destroy your testimony. Satan messes with your family because he knows that your home gives him ready access to your heart.

Satan’s attack on the family takes three approaches. He targets the marriage for attack, he targets the relationship between parents and children for attack, and he targets the relationship among siblings for attack. On these three fronts, Satan works to tear apart and devour love and trust, devotion to God, and effective witness to the world.

You are not crazy. There is a definite relationship between what you are experiencing in your family and what is going on in the spiritual realm. My goal is to help you recognize those relationships so that you can put them in perspective, understand the bigger picture, and win the battles for your home. In these first few chapters, I’m going to start by explaining how the war began, then we are going to discuss spiritual authority and how that relates to the legal transaction that took place on the cross, and after that I will answer this question: “If the war’s been won, why am I fighting today?”

Some Messed-Up Stuff

I mentioned before that you might be dealing with some messed-up stuff in your home. I know it’s hard and you’re tired and you’re

starving for answers. It's my prayer that you find them as you read this book. I'm going to be sharing a lot of foundational truths as we start out, for these truths will uproot the lies that create the strongholds that leave you powerless and ineffective on the battlefield. I urge you to take a deep breath and resist the urge to rush through these chapters. I promise that I'll sprinkle in some practical application and laughter along the way. As far as I know, I am the only author of a spiritual warfare book that talks about skinny-dipping (see *Spiritual Warfare for Women*).

But I know there are times when you need something to do right now. If that is where you find yourself today, go to part 6 in this book and find the collection of chapters dealing with fourteen common issues families are facing. While my list is far from exhaustive, I've tried to include the major issues Satan uses to destroy families. If the issue you are facing is not included in this book, go to www.LeighannMcCoy.com/SpiritualWarfareTools to find several more critical issues. In each chapter, I briefly describe the issue, then provide you with four action steps you can take, five Scripture promises to include in your spiritual arsenal as you go to battle for your family, and a prayer to pray daily as you read this book. So if your heart is breaking and you need a strategy to embrace right away, take up the sword and go to battle while learning how to fight more effectively.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

At the end of each chapter, I will include questions to consider. Use these to apply the truths presented in that chapter to your specific battle. If you are reading this book in a small group, use these questions to spur discussion.

1. How are the struggles in your home distracting you from God?
2. What spiritual truths are you having a hard time believing?
3. Do you believe you are fighting spiritual forces? Why, or why not?

4. If you were to tweet a statement from this chapter, which of these would you tweet?
- Not only are your battles real, they can be won and you can experience the victory of God as you're winning them.
 - Both the people and the situations in your life can be used by the forces of evil to distract, discourage, and defeat you.
 - You are not crazy.