**GOD’S (AGENDA)**

### Begin with a prayer retreat early in the year.

To discover God's prayer agenda, I need to get away, just the Lord and me. Though I try to take several prayer retreats every year, the one at the beginning of the year seems most important for this purpose.

### At the retreat, spend concentrated time praying for each loved one.

As I pray for my family, (he Lord sensitizes me to their needs and the particular chal­lenges for them in the year ahead. I keep my journal (or my laptop computer) close at hand so 1 can take notes on any impres­sions He brings to mind.

### Ask God for a theme for each loved one.

Don't forget to wait for His answer! When I submit myself to God's Word, confess known sin, and ask for His protection and control in my life, I can wait confidently (or Him to answer. I don't hear an audible voice, hut the Lord does impress my mind with specific guidance for each member of my family. Sometimes I m surprised by the passage of Scripture He leads me to. Other times He directs me to promises I'm already claiming for them.

### Develop a prayer outline for each loved one.

Having prayed at length for family members, my heart and mind seem better prepared to develop individual prayer outlines for them. I include daily concerns, like work and school, along with eternal ones, like time in the Word and Christian character for­mation. The Lord helps bring the right emphasis for each one. I've discovered that praying for my family is a dynamic process. The outline serves as a guide for my intercession, one that the Lord often adjusts, changes, or expands, as I pray daily for each person.

### Summarize the "prayer agenda" for each family member in your journal.

After I get back from my retreat, I put everything together on a single page, front and back, for each loved one. The picture goes at the top, then the passage or promise God gave me. Then comes the outline for what I'll pray each day. Finally, I add blank lines to record additional requests and God's answers through the year.

### Let family members know how and when you're praying for them.

I usually write a letter to my sons while I'm still on my prayer retreat. 1 resist the temptation to make it sound like I've just returned from the moun­tain with stone tablets in hand! But I do want them to know that I've been meeting with God on their behalf, and about how I'll be praying for them in the year ahead.

These days there is a lot of teaching on the importance of a "prayer shield" for Christian leaders. It's true—pastors, missionaries, and other leaders need teams of intercessors to pray for them. But interceding for our families is also a high calling. Discovering the Lord's prayer agenda for my family has helped me pray for their deepest needs and ask for His highest pur­poses for their lives. I hope it will do the same in your family.