

I Will Pray

I Will Pray for Other Believers

March 12, 2023

HD
BC

Church people speak a certain language that is somewhat unique to the church culture. In church you hear phrase like . . .

The right hand of fellowship.

Bless the gift and the giver.

We're going to take up a love offering.

Come to the front.

Maybe the most used phrase of all is *I'm praying for you.*

Or the shortened form *praying for you.*

Or the really shortened form *praying*.

Or the ultra-shortened form in a text, the praying hands emoji.

There is nothing wrong with telling another believer that you are praying for them, regardless of the form. But do you actually pray? That's the question. Most people do, but I fear some do not. They simply use that phrase as a statement of encouragement, essentially meaning, I'm thinking of you, or I care about you. If you tell someone that you are praying or will pray for them and do not, you have **either been dishonest or neglectful**. Either way, you have failed to serve that person.

That you pray for other believers is important.

Do it.

How often you pray for other believers is important.

Do it often.

What you pray for other believers is important.

Do it strategically.

So, this morning I want us to consider intercessory prayer, praying for other people. Specifically, I want to focus on praying for other believers. In the next few weeks we focus on praying for children and for unbelievers. During these three messages on praying for others, I'm going to take a systematic approach. Rather than taking one text and teaching it, these will be more topical with a focus teaching and application.

I've organized today's focus on praying for other believers under four headings.

1. The definition of intercessory prayer

What is intercessory prayer? Simply put, it is praying on behalf of someone else. Speaking to God for someone else or about someone else. The focus of the content is not the person praying but someone else. So, we intercede when we pray for other people.

You can also think of a mediator. One who stands in the place of another, on behalf of the other person. Think of an **attorney** speaking on behalf of a client. Think of an **ambassador** speaking on behalf of a governmental leader. Think of **character witness** in a trial. Think of a **student speaking to a teacher** on behalf of another student.

It takes love, compassion, awareness, effort, and perseverance. It requires you to be unselfish. It means taking time to pray for someone else when you could be praying for yourself. **An anonymous author defined it as *standing in other people's shoes and representing them before God.***

Today we are focusing on specifically praying for other believers. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ, so they are part of our family. What happens to them impacts us. We are meant to experience life in a community of believers. That is primarily achieved through the church. So, **your primary focus in praying for other believers is your church.** That's just one reason it is important to be in church. You can't pray for those whom you do not know. You can't be prayed for by people who don't know you.

2. The call for intercessory prayer

Does the Bible lead us to pray for other believers? Absolutely! We are instructed to pray for others, and we have numerous examples.

Job prayed for his friends

Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah

Moses prayed for Aaron and Miriam, and for the entire nation

Samuel prayed for Israel

Jesus prayed for His disciples

The church prayed for Peter when he was in jail

Paul prayed for the churches he planted and wrote to

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us

Jesus is the ultimate, perpetual example. He intercedes for us now.

The Bible calls us to pray for others.

Eph. 6:18. *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.*

James 5:16. *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

1 Timothy 2:1. *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.*

3. The nature of intercessory prayer

Let's dig a little deeper into the nature of intercessory prayer as it is actually practiced. There are **two ways** that we need to pray for other believers. Not talking about the content, we'll get to that in a moment. Talking about two particular ways we intercede for others.

A. Sometimes you need to stand in the gap for them.

There are times when we must pray for other believers because they cannot or will not pray for themselves. Let me give you a few scenarios,

1) Physically unable to pray

Because of sickness, injury, or condition. In a coma.

2) Psychologically unable to pray

Deep depression or suffering from some psychological impairment.

3) Spiritually unable or unwilling to pray.

Drifted from the Lord or abandoned the faith. They cannot or will not pray for themselves. They desperately need someone to stand in the gap for them. Moses praying for his people.

4) Praying for the wrong things

There are times when believers are praying for the wrong things, and it would be helpful for more mature believers to pray for them.

In a sense, praying against their own prayers. **Lord don't listen to them. Don't do it.**

B. Sometimes you need to stand in the gap with them.

In this case, they are praying, but need help. This is what we experience most often in the church.

Health issues. Relationship issues. Crises situations. When we join with them in praying, **we encourage** them and help to **strengthen their faith**. We also **provide cover for them** if they stop praying for a time. By banding together, we provide a constant stream of prayer to the Father. Here are a few practical suggestions.

- 1) Be persistent. Don't just pray one time. Use reminder app.
- 2) Be specific. Pray as they have asked you to pray.
- 3) Be encouraging. Remind them when you pray for them.
- 4) Be Biblical. Think of Bible verses to share that might encourage.
- 5) Be confidential. Don't share unless you have permission.

I don't understand the mystery that exists between the sovereign actions of God and the prayers of His people. I just know that God calls us to pray for one another. I know he answers our prayers and acts on behalf of others, as we pray. So, I want to be one who prays.

4. The practice of intercessory prayer

Let's talk about content. Two primary ways we pray for other believers.

A. Situational needs and issues. (Shared or perceived)

Things we pray for a specific person, time, and situation. Usually, we are asked either by the person or some other interested party. What do you? Do you simply pray as they have asked? Might be helpful to remember some general principles to govern our praying.

Pray in the will of God (1 John 5:14-15)

Pray in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14)

Pray in faith (Heb. 11:6)

There is nothing outside the reach of prayer except that which is outside the will of God or the Word of God. Michael Catt

When someone has a specific need, consider what the Bible says about that particular situation and pray accordingly. You can't always just pray in the exact way that a person asks you to pray.

If you ask me to pray that you will win the lottery, I'm not going to do so. If you pray that God will bless your sinful sexual relationship, I'm not going to do so. If you ask me to pray for God to bless something that is drawing you away from the church and your relationship with Jesus, I'm not going to do so. Neither should you for others.

Make sure, as you pray about specific needs that you pray in light of God's word, and God's will, not in opposition to it.

B. Ongoing spiritual growth and effectiveness.

Things we pray for all believers on a regular basis. Paul offers some great examples in his letters. We also have content from Jesus' prayer for us and from the prayers of others. Here is a simple, but non-comprehensive list. These are things you can pray confidently for other believers and know you are praying in the will of God.

- 1) Growing love for Jesus
- 2) Sensitivity and surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading
- 3) Protection from the attacks of the enemy on mind, body, and soul.
- 4) Wisdom and discernment in an ever-compromising world.
- 5) Boldness to share Jesus, even in the face of persecution

Will you determine right now to answer the call of God to be an intercessor? To pray for other believers? When you do, you are joining with them in their ministries, their challenges, and their lives.

Use the hands emoji. Text that you are praying for them. But make sure you actually pray. Let me offer a suggestion. Rather than saying "praying" either indicate that you have just prayed, are about to pray, or when you plan to pray in the future.