



Pray For One Another

Think about a time when someone has said to you, “I have been praying for you.” Is there anything quite like that feeling? So intentional. So full of empathy. The promise TO pray for someone is kind, but it’s easy to say and not follow through. I’ve done it. You’ve done it. But there’s something to the “I have been” that is unparalleled. It is a love that you can give absolutely anyone, whether or not they ever even know it happened.

I remember a time when a miracle finally came through for me after so many years of praying in secret. It was a struggle I mainly kept to myself, especially after a lot of time had passed. But when blessing fell, and I shared the news, SO MANY people came to me and said that they had been praying for me the whole time. Daily, for years and years, these beautiful ones whom I had no idea even had me in their thoughts had my name over and over in their prayer journals.

We need not look much further than the Apostle Paul for a demonstration of this kind of love. Paul expresses in every epistle how he prays for his beloved churches – he prays in gratitude (Colossians 1:3, Ephesians 1:6), he prays on their behalf (2 Corinthians 13:7-9, 2 Thessalonians 1:11), and he even asks for prayer (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Prayer marks his ministry so prominently!

As for instruction, James tells us to confess our sins and pray for one another, because prayer has great power (5:16). Paul tells us through his letter to the church in Ephesus to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people” (Ephesians 6:8). And Jesus, our intercessor who prayed for us (you and me) even during His earthly ministry, says, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Prayer is powerful. Prayer is attentive. Prayer is for everyone.

So, this is a lot of *why* we pray for each other, but what about the *how*?

Some things we pray for when we happen to think of it. Maybe even most things. If the Lord places them on our hearts and minds, we pray in the moment for them. I don’t know if I’m right, but I feel like this is the “remembering you in my prayers” that Paul says so often. There’s a lot of good that can come of this, and it allows the Lord to guide our prayers for each other.

Some other things, or particular people, we make sure we remember to pray for. These are the names and needs we write down in our prayer journals or on Post-its to remind ourselves as often as we see them. There is a commitment to this kind of prayer. It is in these prayers we carry some of the burden for people, especially if they know we are committed to praying for a particular request.

There is another kind of prayer that takes a great deal of effort, and that is intercession. To intercede for someone is not just to present their requests to God alongside them, but it is to step into their shoes in the same way we would empathize with another person and pray for them in the same way you would pray for yourself. To intercede for another, we have to mentally and emotionally get inside of their experience, and in doing so we lift up more than just their spoken requests. You consider their hearts, and their lives, and their realities with a level of intimacy that lifts the whole person up to the Lord.

This is how Paul prayed for his beloved churches. This is how Jesus prayed/prays for us.

For those of us who have been on the receiving end of this, there is no feeling like it. I will never be capable of forgetting that I am loved because a handful of people had me in their hearts when they came to their Father in prayer. That is the very core of what it is to love like Christ loves.

Getting Started

1. Tell a story of when you were prayed for. How did this impact you (your relationship with the person, your faith, how it lightened your load, etc.)?

2. In general, what is prayer like for you? When do you pray? Alone or with someone? Out loud or silently? For only big things or for everything?

Digging Deeper

1. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What are we supposed to pray about? What is the intended result?

2. Read Luke 11:1-4. What parts of Jesus' prayer stand out to you? What is the overall tone?

3. Read Romans 8:26-27. Restate it in your own words. How does this truth land for you? How does it impact how you think about your relationship with prayer?

4. Read John 17. In what specific ways does this model how to pray? Who is He praying for, specifically, in verses 20-21? What is the significance of this truth?

