



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory  
Prayer And Fasting*

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## PRAYING FOR THE GRIEVING

It is heartbreaking. It is tragic. It severs relationships. It completely changes the lives of those who face it. It is called death. Death is inevitable for every person. People have an appointment with death, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27)." This is an appointment that people will keep. Just as people have a time to be born, people also have a time when they will die, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). People must face the reality of death.

Nothing can protect a person from the inevitability of death. Fame, position, success, riches, the love of family and friends cannot prevent an individual from facing death. The greatest of all engineering miracles--the human body--will close down completely. Medical science continues to explore death, to redefine it, and to try and delay its arrival. Contemporary western society does everything it can to distance itself from its reality. Yet, people continue to die on a daily basis. The greatest and least of all people will be humbled in death.

Death is so devastating because our lives are so busy that we do not think of and consider its reality. We are consumed with "now". This world seems so real and weighty. Death seems distant in space and time and unreal in our experience. It suddenly and harshly invades our lives without any

warning, bringing life on earth to a conclusion and ushering us into our eternal destiny.

Each person will face death. This is an absolute. Yet, a person will also have to deal with the deaths of those around himself or herself. One must not only face the inevitability of his or her death, but also the death of those whom he or she loves. Just as a person must cope with his or her death, he or she must also cope with the pain and grief of seeing loved ones pass from this life into eternity.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will deal with praying for those who grieve. Prayer is essential in helping those who grieve. The power, mercy, grace, and love of God are released into this person's life by prayer. These attributes and blessings of God are desperately needed by those who are grieving. The best way to enable a person to cope with grief and pain is to intercede for him or her. Every opportunity to minister to a grieving person should be seized and utilized. However, this cannot substitute for Spirit-guided and empowered intercession.

The primary focus of this issue will be praying for those who grieve over the death of a loved one. Yet, the principles and prayer requests presented in this issue can be applied to those who grieve for other reasons. Grief is not limited to or triggered solely by death. People grieve over a variety of losses--loss of job, loss of a relationship, dreams that never materialize, and so on. You can

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adapt the principles and prayer requests to the particular needs of the person and his or her situation.

The prayer requests in this issue are presented only as a guide to help you pray for those who grieve. You can use the suggested prayer requests or develop your own from them. As always, you need to pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom and insight in how to pray for the person who is grieving. Be sensitive to His leadership as you pray for those who grieve. He can grant you insights on how to pray about the specific needs that the person has. Seek His leadership as you intercede for this person and his or her needs.

## Unhealthy Ways of Dealing with Grief

In order to overcome grief, a person cannot deny the reality of the loss nor the corresponding pain that one feels due to the loss. Grief is normal and inevitable in the face of a loss. It is not a matter of **if** a person is going to grieve; it is a matter of **how** a person will handle the grief.

Grief can be so painful and overwhelming that a person panics. But, ultimately, one has to face the pain in order to break through to a deep peace. When a person grieves, he or she needs to work through his or her feelings. A person should never ignore, rush, or delay these feelings.

The danger of failing to work through grief is that a person can get bogged down in the grief. At worst, the person can be overcome by it. When it is not dealt with or is turned inward, it is likely to surface in some form or another. Often it surfaces in a harmful form such as ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks, nervousness, inability to function in life, or emotional disorders.

There are some unhealthy ways to deal with grief. Rather than facing the grief and working through the pain, some attempt to use other means of coping with the pain and the loss. A grieving person may exhibit one or all of these characteristics for a short period of time. Yet, it becomes dangerous when the person continues to use these means to cope with the pain and the loss.

Some of the unhealthy ways of dealing with grief are:

(1) *Avoidance*: Some attempt to deal with grief by filling their lives with activity. The person feels that if they can get busy enough, they will forget the pain and it will go away. This is an attempt to bury the pain with busyness. When a person experiences a loss and has to endure the grief that this brings, he or she cannot stop living. The grieving person must continue to live and function. However, the grieving person must deal with the pain and grief. A person cannot be busy twenty-four hours a day. The pain and loss will surface at some time in some way in the person's life. Busyness cannot be a substitute for honestly admitting and dealing with the pain that comes after a loss.

(2) *Withdrawal*: Some people cope with grief by withdrawing into a world of sorrow and self-pity. The person isolates himself or herself from the world. The only contact that this person has with other people is shallow and limited. The person copes with the pain by refusing to face it and by retreating into his or her own reality. This person no longer cares about anything but withdrawing into his or her prison of misery and sorrow.

(3) *Despair*: Some cope with grief by being overwhelmed by it. The person is filled with hopelessness and depression. Those who grieve will experience these things in varying degrees. But, for some, the despair continues. It clings to the person. It drains the life out of the person. The grieving person, overwhelmed by despair, finds it difficult to make it from day-to-day.

(4) *Doubt in God*: When a person endures a loss, it is common for that person to question God. Yet, some endure a crisis of faith. This person begins to doubt the wisdom and the goodness of God. There are questions concerning God's sovereign control of the world. This person often feels that God is unkind and cruel to allow him or her to suffer like this. The grief process invariably throws the question in your face, "Why, God, did you let this happen to me?" The grieving person can become extremely angry at God, feel deserted by Him, or even wonder if He is there. The person may choose not to pray, attend church, or have a devotional time. This reaction is common and for

many it will eventually pass. By clinging to God in faith, this dark night of the soul will pass. Yet, for some, this experience continues. Rather than seeking God and His Word, the grief and the pain causes the person to withdraw from God and to doubt His character.

## The Myths About Grief

When praying for and ministering to a grieving person, there are some myths that need to be exposed. A lot of myths have been handed down from generation to generation about grief and loss. In order to help you better minister to and pray for those who grieve, you need to understand these myths. By accepting these myths, it can lessen our ministry to and intercession for those who grieve. The following are some erroneous beliefs about grief:

(1) *Grieving extends over a set period of time, moves through definable stages, and should decrease after three months and be completed after the first year.* People grieve differently. You cannot put time limits and definable stages on how people grieve. The key issue is for the grieving person to work through the pain and to accept the death of the loved one.

(2) *The sudden death of a person is far worse than a death as a result of a long-term illness. Being able to anticipate the grief makes the grieving process easier.* This is simply not true. Regardless of how the death takes place, the grieving process will be painful and difficult. It is simply a matter of which issues and questions that one has to consider.

(3) *The loss of a child is far worse than other losses.* It is tragic when a child dies. Yet, the pain and grief that people experience is not determined by the age or condition of the person who dies.

(4) *A grieving person should keep himself or herself busy; too much time alone is not good for him or her.* A grieving person needs time alone--time to remember, to reflect, to pray, to worship. Being alone with God is an essential part of the grieving process. A person cannot avoid the

loss and pain forever. It will surface and needs to be faced.

(5) *Don't focus on the fact that you're loved one is dead; don't talk about the loss or tell the story of the death.* A person needs to talk about these things in order to deal with the grief. A person should not become obsessed with this, but, it is healthy to talk about these things openly and honestly with others.

(6) *A person will never get over the loss of a loved one and he or she will always feel the pain.* Through the power and love of Jesus Christ, an individual can overcome grief and loss. No matter how overwhelmed a person feels, he or she can handle grief (**Philippians 4:13**). God is so powerful and wise that He can take our greatest tragedies and bring good out of them (**Romans 8:28**).

(7) *A grieving person must look and act happy even if he or she is feeling awful.* A person should not fake being happy in the midst of grief. This only makes the grieving process more difficult.

(8) *You will never be able to resolve old conflicts that remain with the one who has died since you can no longer talk with each other.* Even though you cannot talk to the other person, you can still resolve any sinful feelings or conflicts that you have had with the person. God is merciful and forgiving; He will help the grieving person do this.

## Prayer Requests For The Grieving

The following are prayer requests that you can use to intercede for those who grieve. There will be suggested prayer requests for both saved and lost people who grieve. There is a difference between the grieving of a person who knows Jesus Christ and a person who does not follow Him. The Word of God declares in **1 Thessalonians 4:13**, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." Paul distinguishes between the grief that a Christian feels

and that grief that a non-Christian experiences. The Christian experiences sorrow over the death of loved ones, Yet, it is very different from those who have no hope, those who do not know Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Savior of their lives. The person who does not know Jesus Christ in this way faces grief without the hope of the gospel, resurrection and eternal life in heaven. Because of this truth, our intercession for these two groups should focus on different issues.

### Praying For A Christian Who Grieves

(1) Pray that the Holy Spirit would grant this person strength and determination (**John 14:26; John 16:7**). The Lord Jesus Christ described the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" or the "Helper". It is the Holy Spirit who gives strength and determination to the believer to face the trials of his or her life. Plead that the Holy Spirit will release His power into the life of this person so that he or she will have the strength and determination to deal with the loss and the grief attached to it.

(2) Ask that God would grant this person comfort in the midst of his or her grief (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**). Our heavenly Father is a God of mercy and comfort. He is able to grant this mercy and comfort into the lives of those who grieve. He knows exactly how to comfort each of His children. Plead with the Father to provide the comfort that the grieving person needs.

(3) Plead that this person will cast all his or her burdens on the Lord (**1 Peter 5:7**). Pray that this person will bring his or her fears, worries, sorrows, and frustrations to the Lord. Ask that this person will develop a greater dependence on the Lord. This is especially true if the person's spouse has died.

(4) Pray that this person will rejoice in the Lord (**Philippians 4:4**). A person who is grieving may not feel as if there is anything about which to rejoice. Yet, he or she can rejoice about who God is, what God can do, what God has done, what God will do, and who he or she is in the Lord Jesus

Christ. Ask that this person will have joy in the midst of the grieving process because he or she is in a relationship to Jesus Christ.

(5) Ask that the person will not be overcome by anxiety (**Matthew 6:25-31**). Worry over the details of life seem to heighten after a loss. Pray that this person will not give into worry but will be determined to face life with faith.

(6) Plead that this person will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). When a person experiences a loss, he or she will not seek God and serve Him like he or she did before the loss. Pray that this person will keep his or her relationship to Jesus Christ as the top priority. Plead that serving Christ would be uppermost in his or her mind.

(7) Ask that the loneliness that the person feels would become the path to a deeper relationship to God (**Psalms 42:1-2**). Loneliness does not have to be a negative. It can be positive if a person uses this loneliness to have more time to spend with God. Pray that the loneliness will drive the person to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(8) Pray that this person will acknowledge and receive Christ's power and love to face the grief and to cope with the pain (**Philippians 4:13**). It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ that the believer can face and overcome grief and pain due to a loss. He can give the person the power and love to cope. Pray that the person will be enveloped in the love and power of Jesus Christ.

(9) Plead that this person will develop a deeper prayer life and by doing this will experience the peace of God (**Philippians 4:6-7**). The peace of God is connected to a fervent prayer life. Pray that the person will mature in prayer and will see the need for prayer more than ever before in his or her life. As the person submits more of his or her concerns to the Lord, he or she will experience more of God's peace. God's peace comes when a person releases the burden to the Lord through prayer.

(10) Call on God to surround this person with merciful and faithful friends who will support, pray for, and minister to this person (**Proverbs 17:17**). This is especially needed after the funeral. This is when the grieving process begins and the grieving person will need faithful friends who will be there for him or her.

(11) Pray that this person will receive hope and strength from the truth that Christ will return and unite him or her with loved ones who died in the Lord (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**). This is the glorious hope of Christ's return. Not only will we be with the Lord Jesus Christ, we will also be with all the believers whom we loved and knew on this earth. Death is not the end for the Christian; it is simply one more step in God's plan for him or her. Death separates believers only for a period of time.

(12) Ask that this person will be comforted and given hope by the truth that Christ has conquered death and that he or she will share in this (**1 Corinthians 15:51-56**). Jesus Christ has removed the sting of death. The Christian can stand against death through the realization that Christ has conquered it and that he or she shares in this victory.

(13) Pray that this person will know that Jesus Christ sees and understands his or her pain (**John 11:35**). Grieving people often feel as if no one can understand how they are feeling. Yet, there is one who understands. Jesus Christ understands the pain and the grief of seeing a loved one die. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. The amazing thing about this is that Jesus had the power to raise him from the dead. Yet, He still wept. He knows what it is to suffer. Jesus Christ has walked through the valley of suffering deeper than any person who has ever walked the face of this earth. He can see and understand the depth of pain and grief that a person feels. Pray that this person will turn to Christ and will lean on Him during the grieving process.

(14) Plead that God will strengthen and deepen this person's faith in the face of the uncertainty that this death has brought (**Hebrews 11:1, 6**). Dreams and plans for the future are smashed. One's life is

significantly altered due to death. One often wonders if anything remains in this world on which one can rely. Pray that this person will trust in God for the future and will look to His guidance on a daily basis.

(15) Pray that this person will trust Christ and be submissive to Him in all matters (**Romans 14:9**). Death shows you that you are not in control of life. Pray that this person will have a greater submission to Jesus Christ who does control all things.

(16) Pray that this person will look to and trust in God as his or her Provider (**Psalms 25:3; James 1:17**). This is especially true when a spouse dies. When a spouse dies, it can take away a significant amount of income from a family. This can cause the grieving person to wonder how he or she will make it financially. Plead that he or she will look to God as his or her Provider. Call on Him to cause them to rest in His provision.

(17) Ask God to give this person wisdom to cope with the grief and the financial and legal decisions that he or she has to face (**James 1:5**). There are many practical matters to deal with when someone dies. The grieving person will have to make crucial decisions. He or she is in need of wisdom to make the right decisions. This person also needs wisdom to cope with the grief. Call on God to grant him or her the wisdom that he or she needs.

(18) Pray that this person will depend on God and not give in to fear and frustration (**Isaiah 40:31**). Ask God to create in this person a spirit of dependence on Him. Pray that this person will turn to God in faith every time he or she feels fearful or frustrated.

(19) Plead that this person will not die until he or she is dead (**Psalms 30:5; 1 Corinthians 10:31**). After experiencing a loss, people simply exist. They are not living; they're simply surviving. Pray that this person will not give up on life until his or her life is over. Pray that he or she will use each day to the fullest and do all things to glorify God.

(20) Pray that this person will realize and experience the love of God as never before in his or her life (**John 3:16; Romans 5:5-6**). The love of God is deeper and stronger than the love of any human being. No matter how special and strong the love between two individuals, the love of God is more special and strong. Pray that this person will experience God's love more powerfully.

(21) Plead that this person will have a stronger belief in God's complete control of life (**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**). When a person experiences death, doubts about God's control of all things can appear. Pray that this person will know that God is in control of all things. Ask God to give him or her a greater confidence in God and His control of his or her circumstances. This is especially needed in light of the uncertainty that death brings into one's life.

(22) Ask God to help the person deal with any regrets that the grieving person may have (**Psalm 103:11-14**). Many times a grieving person will experience deep regret over things left unsaid and things left undone with the person who has died. These regrets can become a heavy burden to the grieving person. Plead that God will give this person the mercy and the grace to deal with any regrets that he or she may have.

(23) Plead with God to heal the broken heart of the grieving person (**Psalm 147:3**). Not only can God heal broken bodies, He can also heal broken hearts. God can mend the damaged emotions that death tears apart.

(24) Pray that God would give the person the grace and the strength to deal with the "firsts" (**2 Corinthians 12:9**). This is especially true for someone whose spouse dies. The grieving person will have to face many things without his or her loved one--first time at church, first time at family reunion, first Christmas, and the like. These "firsts" can be extremely stressful and difficult. Plead with God to give this person sufficient grace to handle these things.

(25) Plead that the person will have hope and will know that he or she can overcome the grief and pain (**Psalm 23:1, 4**). Completing the grieving process within a year is highly unlikely. The intensity of the grief may subside, the waves of grief and emotion will likely roll over the person less frequently, but the pain of losing a loved one will probably continue for some time. Yet, the person needs to know that God will bless, comfort, and strengthen him or her so that he or she will eventually feel better. In the midst of the grief and pain, this person needs hope from God that things will get better.

### Praying Psalm 23 For The Grieving Believer

The words of Psalm 23 are among the most familiar in the Bible. We memorize them as children; we read them throughout our lives. As we grow older, these words become a source of comfort and assurance when family members die. Frequently we think of those who are dying or who have died as the ones who pass through the valley of the shadow of death (**Psalm 23:4**). Actually, the psalmist had something else in mind. He was not thinking about people who were dying; he was thinking about people who were surviving. They were walking through the valley, surrounded by disease, death, and other obstacles. The phrase "valley of the shadow of death" could be translated "through the darkest valley".

Because of this, this is an excellent psalm to use when interceding for believers who grieve. This psalm reveals three things about the valley of death and grief. First, a person is going to *enter the valley*. Entering the valley is beyond our control. We do not generally choose to go there. Cancer strikes. The heart fails. The car is mangled in an accident. A loved one dies and you enter the valley of death and grief.

Not only do you enter the valley, you also have to *endure the valley*. The psalmist declares, "I walk through the valley". This describes the process of facing grief and suffering and overcoming these things. He goes on to state that

even though he goes through the valley, he will not give in to fear. He will not fear because he knows that his Shepherd is with him (**Psalm 23:1, 4**).

The psalm reveals that eventually you will *exit the valley* of death and grief. In the western United States, there are box canyons in the mountains. These canyons are like a room with only one door. You have to come out the same way that you came in.

The valley of death and grief is not like a box canyon. There is an exit on the other side! The psalmist declares, "I will walk **through** the valley". A person is not meant to stay in his or her grief and pain. The valley will not last forever. The Good Shepherd will lead the person out of this valley with His rod and His staff (**Psalm 23:4**).

The following is a prayer based on Psalm 23. You can use this prayer or develop your own from this psalm in order to pray for grieving believers. In order to use this prayer, place the name of the grieving person in the blank spaces and use the corresponding "he" or "she". You could also use this prayer as a starting point for deeper intercession for this person. God may give you more insights from this psalm in order to powerfully and effectively intercede for the grieving person.

Lord Jesus, You are \_\_\_\_\_'s Shepherd. You love him/her. You have laid down Your life for him/her. As his/her Shepherd, I ask You to exercise Your loving and powerful care in his/her life. I plead with You to meet \_\_\_\_\_'s every need--physical, spiritual, emotional, and financial. I ask You to guide his/her steps. In the midst of his/her grief, grant \_\_\_\_\_ the calm assurance that You are in control and that You are guiding him/her.

In the midst of \_\_\_\_\_'s pain, I pray that he/she will be obedient to You. Enable \_\_\_\_\_ to walk in the path of righteousness for Your name's sake. Cause \_\_\_\_\_ to be a shining witness for Jesus in the midst of his/her loss and pain. Enable \_\_\_\_\_ to reveal the hope of the gospel to a lost and dying world.

Lord Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_ is walking through the valley of death and grief. I ask that \_\_\_\_\_ will not be overwhelmed by fear, worry, and doubt. I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ will

know Your presence and peace in a special and abundant way. I plead with You to use Your rod and staff to guide \_\_\_\_\_ through this deep and dark valley.

I pray that You will abundantly provide for \_\_\_\_\_. In the midst of his/her grief and pain, I ask that You would cause Your blessings to overflow in \_\_\_\_\_'s life. Cause Your goodness and mercy to follow \_\_\_\_\_ all the days of his/her life. Give \_\_\_\_\_ the assurance the he/she will dwell with You in heaven forever in perfect peace and joy. Amen.

### Praying For Lost People Who Grieve

When a lost person experiences the death of someone close to him or her, it is a unique time of opportunity. Death has the capacity to fix one's mind on eternity and spiritual concerns. It forces a person to think on and wrestle with ultimate things. When an unbeliever loses a loved one to death, believers need to seize the opportunity to minister the love of Jesus Christ and offer strategic intercession for him or her. The following are some suggested prayer requests that you can use to intercede in this matter.

(1) Pray that this death will show him or her the vanity of clinging to this world (**1 John 2:15-17**). Death has the capacity to make one reconsider his or her priorities. Plead with God that this will happen in the life of this person. Many people will not come to Christ because of their love of this world and its lusts and possessions. Plead that God will reveal to him or her how foolish this is in light of death and eternity.

(2) Pray that the Holy Spirit would cause this person to think about his or her eternal destiny (**Hebrews 9:27**). Ask God to use this death to cause the person to think about the following question, "What will happen to me when I die?" Call on the Holy Spirit to impress that question on the unbelieving person who has experienced a loss.

(3) Plead with the Holy Spirit to deeply convict this person about the certainty of judgment (**Ecclesiastes 12:14; John 16:8**). According to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit convicts people of the certainty of judgment. Call on Him to convict this person about the fact that he or she will die and will face the judgment of God one day.

(4) Ask God to deepen the hopelessness that this person feels (**Ephesians 2:12**). The apostle Paul describes a person who does not know Jesus Christ as a person who is "without God and without hope" in this world. Regardless of outward appearance, those who do not know Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their lives do not have hope. Pray that the hopelessness that he or she feels through the loss of this loved one will deepen and grow stronger. Ask that the hopelessness will become so great that the person will look for an answer to that hopelessness. Call on God to draw the person to Jesus Christ.

(5) Pray that God would send believers into this person's life that will care and pray for and witness to this person (**Proverbs 17:17; 2 Corinthians 5:20**).

(6) Plead with God to speak to this person in a unique and powerful way at this time (**Acts 9:3-9**). A person is saved only by hearing and believing the gospel. Yet, we need to pray that God will use this unique time to fix the attention of this person on the condition of his or her soul, his or her eternal destiny, and the necessity of repenting and turning to Christ. Ask God to use this time to powerfully work in this person's life.

(7) Pray that this person will clearly understand that the only true hope and peace is found in Jesus Christ (**John 14:6**). At a time of grief and loss, an unbeliever will turn to things or people in order to find comfort and hope. Pray that they will find no hope and peace in these things but only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(8) Plead that the death of this loved one will crush the materialism of this person (**Luke 12:16-21**). Death has the capacity to make one think about what is really important in life. It can

enable a person to get their priorities straight. Pray that God will use the death of this loved one to do this in this person's life. Call on Him to cause this person to see what really matters--knowing and serving God.

(9) Ask God to reveal to this person the hope and certainty of heaven for those who turn to Jesus Christ (**Matthew 19:29; Philippians 3:14-15**). While praying for God to show this person the vanity and shortness of this life, pray that He will also show this person the certainty and the glory of heaven for those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

(10) Call on God to bring this person into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (**Matthew 11:28-30**). Plead with God that this person will make a genuine commitment of his or her life to Christ. Call on God to show this person the utter bankruptcy of his or her life and the need to surrender oneself and all that one is and has to Jesus Christ.

(11) Pray that God will impress on this person the shortness of life and the necessity of being prepared for eternity (**James 4:13-14**). People live at a rapid pace and hardly ever consider death and eternity. Plead with God to impress on this person the fact that life is short and that there will be a judgment. Pray that this person will see that life does not go on forever and that it can end at any time.

(12) Pray that this person will see that only Jesus Christ can heal his or her broken heart (**Psalms 147:3**). This person needs to realize that only Jesus Christ can enable him or her to deal with this loss. This person needs to realize that only Jesus Christ can deliver him or her from sin and give him or her the sure hope of heaven.

(13) Pray that this person will only find help and hope in Jesus Christ (**Mark 5:25-27**). The woman who pressed through the crowd to Jesus had tried all kinds of cures, but nothing ever worked. The only cure she found was in Jesus Christ. Pray that this will be true in this person's life also.



(14) Pray that this person will realize that life is not meaningless and that only by knowing and serving God can a person have true purpose and meaning in life (**Ecclesiastes 12:8, 13**). When death strikes, one can develop the feelings that life is meaningless. Life is meaningless when one does not worship and serve God. That is why man was created. When he does not do this, life will be meaningless. Pray that this person will understand this truth.

## Learning To Pray Through The Psalms - Psalm 3

Psalm 3 describes one of the darkest times in the life of David. David is on the run from his son, Absalom. Absalom had plotted to overthrow his father and take the throne of Israel for himself (**2 Samuel 15:1-12**). He deceived the nation and won the confidence of the people (**2 Samuel 15:13**). The nation then turned on David and he had to flee from Jerusalem for his very life (**2 Samuel 15:14-18**).

In the midst of this chaos, David prayed this psalm to God. What can we learn about prayer from this psalm?

(1) *The necessity of laying out your situation before the Lord.* This prayer begins with David's explanation of his situation to God. He declares that his enemies were increasing, growing stronger, and saying that God would not help him (**Psalm 3:1**). He openly and plainly declares his situation to the Lord. Our prayers should reflect the same openness and honesty. This is the way that you show God you need His help. It is also a way of declaring that God is the only One who can help you. It can be your way of saying, "Father, this is my situation and You are the only One who can help me." A final benefit of plainly declaring your situation to the Lord is that it prepares you to get God's perspective on the situation. When we pray, we often pray only for solution. By laying the situation out before God, it gives you the opportunity to see this situation as God sees it. This can help build your faith and strengthen your determination to overcome.

(2) *The need to express confidence in God.* Throughout this prayer, David expresses his confidence in God. In the midst of this fierce test of his faith, he declares that he will trust God. He states that God is his Shield, his Glory, and the One who encourages him (**Psalm 3:2**). He openly admits that it is the Lord who sustains him (**Psalm 3:5**). David even says that, because of his relationship to God, he will not be afraid even if thousands of people oppose him (**Psalm 3:6**). We need to cast our burdens on the Lord. Yet, at the same time, we need to declare God's ability to handle these.

(3) *Remind God of past deliverances.* In this prayer, David reminds God of how He had blessed him and delivered him in the past. He reminded God that He had heard and answered his prayers in the past (**Psalm 3:4**). He also reminded God of how He had delivered him in the past (**Psalm 3:7**). By reminding God of past blessings and deliverances, it will strengthen your pleas for these things in the present.

(4) *God is pleased with urgent cries for help.* In **Psalm 3:7**, David offers an urgent cry for help. God hears and honors the desperate and immediate cries of His people for help. God hears and honors your cries for help. This cry can be for yourself or others. Yet, God is blessed to honor this type of praying.

(5) *The power of prayer to build one's faith.* Prayer is a "faith-building" exercise. David begins this prayer with a desperate description of his situation. Yet, as he continues to pray, his faith gets stronger. He ends the psalm with rejoicing. He declares that God is the One who delivers His people. He then pleads with God to do this. Prayer can move you from doubting to trusting. Prayer can lift you from the ditch of desperation to the very throne room of God. As you talk with God, you begin to see things from His perspective. The more that you talk with Him, the stronger your faith will be. The weakness of our faith is often due to a failure to talk with God and listen to Him.

## Prayer Buster #5: QUITTING TOO SOON

In previous issues of *The Prayer Closet*, we have examined some common “prayer busters”. “Prayer busters” are attitudes and actions that hinder our prayers. These attitudes and actions keep us from receiving answers to prayer. The prayer busters that we have already looked at are: prayerlessness, unconfessed sin, lack of faith, and selfishness. Another basic prayer buster is quitting too soon.

Often God does not answer our prayers because we quit too soon. We simply stop praying about the concern or the need. We prayed for a period of time and just stopped. Is it possible that some of your prayer requests have not been answered because you stopped praying about them?

The Word of God teaches that the believer is to persevere in prayer. When it comes to prayer, you should not quit. Unless God has refused your request, He never tires of you asking Him. God never tires of your shameless persistence in prayer. I overheard an individual say in a prayer conference, “I don’t want to bother God with that again. I would be imposing on Him.” This is simply not true. When you come to God, you are not forcing yourself on Him. He has invited you to come (**Luke 11:9**). You are not imposing on God if you are offering sincere, persistent prayer.

Jesus Christ taught two parables about shameless persistence in prayer. Both parables are recorded by Luke. The first parable is in **Luke 11:5-8**. The neighbor was not about to wake his family, open the door and give this man any food. Yet, because this man was persistent, the neighbor got up and gave him food. This man received an answer because he was persistent.

In this parable, Jesus is contrasting the neighbor’s reluctance and selfishness with the openness and generosity of the heavenly Father. If a self-centered neighbor reluctantly rose at midnight to supply a need, how much more will God’s heart be moved by your persistent prayers to supply a need. If persistence was the key to an **unwilling**

**heart**, how much more effective will persistence be to the **willing heart** of your heavenly Father.

The other parable of Jesus concerning persistence in prayer is found in **Luke 18:1-5**. A widow appeared before an unjust judge in order to plead for justice. Day after day, he turned her away. The woman knew that her cause was right, so she persisted. She returned day after day, pleading for justice. Finally, the judge, ready to pull his hair out, granted her justice (**Luke 18:5**). Her persistence paid off.

Jesus’ point in this parable is: If an unholy and selfish man can be moved by persistence, how much more will a holy and loving Father be moved by the persistence of His children. If an unworthy, sinful, self-seeking judge will finally act because of one woman’s persistence, how much more willingly your loving, kind, and compassionate Father will act as a result of your prayers.

Both parables teach that God wants you to develop a shameless persistence when it comes to prayer. Lukewarmness in prayer is nauseating to God. A lack of persistence in prayer will cause you to come away empty-handed. You must keep on praying. Your potential for success is enormous. Don’t quit too soon.

In dealing with the prayer buster of quitting too soon, one question needs to be asked. The question is, “Is it always too soon to quit?” In other words, how do you know when you should stop praying for an answer?

The following are some biblical guidelines that might help you in determining how long you should pray about a matter:

- (1) **Pray until the impossible becomes improbable.** We can and should pray for the impossible. He is the God of the impossible. You should never limit God (**Matthew 19:26**). Yet, while God can do the impossible, he is not likely to do the improbable. He has the capability, but He is not likely to use it. An example of this is praying that a particular pastor will accept the call to your church. You believe that he is the man for your church. You plead with God that he will accept the call to your church. Yet, this man accepts a call to another church. Should you continue to pray that he

will accept the call to your church? At this point, the impossible has become the improbable. When this happens, it is time to refocus your prayers. This is a basic way to know when you have prayed long enough.

(2) **Pray until God gives you an answer.** Pray until you are sure that God has answered you. When He has move on in your prayer focus. You have prayed about that need long enough.

(3) **Pray until you know the answer is on the way.** Sometimes when you pray, God can give you an inward, quiet assurance that He is going to answer you in a certain way. When He gives you this assurance, it is not necessary to continue praying for that request. God's assurance is as good as His performance. Yet, you need to make sure it is God's assurance and not your own wishful thinking.

(4) **Stop praying when God says no.** You can also stop praying when God says no. How can you know when God is saying no? There are some basic keys in helping you determine if God is saying no.

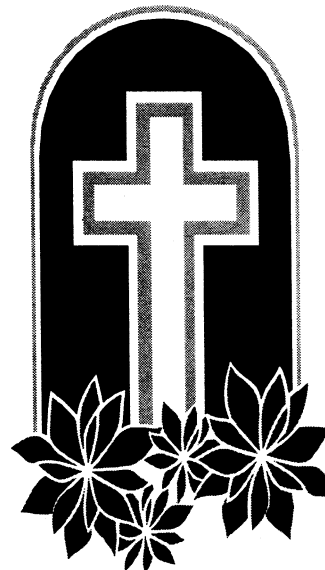
- *Your prayer request may contradict the Word of God.* God sometimes says no through His Word. Perhaps you have been praying for a particular request. As you read the Word, you discover that what you are asking for can never be the will of God. Through this, you have God's answer; the answer is no.
- *When your circumstances change, it would be a sign that God is saying no.* When circumstances change, this may be God's way of getting you to refocus your prayers. If you are praying about a situation and there is a change, but it is not what you have been praying, God may be wanting you to change your requests. He may be saying no to your request so that you can change your request and get in line with His will.
- *God is saying no when He restrains your prayers.* This happens when your prayer request doesn't seem right anymore. You lose interest in the request. The Spirit of God is taking away your desire to pray for it. God has spoken through His Spirit and the answer is no.

- It is time to stop praying for that request and focus on another.

## Thank You

As 1999 comes to a close, we at The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc. are thankful to God for how He has blessed this ministry. God has been faithful throughout this year. He has abundantly provided. The newsletter is going across the United States and into 50 foreign countries. He has granted us a house that we are using as office space. He has blessed us with a computer system. He has enabled us to produce products and resources to help believers grow in praying, fasting, and spiritual warfare. These materials are being circulated throughout the world. The number of conferences and seminars that Dr. Meador conducts has doubled in this year. All credit and glory for these things must go to God.

We also want to thank you, our readers. We thank you for your interest in this ministry, its newsletter, and our products. We thank you for all of your prayers and your financial support. God uses you to enable us to carry out this ministry. As this ministry grows and expands, we need your continued prayer support and financial gifts. We ask you to pray for this ministry and prayerfully consider giving financial gifts to support this ministry. This ministry exists for the glory of God and for you. We pray that you will have a blessed Christmas and New Year! God bless you!



*Peace on  
Earth*

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a network of intercessors who pray for believers who have spouses that are not Christians. This network of intercessors pray daily for believers who are in this situation. These intercessors have been trained and are committed to praying for believers who find themselves in this type of marriage. If you would like to be added to this prayer list or if you know of someone who is in this situation and would like to place them on this prayer list, please contact Dr. Kevin Meador. Please provide the following information:

Name of the family members  
Church affiliation  
Any special requests

Any information that is submitted will be kept in strict confidence and the privacy of the individuals will be protected. Name codes will be given to each name submitted. The person sending in the name and myself will be the only ones who know the real name of the person being submitted.



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