



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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PRAYING FOR BELIEVERS

In all of our praying, the most neglected group is often the believers that we know and serve with in the body of Christ. We rarely pray for the spiritual lives and needs of other believers. Our prayer times are often overloaded with a variety of needs. These variety of needs do require our consideration and intercession. However, we often forget to prayer for the body of believers with whom we belong and serve.

At the same time, when we have times or corporate prayer, these times of prayer focus on everything but interceding for each other. When believers join together to pray, it is a good thing for them to intercede for a variety of needs. This is one of the responsibilities of the church (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Yet, we should never forget the necessity of praying for one another.

The early church in the books of Acts presents a model for the churches of succeeding generations to follow. The Bible states in Acts 2:42 that these believers "continued steadfastly in prayer." These believers joined together to pray for each other (Acts 2:47). When they had a need, the believers would unite in prayer concerning the need (Acts 4:23-31, 12:5, 13:1-3). Their example of believers praying for one another provides a model for every church to follow.

This article will focus on believers praying for other believers. A believer needs to intercede for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ. This intercession can be done in either individual or corporate prayer. Believers need to pray for one another. In order to challenge you and motivate you

to do this, I want to show you the benefits of believers praying for other believers. As you see the benefits of doing this, the desire to intercede for other believers should burn in your heart. Following this, there will be suggested prayer requests that you can use in interceding for other believers. This will hopefully give you insight in how to intercede for your brothers and sisters in Christ. You can also use these prayer request to pray for your own spiritual life.

The prayer requests that will be suggested focus on the spiritual lives of believers. When we do pray for other believers, it is often an "organ" recital. We pray for the hearts, kidneys, lungs, and the various organs of other believers. What I mean by this is that we often focus on the physical, emotional, and financial needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is essential that we do pray concerning these types of needs. Intercession concerning these needs should certainly be a part of our prayers for other believers. However, we often do this at the expense of forgetting to pray about the spiritual lives of other believers.

We should not forget to pray concerning the spiritual lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This should be our main priority in praying for other believers. The reason for this is that too often our felt needs are not our deepest needs. To pray only concerning the physical, emotional, or financial needs could mean failing to pray for another believer's truest needs. Also, physical, emotional, and financial needs have spiritual ramifications. God may be testing the believer's

faith through this need. God could be chastising the believer through these needs. Through these needs, God is working to accomplish His purpose. While never ignoring these needs, our praying should focus on God's work in the person's life. The suggested prayer requests will enable you to focus on the spiritual lives of other believers and allow you the opportunity to be an instrument of God in ministering to these believers.

The Benefits of Praying For Other Believers

The first benefit of praying for other believers is that it is a sign that you are a genuine Christian. The book of 1 John reveals numerous signs that indicate if a person is a true Christian or not. One of these signs is love for other believers (1 John 3:11-15). It is not the only sign that a person is a true believer, but, it is one of the sure indicators that one has been born-again. The Bible explicitly states that believers will love other believers. This is a characteristic of the new birth.

The love of a Christian is not merely the absence of hostility. It is more than simply not hating a person who professes Jesus Christ. But, it is seeking the highest good of other believers. It is seeking to minister to other believers. Christian love is more than a feeling or a fondness. It is a commitment to minister to and support your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

How can you seek the highest good for other believers? How can you most effectively minister to your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ? It is by praying for them. By praying for other believers, you are showing your love for them. You are revealing your compassion and concern for them. You are acting on your commitment to love them. This is a sign that you are born-again. It is one of the proofs on which your assurance of salvation can be built.

Another benefit of praying for other believers is that it is one of the ways you can fulfill the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39). Jesus boldly states that God's great demand is that, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." It is your responsibility to love your neighbor. How much more then should you love those who have been born-again and are your brothers and sisters in the family of God? We are responsible to love those who are not in a personal relationship with God. However, loving your brothers and sisters in Christ is a part of the second great commandment. By striving to love other believers, you are seeking to live in obedience to the second great commandment.

Love is more than a sentimental feeling (1 Corinthians 13). It is a choice that moves you to act. Loving your brothers and sisters in Christ moves you to minister to them. The best way to minister to and care for them is to pray for them. This does not and should not exclude acts of mercy and service for them. ~~Prayer should be the~~ **foundation of your ministry to other believers.** Praying for them is one of the ways that you conform your life to God's demands.

A third benefit of praying for other believers is that it creates an atmosphere of burden-bearing (Galatians 6:1). The New Testament teaches that believers are to bear the burdens of other believers. It is our responsibility to help our brothers and sisters in Christ shoulder the struggles that they face. A crucial way to do this is by praying for one another. You may not always know what to say to your brothers and sisters in Christ when they are weighed down under heavy burdens. Yet, you can talk to God for them. You can carry their burdens to God and call on Him for the provision of their needs. As believers continue this practice, it creates an atmosphere of burden-bearing.

A major part of our Christian fellowship is enabling our brothers and sisters in the faith face and overcome the temptations and trials that they encounter (James 1:2). Prayer is crucial in this task. Prayer channels the love, grace, and power of God into a struggling believer's life. We need t

become disciplined in the practice of praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ. As believers grow in this discipline, they will begin experiencing a compassion for each other and a desire to shoulder the burdens of one another.

Praying for believers fosters unity in the church. Prayer will strengthen and protect the unity among believers. As believers intercede for one another, it deepens the bond of love and compassion that they have for each other. It can also melt away the anger and bitterness that believers might feel toward one another. It is difficult, if not impossible, to cling to bitterness and unforgiveness toward another believer while at the same time truly interceding for that believer. As you intercede for other believers, your heart will be flooded with love and compassion for them. **Laboring in prayer for a person will always increase the love that you have for that person.** God will increase your love for other believers and will deepen your commitment to them as you intercede for them before the throne of grace (**Hebrews 4:16**).

Praying for believers provides the benefit of maturing the believers. By praying for the spiritual growth of believers, they will begin grow spiritually and experience maturity in the faith. It is God's will for believers to grow spiritually and to mature in their faith. When you pray for believers to grow and mature spiritually, you are praying according to the will of God. When you pray according to the will of God, He will answer your prayers. Your prayers are exactly in line with what God desires and demands. You can expect to see God powerfully work in the lives of the believers for whom you intercede. Over a period of time, God will change them and cause them to grow and mature spiritually through your intercession. This, in turn, will strengthen and mature the body. This will enable the body of believers to do the will of God and accomplish God's purpose for that church.

Praying for believers is an essential element in experiencing revival. E.M. Bounds wrote, "Failure to pray has been the baneful, inevitable cause of backsliding and estrangement from God." When believers are not praying for one another and

with one another, the inevitable result will be backsliding. When believers pray for believers, it will bring about a change in their spiritual lives. It will bring about a renewal of their relationship to God. It will bring a greater awareness of sin and the need for repentance. It will create a hunger for the Word. What is revival? It is a fresh awareness of who God is and what He commands of the believer. It is acknowledging and dealing with sin. It is the Holy Spirit stirring the believer to hunger for the Word of God and be obedient to it. Prayer is the instrument that God uses to bring these changes about in the lives of believers. By praying for the spiritual lives of believers, it paves the way for the experience of true revival by those believers. Through prayer, believers can experience a genuine renewal of their relationship to God and of their obedience to Him.

Believers experience encouragement when their brothers and sisters in Christ pray for them. The Bible teaches that believers are to encourage one another and to provoke each other to faithfulness and good works (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). It is the responsibility of believers to encourage their fellow believers to stay faithful to Christ and to abound in love and good works. God has not called any believer to be a "Lone Ranger" in the body of Christ. Believers need the encouragement of other believers. Believers are like porcupines on a cold night. **We need each other even though we needle each other.**

When God called you into salvation in Jesus Christ, He also called you into fellowship with other believers. You cannot separate these two parts of the Christian life. They are joined together. Being called into the body of Christ brings the privilege of fellowship. However, it also brings the responsibility of encouraging other believers. It is our precious responsibility to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews reveals why believers need to encourage one another. He declares that we are in need of endurance (**Hebrews 10:36**). The pressure of daily life, the busyness and the demands of schedules, and the battle with Satan, the world,

and the flesh make believers weary. It seems that it would be easy to slack off or quit. Every believer needs encouragement so that he or she can stay faithful to Jesus Christ regardless of what his or her circumstances are. In order to be faithful to Christ and to live a life worthy of Him, the believer needs the encouragement of other believers.

What is the greatest way that you can encourage other believers? It is by praying for them. This is not to say that you should not take other steps to encourage your brothers and sisters in the faith. There is incredible power in acts of encouragement that you can do toward other believers. Throughout my Christian life, God has used a variety of kind acts to encourage me--phone calls, letters, handshakes, hugs, the preparation of a meal. Acts of encouragement like this have been powerfully used of God in my life and I am sure in your life also.

Yet, nothing will encourage a believer like prayer will. There is no other action that you can take that will enable a believer to stay faithful to Christ like prayer will. This is because you are focusing God's power, grace, and mercy on this person. Your prayers are the channel through which God's power, grace, and mercy flow into the believer's life, giving him or her the strength and endurance that he or she desperately needs.

Praying for believers is a means of delivering them from their sins (1 John 5:16). Each believer has particular sins or sinful habits that he or she struggles with on a continual basis. By praying for a believer's sanctification and holiness, it will provide the motivation and power that the believer needs to confront the sin(s) and to root the sin(s) out of his or her life. Through prayer, you can help other believers deal with the sins that plague them.

Through prayer, you can also deliver a believer from the judgment of God. This is illustrated in the life of Abraham (**Genesis 18:16-33**). Lot was a true believer (**2 Peter 2:8**). Yet, this true believer was entangled in a web of worldliness and compromise. This true believer had backslidden and was facing the judgment of God. It was only through the prayers of Abraham that Lot

was delivered from the judgment of God. Abraham's intercession stood between Lot and God's judgment. You may be the only person who is praying for a straying believer (**James 5:19-20**). Your intercession can be used of God to deliver this believer from His judgment and from backsliding.

Praying for believers empowers the church. The Word of God declares in **Ephesians 4:30**, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed to the day of redemption." Unconfessed sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Yet, it is important to notice the context of this passage. Paul has been dealing with how believers are to treat believers. It is interesting to notice the sins that he lists that grieve the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:31**). The sins that Paul lists are those that are committed in relationships. When these sins are present among believers, the Holy Spirit is grieved. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, He will not work in a powerful and life-transforming way among those believers. He will not release His almighty power among a people that tolerate the sins that grieve Him. It is only when believers are in a right relationship -- tenderhearted, kind, and forgiving -- that they can expect the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

When believers pray for one another, it can enable them to overcome the sins that Paul lists in **Ephesians 4:31**. As they pray for one another, God will produce the qualities that Paul describes in **Ephesians 4:32**. Because of this, the Holy Spirit will be pleased rather than grieved. He will release His power and transform lives. This empowering can be traced back to believers praying for one another. It is an important step to receiving the power of God.

A final benefit of praying for believers is that assurance that you will always have someone praying for you (1 Thessalonians 5:17). If we do not pray for each other, who will pray for us? The Lord Jesus Christ declares that true believers will have tribulation in the world (**John 16:33**). If you are a Christian, you cannot find friendship and fellowship in the world (**James 4:4**). Believers must pray for one another; no one else will.

One of my favorite scenes in the life of Jesus is found in **John 6**. Jesus has preached a powerful and confrontational message to the crowd that has been following Him. The crowd begins to leave because they are offended by Him and His message. Jesus turns to His disciples and says, "Do you also want to go away? (**John 6:67**)" Peter, speaking for the disciples, declares, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (**John 6:68**)." In other words, Peter says, "Where else can we go? You are our only hope!"

This illustrates my point. Where can the believer turn to other than to Christ and His body, the church? Where else can the believer find strength, comfort, and encouragement for his or her walk with God and witness in the world? The believer certainly cannot turn to the world for these things. A believer cannot expect anyone but other believers to pray for him or her. Believers must intercede for believers; we are all that we have.

Practical Suggestions For Praying For Believers

Praying for other believers may seem to be an overwhelming task for you. It might seem impossible for you to pray for other believers since you are associated with so many or know so many. This section is intended to help you think about some ways to manage this task. The following are some suggestions that you might want to consider in developing a system of praying for believers. It is my hope and prayer that these suggestions will give you some insight to help you develop your own system of intercession for believers. Don't be overwhelmed by the task! Ask God to give you the insight and wisdom to develop a method of praying for believers that will fit your prayer life. Then, pray!

(1) Pray for the members of your Sunday School class or small group. This would be a good

beginning in praying for believers. Pray for each member on a daily basis or at least on a regular basis. You might focus on different requests each day for all the members of your class or group.

(2) Pray for entire body of believers that you belong to on a regular basis. When I served in churches, I prayed through the entire membership on a regular basis. In the smaller churches, I would pray for all the members on a daily basis or at least every two or three days. In the larger churches that I served, I would pray for the entire membership every week or two. In this way, I would attempt to cover every member with prayer. You might want to consider getting a list of the membership of your church. When you get this list, divide the membership up into what are manageable units for you. Then pray through these groups of believers on a regular basis.

(3) You might want to consider "adopting" believers that you want to pray for over a period of time. You can choose a believers or a certain number of believers that you can pray for during a specified time period. Ask God to place on your heart and mind the believers for whom He wants you to intercede. Also, ask Him to guide you in how long He wants you to focus on interceding for these believers. During this time, pour yourself out in intercession for these believers.

(4) Pray for believers that you do not know very well. It is often very easy to pray for those believers that you are the closest to in your church or group. This may be an area that you need to get out of your comfort zone and develop. Pray for guidance and according to the Holy Spirit's leadership, choose a believer or believers that you will pray for on a regular basis or for a specified time. Intercede for them on the basis of the suggested prayer requests in this issue. Then, let them know about your concern and your intercession with a phone call, a note, or at worship service, or a class. By doing this, you are not only interceding for another believer, but you are also