



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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ISSUE 4

PRAYER AND DIVORCE

Marriage is ordained for the benefit and happiness of humankind. Wedding vows express the responsibilities of a man and woman that desire to enjoy that happiness and those benefits. A committed man, a committed woman, and a committed Lord make a marriage work. A wedding doesn't make a marriage work—a wedding is simply a beautiful way to begin a marriage. It takes hard work and faithful dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to make a marriage work.

Nowhere in Scripture is divorce treated as a part of God's plan for marriage. Nowhere in the wedding vows is there a clause that allows for divorce. The Lord Jesus Christ declares that Moses wrote in the clause on divorce because of human weakness, disobedience, and rebellion (**Mark 10:5**). Divorce is always an offense to God and a sign of failure. It is breaking the marriage covenant that is made before Him and to Him.

Nobody really wins in a divorce. Actually everyone loses in divorce: the couple, their kids, their family, their friends, and even society. The gains derived from a divorce do not compensate for the greater loss of God's ideal—which is one man married to one woman until death parts them. It is a tragic event that wounds and destroys. Every divorce is tragic and regrettable. It causes widespread pain.

However, divorce does exist. It is a reality that confronts us on a daily basis. As the divorce rate continues to climb, the church of Jesus Christ is being confronted more and more with divorced people and broken families.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on praying for those who are divorced. Through prayer, divorced people can be helped, healed, and strengthened. It is a powerful tool in helping those whose lives have been torn apart by divorce. This issue will also provide insights on how to pray for the children of divorce. Divorce is traumatic for children; they need intercession as much as the parents who are divorcing do. There are also suggestions on how to pray for the parents of children who divorce. This is often a forgotten group in this situation. The parents of children who are divorcing often suffer in silence. They need help and healing also. A powerful way to minister to these individuals is to intercede for them.

ISSUE 4 - HIGHLIGHTS

PRAYER AND DIVORCE

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The Christian Response To Divorce

In this age of an ever-growing divorce rate, how should Christians respond? *Christians should respond first and foremost with prayer.* Too many times Christians often want to gossip about those that are having marriage problems or who are divorced. Christians want to take sides and blame the other spouse for the problems in the marriage or for the divorce. In fact, Christians want to lament and complain about the divorce rate and the tragedy of broken families. Yet, how many Christians want to humble themselves before God and cry out for a change in these matters? Rather than gossiping and taking sides, Christians should be standing in the gap and pleading for marriages and for those who are divorced. Rather than complaining and lamenting the sad state of affairs in marriages and families, Christians should be standing in faith and prayer against divorce and the breakdown of families. Through prayer, the power of God can be released into lives and marriages. Change and healing can take place through the power of God that is released through prayer. Yet, we do not pray about these matters and then we are surprised when marriages end and families breakup. If we want to stem the tide of divorce and family breakups, then we must pray! If we want to see divorced people and children healed and help, we must pray!

Christians should respond with a message of repentance and hope. Divorce is a deviation from God's standard. The church must stand firm in this truth. The church must call for repentance when a marriage ends. Yet, at the same time, the church is to offer the message of hope to those who are divorced. We must proclaim that God is a God of mercy, compassion, and hope. He can and will enable a person to heal and put his or her life back together again. He can forgive and restore. God does not abandon or throw away those who are divorced. He is a God who forgives, heals, and blesses. The church must declare this message to those who are divorced.

The church must respond with love and forgiveness. Too many times divorced people feel as if they are judged and condemned by the church

if they are divorced. They are made to feel as if they are inferior to the others in the church. The church cannot compromise God's standard for marriage. His standard is one man-one wife for life. Yet, when divorce does take place, the church must offer love and forgiveness to the person. The divorced person must receive ministry, acceptance, and love from the body of Christ. After all, isn't that what the church stands for in this world? The church is to be a "hospital" for the wounded and broken. When the church accepts the wounded and broken, it becomes God's hands and voice, transforming people and situations. When the church does not do this, it forfeits the opportunity to be salt and light in a world that desperately needs the mercy, forgiveness, and healing of our God (**Matthew 5:14-16**). A divorced person must receive love, forgiveness, and ministry if he or she is going to be healed and then move on from this tragic event.

The church must respond to divorce with mourning. This may sound like an unusual response to divorce. Yet, we, the body of Christ, have become hardened to the fact of divorce. Divorce is so commonplace in our society that we no longer experience grief and mourning over it. In a sense, we are accustomed to divorce. We may express surprise and shock. Unfortunately, many people love to know the "juicy" details of what happened to the marriage. They often love to gossip about what happened in the marriage and who is at fault. But, we no longer mourn. Our hearts are no longer broken. Why should the church mourn? We should mourn because God's standard for marriage has been defied. We should mourn because this couple is losing the marital blessings and happiness that God has ordained for marriage. We should mourn because the child or children will not have both natural parents at home to create an environment of stability, love, discipline, guidance, and material provision. We should mourn because a child or children will face the turmoil of divorce and of a broken home. We should mourn because society is receiving a message that divorce is acceptable even among Christians. We should mourn because when a marriage dies, a dream also dies—a dream for a happy marriage, a dream for a happy family life, and a dream for two parents who love each other to share that love together with their children.

The fact that we do not mourn is closely connected to our first response to divorce. As stated earlier, our first response to divorce is to pray for those involved. Yet, we will not do this as fervently and consistently as we should unless we mourn over this. In fact, we do not stand in the gap for marriage and family because we do not hate the sin of divorce. If you want to be a powerful and effective intercessor, you need to develop a hatred of divorce and the breakup of families. Our complacency in these matters has made us lazy in interceding for marriages and families.

Will you ask God to remove your complacency concerning this? Will you ask God to create in you a hatred of divorce and the breakup of the family? God hates divorce (**Malachi 2:16**). Pray for God to create in you the same hatred that He has for divorce and the breakup of families. Pray also that He will give you a compassionate and forgiving spirit for those who are divorced.

Father, I praise You for Your wisdom in creating marriage and family. You are such a good and gracious God. These are precious gifts. Father, create in me a hatred for divorce. Cause me to feel the same way about divorce as You do. Deliver me from gossip, faultfinding, and complacency. Cause me to stand in the gap and battle for marriages and families. Empower me to make a difference in marriages and families through my intercession. Amen.

Praying For Those Who Are Divorced

The following are suggestions on ways that you can intercede for those who are divorced. These are suggestions that you can use in order to pray for them. You can use these prayer requests to pray for yourself if you are divorced. If you feel led to, you can develop your own from them. At the same time, you need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading as you pray. He can grant you insight in how to pray for each particular situation. Your strategy for intercession can be built on prayer requests developed from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's particular insight.

God (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Matthew 11:28; Psalm 63:1, 73:25-26). Pray that God would use the pain and the difficulty of divorce to draw this person to Himself. If the divorced person is lost, pray that God would use this situation to bring him or her into a right relationship with Himself. If the divorced person is saved, pray that God would deepen his or her intimacy with Himself. Ask God to use this time as an opportunity to draw the person into a closer, more unique relationship with Himself. God is the only hope and refuge of this person, whether the person is lost or saved. Pray that God will use the pain and the difficulty to show this person this life-changing truth.

- (2) *Pray that God would give this person a spirit of repentance (Acts 5:31; 1 John 1:9). In *Divorce and the Gospel of Grace*, L. Woodson writes, "Even though a divorce may be the best of all solutions to a hopelessly shattered relationship, there is still a sense of guilt. Divorce was just never meant to be." Divorce is rebellion against God's standard. It is something that God hates. Pray that this person will turn to God in true confession and repentance concerning this sin. Ask God to create true conviction in this person so that he or she will truly turn to God with this failure.*
- (3) *Ask God to deliver this person from false, subjective guilt (Romans 8:1; Philippians 4:6). There is a guilt that leads a person to turn to God in confession and repentance. There is also a guilt that leads a person to despair and hopelessness. Failure is not final with the child of God. Every day the Christian is enabled to begin again. He or she fails at many points. Yet, God forgives and restores. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. God does forgive the sin of divorce! There is no need for any person to exist under the weight of guilt when God forgives and accepts. There is no "magic wand" that a person can use to remove the guilt that a divorced person may experience. Yet, you need to pray that God will deliver this person from false guilt. Ask Him to cause this person to bring all the feelings of guilt that he or she may be feeling to Him.*
- (4) *Pray that this person will pour out his or her*

- (1) *Pray that God would use this time to draw the person into a more intimate relationship with*

heart to the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). The divorced person will have to face many frustrations and pain. This person is going to experience a wide range of emotions. The emotional pain of divorce is real, so real that some people try to ignore or deny its existence. Imagine that a person has a physical wound—a deep gash or a fractured bone. Imagine what could happen if the person decided to ignore the pain and go about life as if nothing were wrong. The deep cut would become infected. The broken bone might cut off the supply of blood to vital organs, causing death. If the break were not fatal, it would most likely heal in a crooked manner, permanently impairing the individual's movement. In short, ignoring wounds usually causes further problems. This person must turn to the Lord, casting all his or her burdens and fears on the Lord. Ignoring, denying, or attempting to handle these things by oneself will only lead to more frustration and pain. This person needs to learn the discipline of pouring out one's heart to the Lord. When I say the "discipline" of pouring out one's heart to the Lord, the believer needs to develop the ability to bring his or her frustrations and pain to the Lord (**Philippians 4:6-7**). There are some negative ways to handle this pain: ignoring its reality, denying its reality, striving to handle this by oneself, or turning one's pain on others through anger and rejection. Pray that this person will bring every problem, frustration, pain, and fear to the Lord. Ask Him to move this person to run to the Lord with all of his or her struggles, especially those connected to the divorce (**Proverbs 18:10**). Call on Him to reveal Himself to this person as his or her Refuge.

- (5) *Ask God to grant emotional healing to this person (Psalm 147:3)*. There are some emotional wounds that only the Lord can heal. Call on God to release His love and grace into this person's life so that he or she can be made whole emotionally.
- (6) *Pray that this person will have a forgiving spirit (Ephesians 4:31-32)*. Forgiveness is not easy but is essential to healing and growth after a divorce. Those involved in a divorce must forgive. It needs to be remembered that forgiving is not forgetting. When we choose to forgive, we still retain the memories of pain, anger, fear, and sadness that require forgiveness

in the first place. At the same time, forgiveness does not release a person from their responsibility. When a person forgives another, it does not mean that he or she is released from the responsibility for what has been done. Pray that this person will understand these truths. Pray also that this person would forgive his or her spouse every time he or she remembers the pain connected to the marriage and divorce. Forgiveness is not a one-time act but a daily discipline. Christ does not place a limit on forgiveness. In **Matthew 18**, Christ teaches that forgiveness may take hundreds of times to accomplish (**Matthew 18:21-22**). Plead that this person will develop a forgiving spirit and that he or she will not rationalize hatred or bitterness.

- (7) *Ask God to protect this person from bitterness, worry, and despair (Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 4:31-32; Matthew 6:25-34)*. These are common problems for a divorced person. Pray that these things will not gain ground in this person's life. Satan would love nothing more than to place strongholds in this person's life through these sins (**Ephesians 4:27**). Pray for the Holy Spirit to immediately and deeply convict this person of these things so that he or she can confess them and turn from them. Ask God to provide a shield of protection for this person from the attacks of Satan in this area.
- (8) *Plead with God to grant this person loving friends who will speak the truth to him or her (Proverbs 17:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Ephesians 4:15)*. The divorced person needs faithful friends who will support, love, and pray for him or her. These friends need to be wise and compassionate. They need to have the ability to love this person, but, at the same time, tell this person the truth. Pray that God would raise up friends who will have this wisdom and love. If you are a friend to this person, ask God to create a deeper love in your heart for this person. Ask Him to help you share the truth in love with this person.
- (9) *Pray that this person will maintain a healthy relationship with the divorced spouse if that is possible (Romans 12:17-19)*. In **Romans 12:18**, the apostle Paul calls on believers to live at peace with all men if that is possible. Paul is declaring that we are to maintain peace with those around us if this is possible. This

principle can be applied to divorce. Those who are divorced need to maintain a peaceful relationship, especially if children are involved. However, sometimes this may not be possible. One or both of the spouses may not want to maintain a peaceful relationship. One spouse may be in physical danger from the other. Pray that God will work powerfully in this situation. Call on Him to work in the lives of people so that they can maintain a peaceful and healthy relationship.

- (10) *Pray that this person will grieve properly (Ecclesiastes 3:4).* This person does need to grieve over the broken relationship and the end of the marriage. Grief is caused by some kind of loss, usually of a loved one, as in the case of a death or a divorce. It is a normal reaction to a painful situation and is one of the most deeply disturbing emotional states a person will ever endure. Funeral services are helpful for people grieving because they provide a mechanism whereby the mourner can understand that the relationship is absolutely and forever terminated. This relationship is over and will never be as it was. Since there are no funeral services for divorce, grieving can become a prolonged and complicated process. Although the relationship is terminated legally, it frequently is maintained in some crippled form. The day of the divorce does one thing, if nothing else: it begins the process of putting back together the lives of both parties. Pray that this person will grieve but that this grief will not be overwhelming. Ask God to enable this person to endure the grief and then move on toward the joy and hope of the future.
- (11) *Pray that this person will deal with his or her anger in a godly way (Ephesians 4:26; James 1:20).* When a divorce occurs, there is likely to be a great deal of anger involved. Pray that this person will deal with his or her anger in a proper way. Call on Him to protect the person from turning this anger on the spouse, the parents, or the children. Pray that he or she will turn to Christ and seek Him for the power and grace to deal with the anger.
- (12) *Ask God to give this person wisdom in dealing with the children involved (James 1:5).* There is a great need for wisdom when children are involved in a divorce. Pray that God will grant wisdom to both parents as they attempt to

raise the children even though they are divorced. Ask God to enable them to keep their children's best interests in mind as they make decisions and as they relate to each other. Pray that they will not be petty and that they will not use the children to get back at the other spouse. Plead with God to give them insight on how to deal with the children and how to treat them. This is especially true when one or both of the spouses involved in the divorce remarry.

- (13) *Pray that God would heal and bless the relationship with both sets of parents (Colossians 3:12-14).* A divorce involves more than just the man and the woman in the marriage. It also involves the respective family members, particularly the parents of the spouses. When divorce occurs, the parents experience pain. They have to deal with their child along with that child's ex-spouse. This relationship can be strained and tedious due to the divorce. Pray that God would grant healthy relationships between the divorced spouses and each set of parents. Ask God to heal any unforgiveness, anger, or bitterness that may exist in these relationships. Call on Him to enable both spouses and the parents involved to confront any problems in these areas. Ask God to help them to communicate clearly and compassionately with each other.
- (14) *Plead that God will help this person cope with and overcome the stress in his or her life (2 Corinthians 12:9).* Divorce does not alleviate stress. It does not eliminate problems. When a person divorces, that person goes from one set of problems to another set of problems. That person goes from one type of stress to another type of stress. Ask that God would grant this person His grace and power to deal with the stress and pressure that he or she will have to face on a daily basis.
- (15) *Pray that this person will be consistent in his or her relationship to Jesus Christ and His church (Mark 8:34-38; Hebrews 10:25).* It would be easy to let one's relationship to Christ and His church become a lesser priority because of a divorce. Ask God to create a deeper commitment in this person to Christ and His church during this time. Pray that this person will not allow the stress and the difficulty of this time as an excuse for backsliding from Christ and His church.

- (16) *Pray that this person will realize that he or she is uniquely and completely loved by God (Genesis 2:7; John 3:16).* Divorce can shatter a person. It can make a person feel as if he or she is “damaged goods”. It can cause a person to feel unloved and unwanted. This person needs to know that God loves him or her unconditionally. This person needs to know that God’s love is real and powerful despite the circumstances of his or her life. Pray that this person will experience God’s love as never before in his or her life. Ask God to envelope this person in His unchanging love.
- (17) *Ask God to manifest His presence, His power, and His peace to this person in a fresh and new way (Psalm 139).* The divorced person will experience many changes and struggles. In the midst of all this, he or she needs to experience God’s presence, power, and peace in a fresh and new way. There are many things that this person needs. Yet, his or her greatest need is God—His presence, peace, and power.
- (18) *Plead with God to deliver this person from fear (Psalm 3:3-6).* One of great struggles that the divorced person faces is fear. Because of the divorce, his or her life changes in a dramatic way. This change can be traumatic. This is especially true for a woman who is now forced to make a living and raise children. Pray that God will strengthen the faith of this person. Ask God to cause this person to depend on Him and to look to Him as his or her refuge. Call on Him to assure this person of His care and concern for him or her.

Praying For The Children of Divorce

All children, of all ages, are affected by divorce. For the child, divorce represents a tearing apart of his or her parents. It is as painful and traumatic for the child as it is for the adults involved. Divorce represents the destruction of the child’s home. This wreaks havoc with how the child views himself or herself. It has an adverse affect on how the child functions. It will have an affect on how he or she will relate to future spouses. Except in the most unusual circumstances, children

are deeply hurt and angered when their parents choose to divorce. The children are affected not just for the moment but for the rest of their lives.

A child who goes through a divorce may go through a period of wondering if he or she will ever be happy again. Recent research is concluding that there may be no end to the pain experienced by children as their parents’ divorce. This pain is evident. As one divorced mother confessed to me, “Perhaps the most difficult thing, for me at least, was dealing with the children. That was pure agony. Their pain hurt me far more worse than anything else I can think of. It still hurts me to think about it. Perhaps it always will.”

The bad news about the children of divorce is this: to a greater and lesser degree, the kids will hurt for the rest of their lives. The good news is that Jesus Christ can enable them to cope and to experience healing from this. The power of Jesus Christ can take this negative experience and turn it into positive change in them.

The key to this transformation is intercession. Children of divorce are often pitied. Yet, this is not enough. There must be intercession and action. If these children are going to experience healing and hope, believers must attempt to minister to them. The foundation of this ministry is intercessory prayer.

The following are some suggestions on how to pray for a child of divorce. When I use the term “child”, I mean children of any age from a young child to adults whose parents divorce. You can use these suggestions or develop your own from them. You also need to be open to the Holy Spirit granting you insights on how to pray for the child.

- (1) *Pray that God will use this event to deepen the child’s relationship to him or her (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Matthew 11:28; Psalm 63:1, 73:25-26).* Ask God to use this time to draw the child into a relationship with Himself. If he or she is saved ask God to use this time to deepen his or her relationship to Himself. Pray that none of this suffering will be wasted, but that this person will be drawn closer to Christ whatever his or her spiritual condition.
- (2) *Pray that God would deliver this child from bitterness and unforgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32).* When a couple divorces, the child will have to deal with feelings of bitterness

and unforgiveness. Pray that these things will not take root in his or her life. Ask God to protect this child from the attacks of Satan in this area. Pray a hedge around his or her emotions so that the child will not yield to these things and give Satan an opportunity to work.

- (3) *Ask God to grant a healthy relationship between the child and the parents or stepparents (Ephesians 6:1-4).* Divorce can place a strain on the child's relationship to the parents or the stepparents. Pray that the child will have a loving and sound relationship to the parents and/or the stepparents.
- (4) *Pray that the child's parents will model true Christianity in front of the child (Matthew 22:37-39).* Children continue to model the parents' lives even after a divorce. The reaction of a child to a divorce is going to be determined to a large degree by the behavior of the parents. As a child watches how the parents deal with their own pain and healing, as a child watches the parents turn to God or not, that child will respond in a similar way. Pray that the parents will have an intimate relationship to God and that they will model true Christianity before their child. Pray that they will turn to Christ and seek His help and power so that the child can have a powerful example.
- (5) *Plead that this child will be protected from a lifestyle of rebellion (Proverbs 1:7, 20-33).* When a couple divorces, there is the possibility that the child or children may respond to this with rebellion. In order to deal with the hurt and pain of divorce, the child turns to rebellion to cope. This rebellion may be directed toward the parents, the family members, friends, authority figure, or God Himself. The child or children may commit foolish actions in light of the divorce. One study found that 25 percent of unmarried adult children of divorcing couples hurled themselves into an intimate relationship within a year of their parents' divorce. It is also known that a significant number of married adults take foolish action in their own marriages at or near the time of their parents' divorce. Pray that this child will exercise wisdom and will

be protected from rebellion. Ask God to protect this person from doing something that is foolish and that will be hurtful.

- (6) *Pray the child will learn to cast his or her burdens on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7).* Instead of rebelling or acting foolishly, pray that this person will turn to the Lord. Pray that he or she will learn the discipline of bringing the problems, the pains, the frustrations, and the anger of his or her life to God, looking to Him to resolve these things and for the power to overcome these things.
- (7) *Ask God to surround this person with strong adult role models (1 Timothy 5:1-2).* When a couple divorces, a child's life is shattered. This child needs older caring believers who will support and affirm him or her. These believers need to pray for, spend time with, and affirm the child.
- (8) *Pray that God will raise up loyal and godly friends for this person (Proverbs 17:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).* This child needs peers who are going to be faithful and supportive. Ask God to give this person friends who are going to be faithful and who will lead him or her to Christ. Pray that these friends will be a hindrance to rebellion and not a help to rebellion.
- (9) *Plead that the child will not be plagued with guilt and shame (Lamentations 3:22-23).* The child or children of divorce will often experience guilt concerning the divorce. The child feels at fault for the divorce. The child may feel as if he or she is responsible for the divorce. Plead that this person will be freed from guilt feelings concerning this matter. The child may also experience shame concerning the divorce. This can create feelings of worthlessness in the child. He or she may feel as if no one can love him or her ever again. Plead that the child will be protected from shame. Ask God to enable the parents and those around the child to create an atmosphere where the child will not be overwhelmed with guilt or shame for the divorce.
- (10) *Pray that the parents will not neglect or abandon the child or children (Ephesians 6:4).* When I say "neglect" or "abandon", I do not mean physically. If that is a danger, then you should pray that this

would not happen. Yet, this often happens emotionally. The parent or parents are so caught up in their own pain or bitterness that they forget about the child and his or her needs. This is especially true when the divorce is contested and there is anger and bitterness. Pray that the parents would not be so self-absorbed that they neglect or abandon the child's situation and feelings.

- (11) *Plead that God would give the child grace and strength to adjust to all the changes in his or her life (2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:7).* The divorce is going to bring a staggering amount of change to the child's life. The child is already struggling with the pressures and problems of growing up. Yet, there is now added to the pressure and difficulty of having the home torn apart and completely new circumstances. Pray that God would abundantly pour out His grace and mercy on this child, enabling him or her to cope with the changes due to the divorce.
- (12) *Plead with God to use the divorce as preparation for healthy future relationships Romans 8:28).* Children often repeat the mistakes of the parents. What a child sees in a marriage is preparation for how he or she will act in marriage. The parents' marriage is a model for and a mirror of the child's marriage. There are exceptions to this. Yet, this is something that we cannot take for granted. Pray that God will turn this negative into a positive. Plead that God will turn this obstacle into an opportunity. Ask God to teach this person from the mistakes of his or her parents. Pray that He will deliver them from the thoughts and actions that led to the parents' divorce. Call on Him to break the cycle of divorce in this child's life.

Praying For The Parents of Divorce

It's those words that a parent dreads, "Mom and Dad, our marriage is over. We are getting a divorce." The casualties of divorce include the parents of those who are divorcing. The parents of a divorced couple are often forgotten. They experience pain and anguish like their children

when divorce occurs. Parents discover that it's not only their children's hopes and dreams that die. Their own dreams and hopes die.

When divorce occurs, the parents of those involved need intercession. You may not know what to say to them, but you can talk to the Lord in their behalf. The following are some suggestions on how to intercede for the parents of those who are divorced. These are only suggestions. You can use them or you can develop your own from them. As always, you need to be sensitive to the Spirit's leadership in your intercession. As you talk with them and minister to them, He may give you insight and guidance on how to pray for them and the family.

- (1) *Pray that God would use this time to deepen His relationship to them (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Psalm 63:1, 73:25-26).* Ask God to use this time in their lives to draw them closer to the Lord. Call on Him to deepen their intimacy with God in this time of pain and frustration. Plead with Him to use this time as a pathway into greater intimacy with Him.
- (2) *Ask God to deliver them from their pride (Proverbs 11:2, 16:18-19, 28:25).* Part of the parents' pain comes from pride. When children get divorced, a parent's prideful image of himself or herself as a good parent is threatened. Divorce forces a parent to question whether or not there was something that he or she did or did not do that indirectly contributed to this problem. Yet, a parent has to remember that the child makes choices. Pray that the parent will be delivered from pride and that he or she has failed as a parent. Ask God to remove this pride so that he or she can minister to the children and the grandchildren involved.
- (3) *Pray that God will deliver them from shame and guilt (Lamentations 3:22-23).* Along with the pain of seeing one's child divorce, there is also the guilt and the shame. There is guilt that the parent failed in some way. There is the shame that your children are divorcing. Call on the Lord to protect them from guilt and shame.
- (4) *Plead that the parents will commit the children and the situation to the Lord (Romans 11:33-36).* A parent has an innate desire to "fix" things in a child's life. From the time a child is born, the parent strives to protect and help the child, whether the situation is good or bad. Yet,

this is one time that a parent cannot fix anything. This is a time when the parent must surrender the children involved and ask God to work in the situation. At a time like this, it is only God who can heal the broken heart. It is only God who can put a person's life back together. Ask God to convict the parents to the necessity of committing this into the Lord's hands and waiting on Him and His powerful work. Ask God to enable the parents to pray faithfully for the children and the grandchildren. This can be a struggle for the parents. As one parent confessed to me, "It is difficult to pray for my daughter-in-law after what has happened." Call on God to give them the grace and power to intercede for the children and grandchildren.

(5) *Pray that the parents will be wise and discerning in this situation (James 1:5).* The parents in this situation especially need this. When divorce occurs, the tension is high and emotions are strong and deep. It would be easy to start making accusations and assigning blame. Yet, parents must be aware of the fact that they probably don't know the whole story. Their child may be much more saintly—or much more of a sinner—than they suspect. Pray that the parents will be wise and discerning and will not allow their emotions or their tongues to get out of control.

(6) *Plead with God to give the parents a forgiving spirit (Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32).* When a couple divorces, the parents struggle with anger and bitterness toward their child's spouse or their own child if they feel that he or she is responsible for the divorce. Yet, the parents must exercise forgiveness in spite of the hurt. Pray that the parents will take any and all feelings of anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness to the Lord. Ask Him to enable them to deal with these things diligently and immediately. Pray also that they will understand that forgiveness is not condoning what has been done. Many times people are slow to forgive because they feel that if they forgive, they are condoning the action done against them. Yet, this is not the truth. Forgiveness is releasing a person from their debt and refusing to yield to anger, bitterness, or unforgiveness toward the person. Plead with God that the parents will be delivered from pettiness and faultfinding.

(7) *Ask God to enable the parents to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:25).* In dealing with the children, the grandchildren, and the other in-laws, the parents will need to speak the truth in love. When a person speaks the truth without love, it is harsh and hurtful. When a person loves and does not speak the truth, it is compromise. In this situation, the parents must speak the truth in love. Pray that God would give them this ability. Ask Him to enable them to give wise counsel when it is asked for or is needed.

(8) *Ask God to give them the strength and power to cope (Psalm 147:3).* The divorce of a child is painful to the parents. Yet, through the power of God, the parents can cope and do not have to yield to despair, frustration and bitterness. God can heal the wounds that the divorce opens. Pray that His strength and power would be equal to and greater than the pain that they might experience.

When A Marriage Is In Trouble

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* has focused on praying for those involved in divorce. We should pray for those who are divorced and who are in the process of getting a divorce. Yet, at the same time, we should pray for a couple if their marriage is in trouble. We cannot and should not give up on couples.

Believers must oppose the spirit of divorce that is so prevalent in this age. There is no other alternative. Believers need to pray for marriages, especially those that are in trouble. It is our duty and our privilege to intercede for these couples. If your marriage is in trouble, you must plead with God for the marriage. If you know that a marriage is in trouble, you must stand in the gap for that marriage. It is time that the church stops giving up on marriages. It is time that the church humbles itself before God and intercedes for couples. Divorce does not have to be the norm. Broken families and lives do not have to be a daily reality. As long as God is in heaven and God's people pray, there is hope for marriages and families.

The following prayer requests are for a marriage that is in crisis. These are suggestions to help you know how to pray in this situation. You can use these requests to pray for your own

marriage or other marriages. You can use these suggestions by placing the names of the couple in the blank. As always, be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as you pray. He may give you insight and Scripture to pray as you intercede for yourself or the couple. Plead the Word of God! Pray with faith and persistence!

Father, I pray that You will deliver _____ and _____ from self-centeredness. Grant that _____ and _____ will have a servant's heart (**Ephesians 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:2; Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:5-11**).

Father, in the name of Jesus, I pray that You would bind the work of Satan from this marriage. He would love nothing more than to destroy _____ and _____'s marriage. I ask You to stop His work in their lives and destroy his attacks against this marriage (**John 8:44; Genesis 3:11-13**).

Lord, I ask You to convict and deal with any unconfessed sin in _____ or _____'s life. Enable them to deal with any sin that is hindering their marriage (**1 John 1:9**).

Father, I plead that _____ and _____ will speak the truth to one another in love. Cause _____ and _____ to honestly share their feelings without being arrogant or spiteful. Through love and honesty, enable _____ and _____ to work through their differences (**Ephesians 4:25; 1 John 4:7, 11**).

Holy Spirit, I pray that You would create a spirit of forgiveness in _____ and _____. In the name of Jesus, I plead that they will put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander, along with every form of malice. In the place of this, I pray that they would be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them (**Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32**).

Father, I plead that You would bring _____ and _____ into a more intimate relationship with Yourself. Cause them to long for You as the deer longs for water. Grant

them a hunger in their soul for You. Create within them a spirit of prayer, especially for each other (**Psalm 42:1-2, 63:1; John 17:3; Colossians 4:2**).

Holy Spirit, I plead that You will convict _____ and _____ about the problems in their marriage. I pray that Your conviction would be deep and sharp. Deliver _____ and _____ from being defensive and self-righteous about the problems in the marriage and Your conviction concerning these things. Grant that _____ and _____ would humbly accept Your conviction and will change as You deal with him or her (**John 16:7**).

Father, I ask that You would deal with any past problems in _____ or _____'s life that is causing trouble now. Your Word declares that You heal the brokenhearted and that You bind up their wounds. In the name of Jesus, I ask You to be true to Your Word and heal the emotional wounds and baggage that _____ and _____ has in his or her life (**Psalm 147:3**).

Father, in the name of Jesus and by the power of Your Holy Spirit, I plead that _____ will love _____ as Christ loved the church. Cause _____ to have a sacrificial

and serving love toward _____. At the same time, in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I plead that _____ will be a loving and submissive wife. Cause _____ to support and minister to _____ (**Ephesians 5:22-33**).

Father, I pray that You would rekindle passion and desire between _____ and _____. I ask You to bless their relationship and cause them to rejoice in it. I pray that _____ and _____ would be satisfied and exhilarated with each other's love (**Proverbs 5:15-23**).

Lord Jesus, You have declared that what therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. You have declared the will of the Father. It is the Father's will for marriages to be for a lifetime. You desire one man to be with one woman for life. This is Your heart's desire. Because this is Your heart's

desire, I plead with you to save and strengthen
_____ and _____'s marriage.

Because this is Your heart's desire, I ask in the name of Jesus that You will do whatever it takes to protect and defend this marriage. O God, do not let sin, Satan, circumstances, or problems separate what You have joined together (**Mark 10:2-9**).

Praying For The Families In Your Church

Marriages and families are struggling to survive today. Satan is throwing an all-out offensive against these institutions. The world is attempting to lessen the sanctity and the importance of these institutions. A lack of commitment is wreaking havoc in marriages and families.

In the midst of all this, the church must stand for marriage and the family. The primary way to do this is through intercession. We must pray for the marriages and families that make up the church.

The following is a simple pattern for praying for the families in your church. It is based on the acrostic F.A.M.I.L.Y. This pattern provides a powerful way to intercede for the families in your church. I plead with you to pray for the marriages and families in your church. Through prayer, strong and godly marriages and families can be a living reality. Instead of complaining and lamenting about the breakup of marriages and families, we should be praying and pleading with God for them.

Faithful to hear and obey the Word of God (**James 1:21-25; John 14:23**). Pray that the Word of God will be the foundation on which this family builds. Ask God to give each one a hunger for the Word of God. Pray that they will put into practice what God commands in His Word.

Active in serving Christ and His church (**Hebrews 10:25; Mark 8:34-38**). Plead with God to create in this family a longing to follow Jesus and to serve in His church. Pray that each family member would know Christ and would faithfully serve Him.

Maintain their prayer lives (**Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2**). Pray that each member would have a heart for prayer. Ask God to create a longing to spend time with Him in each family

member. Pray that the family would establish a family altar.

Introduce others to Jesus (**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**). Pray that the family would be witnesses for Christ both with their lives and their lips. Ask God to give the family boldness in standing for Jesus Christ. Plead with Him to remove anything that would hinder them from being powerful witnesses.

Love as God loves (**1 John 4:7,11; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8**). Pray that this family will love each other with deep and unconditional love. Ask God to remove anything that might hinder them from loving each other.

Yield themselves to God's protection (**John 8:44; Ephesians 6:10-20**). Pray that this family will confess and repent of sin. Ask God to enable them to cut off any avenue that Satan might use to attack them. Call on Him to convict them of the necessity of the armor of God. Plead that He would protect them from the attacks of the enemy.

The Keywords of Powerful Praying

Helplessness is utterly essential to powerful praying. In order to pray with power, one must approach God with a spirit of dependence. You must abandon your strength and your power. You must realize that God and God alone has the power to bless, to change, and to intervene. God powerfully works through the intercessor that depends on Him. O. Hallesby wrote, "Helplessness is unquestionably the first and surest indication of a praying heart. As far as I can see, prayer has been ordained only for the helpless. Prayer and helplessness are inseparable. Only he who is helpless can truly pray."

"Father, create within me a spirit of helplessness so that I can be used by You in intercession. Amen."

The Beloved Unbeliever Network

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a ministry of intercession that focuses on praying for believers whose spouse is an unbeliever. In the past months, God has been burdening me to broaden the scope of this ministry. My heart longs for revival in marriages and families. In a recent fast, God has convicted me to provide intercession for troubled marriages and families. He has burdened me to use this ministry to stand in the gap for marriages and families and against the spirit of divorce and broken homes. This ministry will continue to pray for believers with unbelieving spouses. Yet, we will also pray for any marriage or family that is in crisis. If you would like to join this ministry as an intercessor, please contact me through one of the means listed on the front of the newsletter. You can make a difference! If you know of a marriage or family in crisis or if you find yourself in this situation, please let us have the opportunity to intercede for you and your situation.



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