



THE PRAYER CLOSET

ENCOURAGING & EQUIPPING BELIEVERS IN PRAYER

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ISSUE I

PRAYING FOR PRODIGALS

Most believers have the heartbreaking experience of dealing with a prodigal. It may be in your family or in your church. It could be a friend. What is a prodigal? It's a person who has turned away from Jesus Christ and His Word and church. This person professed faith in Jesus Christ. This person exhibited faithfulness over time.

However there's been a change. This person has walked away from Christ's Word and church. This person is no longer faithful. The commitment this person made seems forgotten or buried in worldliness and indifference. Perhaps he or she has accepted beliefs that go counter to the teachings of the Word. Maybe this person lives a lifestyle not characteristic of a follower of Jesus.

It breaks your heart. It's a cause for deep concern. However, it's not hopeless. God uses the prayers of His people to deliver prodigals. It's an amazing, encouraging truth that God will hear and respond to the prayers of His people for prodigals. When God's people pray, He does change lives. God does deliver and restore believers to Himself in response to the broken pleading of His people. God is pleased to use your prayers in delivering and restoring people from the grip of sin and Satan.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will focus on praying for prodigals. I want to present to you the biblical basis for praying for prodigals. Then I want to offer some practical strategies on how to pray for prodigals.

The Biblical Basis For Praying For Prodigals

The Bible does give us an example of praying for a prodigal. This truth is illustrated in the life of Abraham. In **Genesis 18**, the Lord tells Abraham

that He is going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 18:20-21**). This burdens Abraham because

he knows that Lot and his family are living in Sodom (**Genesis 14:12**).

Lot was a genuine believer (**2 Peter 2:7-8**). Yet, he allowed himself to be drawn into Sodom by his worldliness and lust. Sodom was an extremely wicked city (**Genesis 13:13**). Lot was grieved by the wickedness of the city. However, he had backslidden to the point that he tolerated this and compromised his faith. Lot no longer went, like Abraham, to the altar to pray, fellowship with God, and seek forgiveness (**Genesis 13:4**).

Lot was in Sodom and was about to be swept away in the judgment of God. The only thing that kept Lot from being swept away in the judgment of God is that he had an uncle on the hillside praying for him! Abraham's praying in **Genesis 18:22-23** kept Lot from being destroyed in the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible says in **Genesis 19:29**, "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt." Isn't that amazing? God "remembered" Abraham! He heard Abraham's prayers and delivered Lot out of Sodom.

Do you see that God will deliver people through your praying? Your prayers in behalf of others are not in vain. God can and does use your prayers to intervene in the lives of other people.

In the example of Abraham's praying for Lot, I'd like to share some basic principles for praying for prodigals. **First, you must be committed to the task.** When Abraham began to pray about Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, he drew near and stood still before the Lord (**Genesis 18:23**). He positioned himself to plead with the Lord. He was determined to seek the Lord. He would not cease praying until he received an answer. Anchor yourself in the presence of God. Get alone and get with God for your prodigal. You can't give up. You can't quit. No

matter how desperate the situation gets, keep seeking and believing the Lord. William S. Plumer wrote, “Real prayer seeks an audience and an answer.” Go into the presence of God, committed to the task of praying for the prodigal.

The next principle is to be bold in your pleading with the Lord. Abraham began his prayer by asking God to deliver the city if there were fifty righteous people (**Genesis 18:23**). He continued to plead with God until He assured him that he wouldn’t destroy these cities if he found ten righteous people (**Genesis 18:32**). Do you see the boldness of Abraham? He did it with humility, “And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (**Genesis 18:27**). True humility fuels the fire of boldness! Humility before God means that you are absolutely convinced that you can do nothing and that God alone can intervene. That’s what makes us bold in prayer. When you pray for a prodigal, it’s time to be bold. This person is in a desperate and dangerous condition. Only God can work in the heart of the person to turn them back and restore them. Plead with God out of a humble boldness that recognizes God’s power.

The final principle in praying for prodigals is to focus on the character of God. In this prayer, Abraham focuses on the righteousness of God (**Genesis 18:25**). God always does what is right. He never does what is wrong. Abraham knew this and used it in his praying. Lot was a righteous man. Since God is righteous, He will now allow the righteous to be destroyed as the wicked are. Abraham asks God to be true to His character.

When you pray for a prodigal, call on God to be true to His character. He is merciful; ask Him to have mercy on this person. God is good; plead with Him to show His goodness to this person. God is powerful; pray that God’s power will convict and draw this person back to Himself. God is glorious; plead with Him to glorify Himself by delivering this prodigal.

Practical Strategies For Praying For Prodigals

- *Plead that God would give this person a new heart and make him or her into a new creature (**Ezekiel 36:26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:1-16**). When you are praying for someone in this position, you have to consider the possibility that*

this person has never had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The overwhelming testimony of the Bible is that a person cannot live in a perpetual state of sin and disobedience (**Romans 6:1-2; Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 1:6, 2:3-4, 3:6-9**). Lot does provide an example of a righteous believer who becomes entangled in sin and worldliness. There is one Lot in the Bible to give hope for deliverance. However, there is only one Lot to show that people cannot presume on God in this matter. We need to heed the warning of A.W. Tozer, “If I find anyone who is settled down too snugly into this world, I am made to doubt whether he’s ever truly been born again.” Plead with God to do a work of grace in this person’s heart, bringing them to Jesus in faith and repentance.

- *Ask God to be true to His Word if this person is a Christian (**Philippians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24-25**). It is possible that this person is a Christian. Yet, God has promised to keep His people. He has revealed in His Word that He will continue the work that He began. Ask God to work powerfully in this person’s life. Plead that God will work to renew this prodigal’s faith and repentance.*
- *Pray that this person will have a hunger for God greater than any other desire (**Psalms 42:1-2**). Ask the Holy Spirit to create within this person a fresh hunger for God – a craving that will be greater than what is drawing the prodigal away from God.*
- *Pray that God would cause the consequences of sin to become bitter (**Jeremiah 2:19**). When a person turns away from the Lord, it’s because of a person, a possession, a position, or a pleasure. Call on God to make that obstacle a bitter pill to swallow. Ask that seeking after this obstacle will be painful and just not worth it.*
- *Ask that God would remove any evil influences in his or her life (**1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 1:9-10; Psalm 1:1**). When a person strays from the Lord, the devil will make sure to provide evil influences to encourage the prodigal. These people are going to be a hindrance to this person turning back to the Lord and seeking Him. Pray that these relationships with no longer have influence or that the relationships will fail.*
- *Pray that God will send believers into the prodigal’s life who can speak truth to him or her (**John 4:37-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9**). We do need to pray for the*

removal of evil influences. Yet, we also need to pray for God to raise up people who can speak truth to the prodigal. The prodigal may not listen to you, but they may listen to someone else. Ask God to cross the path of the prodigal with people who will have a powerful, righteous impact on his or her life.

- *Plead that the plans and goals of this person will fail until he or she repents and turns to the Lord (Luke 15:14-17; Hosea 2:5-7).* As long as this person pursues a sinful path, call on God to bring nothing but frustration and failure in life. Call on God to bring nothing but grief and misery to this person until he or she turns to the Lord. I know this sounds harsh. Yet, it is better for a person to have temporary failure than to experience eternal loss and ruin. Pray that the prodigal's path away from God will be costly and painful.
- *Pray that this person would recognize God's warnings in his or her life (Genesis 14:11-12).* **Genesis 14** reveals that a coalition of foreign kings overwhelmed and captured Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot and all that belonged to him was captured and carried away. Abraham hears of this and rescues Lot (**Genesis 14:13-17**). This was a merciful warning to Lot. In mercy, God used this event to warn Lot about staying in Sodom. He wanted Lot to understand that if he remained in Sodom, he would lose everything. God sends warnings into the life of prodigals – His Word, people, events, and adversity. Pray that the prodigal will be aware of God's warning and will heed them by turning back to the Lord.
- *Ask the God would break and remove any demonic influence from this person's life (1 Peter 5:7-9).* When a person has turned away from the Lord, there's no doubt that Satan and his demons are actively at work. There is a tremendous spiritual warfare around a prodigal. The enemy is not going to give up the prodigal without a battle. Call on the Lord to bind and destroy the work of the enemy in the prodigal's life. Pray that Satan's plans for this person will be shattered and that God will be glorified.
- *Ask that the convicting work of the Holy Spirit would be deep and unceasing (John 16:7-9).* The Holy Spirit produces conviction in believers' hearts when they pursue a path outside of God's will. When a person will not listen to you, the Holy Spirit can still speak into his or her heart and

produce cutting, shattering conviction. Pray that the Spirit's conviction will be deep in the person's heart. Ask that it will be unceasing. Plead for no relief until there is repentance and a return to the Lord.

- *Pray that God's chastisement will be severe and unceasing until this person repents (Hebrews 12:5-8).* God has promised to chastise His children. A child of God will never face the wrath of God because Christ bore that wrath on the cross for the believer. However, a believer will feel the discipline of the Father. The most basic level of chastisement is the conviction of the Spirit. Yet, when a person doesn't respond to that conviction, the Father can increase the severity of the chastisement. God is merciful but He is stern in dealing with sin. Our Father knows what sin will do to us. He realizes what going our own way will cost us. That is why He deals so sternly with us. He loves us too much to let us continue in sin. He loves us too much to let us pursue our own path without chastising us. Plead for the merciful but severe chastisement in this person's life.
- *Pray that God would assure this person that He will receive them if they return in repentance (Isaiah 1:18, 55:6-7; Micah 7:18-19).* Sometimes when people turn from the Lord, they wonder if He will forgive and restore. It's an effective tool of the enemy to hinder them. Ask God to assure the person that He is willing and ready to forgive and to restore.
- *Plead the character of God.* Use God's character to pray for the prodigal:

God, You are merciful; show _____ mercy by drawing him/her back to Yourself (**Lamentations 3:22-23**);

God, You are powerful; By your almighty power, destroy the works of the enemy in _____'s life; by this same power, renew _____'s faith and repentance (**Psalms 115:3**);

God, You are faithful; continue Your work in _____; remove anything from his or her life that is hindering that work (**Philippians 1:6**);

God; You are righteous; don't allow _____ to profess something that doesn't match his/her lifestyle. Deliver him/her

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from this sinful pursuit and bring _____
back to Yourself (**Jeremiah 9:24; 12:1**);

God, You are jealous; You will not tolerate any
rivals in the lives of Your people. _____
is chasing after other gods, the desires of his/her
own heart. Reveal Your jealousy by drawing this
person back to You, enable him/her to love You
above anything or anybody else (**Deuteronomy**
4:24, 29:20).

The Prayer Closet News

In 2020, The Prayer Closet begins its 22nd year
of ministry. All that I can say is, "To God be the
glory." God has been faithful to this ministry. He
has enabled it to survive when I didn't see any way
that it could. He has made a way when it seemed
as if there wasn't any.

He has also worked in ways beyond our
comprehension. We received a call not long ago
from a lady in Manhattan, New York. She wanted
to order some of our materials. I asked her how
she knew about our ministry. She said that she
was on the subway going to work. She noticed a
lady next to her reading a newsletter about prayer

called *The Prayer Closet*. This woman asked to see
it. She started reading it and asked if she could
have it. The lady would not let her have it but
gave her our contact information. She then called
us about our prayer materials. From Hickory, MS
to Manhattan, New York. It can only be explained
as a work of God. We thank God for His
goodness.

I'd appreciate your prayers for this ministry.
I'd also ask you to consider supporting this
ministry financially. Your donations will go to
reaching people across this country and world.
God bless you richly!

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