



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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## THANKING GOD FOR YOU

In **Philippians 1:3**, the apostle Paul writes, “I thank God upon my every remembrance of you.” He tells the Philippian believers that he thanks God for them. As you read the letters of Paul, you will see him thanking God for other believers. He continually practiced this.

This gives us insight into an aspect of prayer that we need to develop. Believers need to give thanks for other believers. By this, I mean more than a blanket thanksgiving for others who believe in and follow Christ.

We are called to thank God specifically for the way He is working in the lives of other believers. For instance, Paul writes, “We give thanks to God always for you all . . . Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3**). Paul gave thanks for faith, love, and patience of these believers.

This issue of The Prayer Closet will focus on giving thanks for other believers. We will look at why we should practice this and some specific ways we can thank God for them. It is my hope and prayer that this issue will encourage you and equip you to give thanks always for other believers.

### Why Should I Thank God For Other Believers?

There are a couple of reasons why we need to incorporate this into our prayers lives:

#### *The Priority Of God's Will*

In the letters of Paul, we see him continually thanking God for other believers. This reveals Paul's heart; yet, it also reveals God's will for us. His practice provides a pattern for us. We must make this a part of our prayer lives because God desires it. Through Paul's example, God calls us to offer thanks for other believers and the ways that God is at work in their lives. God's Word gives us Paul's example to challenge us and to stir us to carry out God's will – which is to thank God for other believers.

#### *The Praise Of God*

When we thank God for other believers, God is glorified. When we thank God for them, we are acknowledging that God has saved them, transforms them, and blesses them. It is actually praise for God! We can do no spiritual good on our own. We are sinful and in need of the grace of God. By thanking God for the change and the blessings of other believers, we

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Dr. Kevin Meador, P. O. Box 278, Hickory, MS 39332 (601) 646-2295

EMAIL: [prayercloset\\_1998@yahoo.com](mailto:prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com)

WEB PAGES: [www.prayerclosetministries.org](http://www.prayerclosetministries.org) - [www.kingdompraying.com](http://www.kingdompraying.com)

acknowledge that God is the Source and the Giver of those things. Our thanks for other believers is praise for all the blessings that God gives to those who believe and follow Jesus. We honor God by acknowledging what He has done and is doing in their lives.

### ***The Promotion Of Unity***

Thanking God for other believers fosters unity. It is a unity building exercise! Why? By thanking God for them, it keeps your heart tender toward them. It's hard to thank God for believers and not be in a right relationship with them. At the same time, if you struggle with other believers, thanking God for them can melt your heart. I distinctly remember praying about my hard feelings toward another believer. I was struggling with feelings of bitterness and resentment. As I prayed, I sensed the Holy Spirit saying, "Start thanking God for the spiritual good you see in his life." When I began doing this, I felt my heart melting. By doing this, it gave me the strength to forgive and bless this believer.

### ***The Protection Of Your Heart***

Thanking God for other believers guards your heart. It protects your heart from covetousness. The great enemy of covetousness is giving thanks. As you give thanks for what God blesses believers with, it defends you from desiring what they have, even resenting their blessings. It also offers protection from jealousy and envy. By thanking God, we focus more on God's grace than our worthiness. We often see what others have and believe, "I should have that" or "I should be blessed like that." Giving thanks for others reminds us that God is gracious and that He blesses all His children in the way that pleases Him. God gives His children what they need at the time they need it.

### ***The Preparation For Discernment***

Thanking God for other believers requires discernment. When you practice this, you have to look deeper than the surface. It means thanking God for the growth that you see. It means seeing the hand of God in their lives in

difficult times. It means recognizing steps of faith even if they are "baby" steps. We should call on God to grant us this discernment. We must have it if we are to grow in the ability to thank God for others. At the same time, this discernment enables us to pray wisely for other believers.

## **Ways To Thank God For Other Believers**

The Bible offers a variety of ways that we can give thanks for other believers. Consider the following ways that you can offer thanks to God for your brothers and sisters in Christ:

### ***Thank God For Their Salvation (Luke 2:29-32)***

In this text, we see that Simeon had devoted his entire life to waiting for the Messiah to appear. When Jesus arrived with Mary and Joseph to the temple, Simeon took the baby in his arms and praised God. He was praising the very God he was holding in his arms! The prayer that Simeon prayed acknowledged that the infant Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises. God had sent a Savior! Simeon says my eyes have seen your salvation. He thanked God for this sight. In a very real sense, when you see other believers, you are seeing salvation - and what beautiful sight it is! Thank God for saving others. Thank Him convicting them and drawing them for Jesus. Thank Him for making them a part of God's eternal family.

### ***Thank God For Their Gifts And Abilities (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)***

In **1 Corinthians 1:4**, Paul thanks God for the "grace" that He had given the Corinthians. The word "grace" refers to the spiritual gifts that God had granted these believers. The believers of the Corinthian church were rich in spiritual gifts, "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge . . . So that ye come behind in no gift" (**1 Corinthians 1:5, 7**). Paul offers thanks to God for the variety and richness of the gifts and abilities that they possessed. In this text, God calls us to express gratitude for the gifts and abilities that He grants to others. Too often, we discover the deficiencies in others and fail to appreciate the

good in them. When was the last time you actually pointed out the good in another believer instead of complaining about the bad. How would our church fellowships be transformed if we all thanked God for one another's gifts instead of complaining about one another's imperfections? We are to look for and thank God for the gifts and abilities of other believers.

#### *Thank God For Their Faithfulness* **(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)**

The Thessalonian church was busy trusting and obeying God, loving others, and patiently waiting and looking for the coming of Jesus. Paul offers thanks for their faithfulness. They were living and working for Christ. They continued in this, never wavering or giving up. Paul's heart was filled with gratitude for their determined faithfulness to God. As we look around at other believers, our hearts should be filled with the same gratitude. We must thank God for the consistency of other believers. Faithful believers are vital to the growth of any church and the ministry of God's Word. Every church must have believers that are faithful in all seasons. As you see other believers being faithful, thank God for this. Tell them about your thankfulness for their faithfulness, encouraging them to continue.

#### *Thank God For The Joy Other Believers Give Us* **(1 Thessalonians 3:9-10)**

The Thessalonian church brought Paul great joy. This church delighted his heart. What believers have brought joy into our life? Maybe they taught you. Maybe they prayed for you. Maybe they spoke a word of encouragement. Maybe they helped share a burden. Maybe they gave you financial gift. Believers have blessed you and brought great joy to your life. Thank God for these believers and their specific acts that brought joy to your life.

#### *Thank God For Their Spiritual Growth* **(2 Thessalonians 1:3)**

In this text, Paul thanked God for the spiritual growth of these believers. They weren't perfect, but they were growing. Every church is filled with people at various stages of spiritual growth and maturity. God works in all in a variety of

ways; as you discern this growth, thank God for it. Offer thanks to God for deepening His work in the lives of His children.

#### *Thank God For The Love Among Believers* **(Philemon 4-6)**

Philemon was a Christian who hosted the Colossian church in his home. Paul wrote to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus that he was praying to God on their behalf. Paul thanked God for the love that these believers had for God's people. Thank God for the love you have experienced from other believers. Thank God for the actions of other believers toward you that was prompted by that love.

## **The Practice Of Giving Thanks**

The following are some suggestions on how to practice giving thanks for other believers.

- ✓ *Ask God to enable you to thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ.* This is God's will for your praying. Call on Him to empower you to practice this. Ask for the discernment to see all the things that you can thank Him for concerning other believers.
- ✓ *Start by making a list of believers and then offer specific thanks.* You might consider starting this way. Make a list of believers and then write down specific reasons that you will give thanks for them. This will help you develop the practice.
- ✓ *Spontaneously thank God during your prayer times.* When God brings to your mind believers and His work in their lives or their impact in your life, thank God for His work in them and in you. Be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in this.
- ✓ *Keep a journal of thanksgiving for other believers.* You might consider making this a special part of your journal – a section where you thank God for other believers. You don't have to write a great deal. Just record their name and how God is at work in them or how God has used them in your life. You might even consider a special journal just for this.
- ✓ *Connect thanksgiving with intercession.* We see this pattern in Paul's letters. He would start by telling the believers that he thanked God for them. Then he would intercede for

them. As you thank God for other believers and His work in them, pray for them. Intercede for them and their relationship to God.

- ✓ *Pray that God will make you into the kind of believer that others can thank God for.* While we need to thank God for others, we must strive to be the kind of believer that others can be grateful for. Call on God to help you grow. Ask Him to help you bless other believers. Pray that He will deepen your love for other believers. Invest your time, tears, prayers, love, and resources in the lives of other believers. Be the kind of Christian that will fill the hearts of others with gratitude – that will lead them to thank God for you!

**Dr. Kevin Meador, President**  
**The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc.**  
**P. O. Box 278,**  
**Hickory, MS 39332**  
**(601) 646-2295**

**EMAIL:**

**[prayercloset\\_1998@yahoo.com](mailto:prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com)**

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