

Praying For Others

A Brief Guide To Intercessory Prayer

4. **Be patient, don't give up.** God definitely has a different sense of timing than we do. Some bible people prayed for 50 years before God answered their prayer. "Wait" is indeed one of God's answers, sometimes a common one. But "wait" is much different than "no".

5. **Be prepared for unexpected answers.** God is very smart, very creative. Especially in difficult situations, God can answer our prayer in very unexpected ways. In fact, in prayer we can expect the unexpected. As Isaiah 55:8 says, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*"

6. **Pray with others.** Praying with others builds Christian fellowship. It really accelerates our growth in prayer. There is synergy when several pray together for the same thing. Having partners in prayer makes it much easier to stay motivated and keep praying.

7. **Pray with your ears open.** Prayer is two way. Sometimes we miss God's answer to prayer because we were talking so much God couldn't get a word in!

I hope you find this resource helpful for your prayer life. I can't emphasize enough how important your prayer is to Christ's church. This is the best thing you can be doing for others.

As you have other questions about prayer, call Pastor Jay at (262) 628-2633 or (262) 271-5455 or drop me a note. I look forward to hearing about your experiences with prayer.

Praying for the needs of others is one of the most important ministries of the church. We call these "intercessory prayers". While they are included in most worship services, I encourage all Christians to participate in this ministry through private prayers at home and in praying together in small groups. This guide is offered to help you begin to do this kind of ministry in your own life. It is set out in a question and answer format, covering the most commonly asked questions on prayer.

Why bother praying for the needs of others? Hasn't God already determined everything that will happen?

The bible contains many marvelous stories of God doing things *because somebody asked*. The Roman soldier's servant was healed because he asked (Mt 8:8). Because of Moses' prayers, God spared Israel from punishment for sin. James 5:16 says "the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective". Jesus says, "If you then ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

God doesn't have everything planned out. God has given us a wonderful gift of being in partnership with him. In this partnership your prayer makes a difference.

I am not a Pastor. I don't know that much about the bible. Am I good enough to be praying for others?

Scripture says that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". So no one, not even Mother Teresa, is "good enough" to pray to a holy God. Fortunately, prayer doesn't depend on how good we are. It depends on how good and merciful God is. Prayer is simply communication with God and God desires to be

in relationship with all his children. When we pray, it delights God. And, when we pray for others, God is even happier because he is seeing his children grow in maturity, being less concerned with ourselves and learning to care for each other.

What do I say in my prayers?

There is no right or wrong way to pray. There is no secret formula which will make your prayers more effective. There is no single method of prayer which is right for everybody. Just as everyone has their own style of communication, each person has their own style of prayer.

However, just as there are certain things that you have to tell your spouse in order to have a good relationship, there are also subjects we need to cover with God in order to have a good relationship and effective prayer.

I take my guidance from the bible's prayers (especially the psalms and the Lord's Prayer). These model prayers show that ***most prayers include:***

1. ***Praising and adoring God.*** This is where we tell God how wonderful he is. The purpose is not to flatter God. Rather, praising God is a great way to humble ourselves before him and acknowledge that God is God and we are not. Getting those facts of the relationship straightened out opens the gates of prayer. And only a great and majestic God will have enough resources to help.

2. ***Confessing our Sin.*** Once we acknowledge God's greatness and holiness it becomes apparent that our sin stands between us and God. Unconfessed sin is a great barrier to prayer. But as we admit our sins to God and ask for God's forgiveness and for God's help in changing our ways, the channels of communication are restored.

3. ***Seeking God's Will.*** One of the greatest benefits of prayer is that it gives us a way to get into harmony with God's will and God's plans.

So, in your prayer, be sure to share with God any decisions you are wrestling with or any area where it would be good to have God's opinion.

4. ***Thanking God.*** You don't like helping ungrateful people and neither does God!

5. ***Specific requests for help.*** Biblical prayers are very specific. So should ours be. It is good to picture the person or situation you are praying about and describe exactly what you hope God will do. The more certain you are about God's will in the matter the more specific you should be. You can include prayer for your needs, the needs of your neighbors, friends, the church, and the world. There is no limit. God welcomes all prayer.

A few suggestions about prayer:

1. ***Keep it short.*** The Lord's prayer is a model of brevity. God likes that. In the bible, God complains when we pray long, repetitive prayers (where we get caught up in listening to our own voices).

2. ***Write requests down.*** Keeping a prayer journal does several things. It gives you a list of people and situations to pray for so that you don't forget somebody or something. If you don't have time to make it through your list, you can mark it and pick up where you left off at a later time. If you date the requests and put a note about the requests, then, at a later day, you can review your list and observe how God is answering those prayers. I find it so inspiring to look at prayer requests from a year ago because I can then see just what God can do if we are patient and work on God's schedule.

3. ***Start small.*** Richard Foster, a noted teacher on prayer, says we do better to start with requests for small things in our lives (such as dealing with a single person at work). As we see how God answers these requests, then we are better able to pray for large, difficult requests, like healing miracles, ends to wars, etc.