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## *Praying for others*

### *Questions I've been asked*

*Question:* Should we tell others we are praying for them? Wouldn't this embarrass them?

*Answer:*

I recall a group of about 30 elderly church women who discussed this subject after I had spoken to them on the responsibility of loving one another. They admitted they seldom asked for prayer for themselves, and rarely mentioned the subject to others.

To everyone's amazement, a white-haired woman in a wheel-chair spoke up, pointing her finger at a friend across the room. "When you were in the hospital those three weeks, I prayed for you every day!" She finished with an emphatic nod of her head.

"Well, for goodness sake! Why didn't you tell me?" replied her friend. "You could have told me on the telephone—you talked to me every day. It certainly would have helped my morale just to have known."

We take each other for granted too many times. Love must give the final answer, as to whether you will tell another you are praying for them, or whether you will keep quiet. While it might embarrass some, it will encourage others. There are many who never once in a lifetime have ever had anyone say to them, "John, I prayed for you last night."

One of the first meaningful friendships I made as a young adult came from telling another I was praying for her. A student from abroad, she had received a telegram notifying her of her father's death. It was Christmas vacation. Most of the students had gone home for the holidays. As I left the dining room that night, I stopped a moment to tell the girl I'd heard the news and that I was praying for her. Later, she told me I was the only one that mentioned her loss.

*Question:* Should we have prayer lists? They get so long; how can one know which names or requests to discontinue?

*Answer:*

If you mean a personal, at home, prayer list, do just as your heart plus your good common sense, tells you to do. I follow no methodical rules in private. Often, however, I write names down as I pray. This helps me to more specifically commit the person to the loving hands of my Father. I don't keep these lists. Instead, I start other lists as I feel guided to do so.

If you mean in a group—why not again use your good common sense? You select and choose in countless matters at home and at work. One practical word: whatever tends to staleness and boredom has outgrown its purpose. Keep finding different ways. Use your creative imagination. Ask and receive the wisdom God is waiting to give you. Or, invite another

er to share with you. Two agreeing—this is Jesus' pattern for asking and receiving.

*Question:* Would you discuss the subject of thanking God for a request just made but not yet answered? Can we give thanks before we have received?

*Answer:*

I certainly believe we can. In fact, Scripture encourages us to do this very thing. You should be familiar with Philippians 4:6, 7. Paul writes to encourage the Philippians to be careful about nothing—meaning, don't be anxious or worried. Instead, in everything as you pray, let thanksgiving constantly and consistently come through. The result is the peace of God, passing all understanding, keeping your hearts, minds and thoughts through Christ Jesus.

If we would practice this in personal prayer, and also in group prayer, how different might be our ability to believe and receive. Giving thanks is one of the highest forms of believing prayer. Giving thanks keeps one from excessive anxiety, and fosters trust. More and more I find myself praying with thanks, and if I forget, I simply start over.

Here is a short meditation I'll share with you.

*I found myself praying:*

*What I meant was:*

Go before me today.

Thank You Lord, for going before me.

Bless Denise and Lloyd

Thank You, Lord for Denise and Lloyd. I see

(my sister and her husband)

them now surrounded by Your love. Thank You for their love for me.

Help Denise in the prayer-group work opening to her.

Thank You, for open doors You've given her. Thank You, for filling her with insight, faith and love to do Your work.

*Question:* In order to believe you will receive what you have asked for, do you think making a mental picture helps?

*Answer:*

Yes, I do. Again let me give you Jesus' teaching on this subject from Mark 11:22-26. "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he said shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."

The mountain represents the difficulty. Have you ever tried to imagine or visualize what a mountain dropping into the sea would look like? what it would sound like? what other results might follow? This is making a mental picture.

Here is an example of how it might work. In my travels last year, I spoke with a woman who longed to have her husband attend church with her. I asked how long she had been attending by herself? Her answer was—thirty years. I inquired if she had ever invited him to go with her? No, she hadn't, but she had wanted to.

"As we are sitting here quietly," I suggested, "think of yourself sitting in church. And now—think of your husband sitting beside you." I paused a moment and asked if she could visualize this. Could she form a mental picture of the two of them sitting together in church?

"Yes, yes, I can!" she exclaimed.

"This," I replied "is the joy of faith." Together we then gave thanks to God.

Later an unmarried woman, having heard of the above, asked me if she could pray for a husband in this same way. I told her I was sure there were many factors involved in her desire, things which needed careful examination.

Again, I repeat, God gave us common sense. If we don't know how to use it, then we certainly do need to pray with a Christian friend who does!

A young man who needed a job found himself stuttering and nervous each time he applied. We prayed together about this, and in our minds saw a mental picture of him applying without stuttering. He held this picture in his own mind the next day, applied—without stuttering—and got the job.

*Question:* For many years I've prayed that my daughter-in-law would become a Christian. How long should I keep asking? Should I give thanks, and leave my request with God?

*Answer:*

This is the one question I am asked more than any other. If your heart is not at rest about your prayer and about your loved one, keep asking. If your heart finds rest when you pray, give thanks and then turn the matter over to God.

Jesus taught us both kinds of prayer. The persistent, urgent prayer which finally got results is re-

corded in Luke 11:5-13. The prayer that brings joy with the answer is promised us in John 16:23, 24, where we are instructed to ask the Father in Christ's name. Joy is an immediate reaction. We don't *guess* we are joyful, we know we are joyful.

To you whose heart is not at rest, who keep asking—have you tried giving thanks? Also, are you co-operating with God? Is He communicating to you about your loved one? Sometimes God uses us to help answer our own prayers. Sometimes we hinder our own answers through ignorance or prejudice.

Heart-communication in prayer will bring rest. It will bring you guidance as to the next step of faith you must take—because *praying* is the first step.

I recall several years ago being with a small group of women, one of whom was actually weeping as she prayed for her daughter-in-law's conversion. After some talk and some prayer, we discovered she and the young woman were estranged over earlier difficulties. As soon as she began to give thanks and ask for ways to show love and forgiveness to her daughter-in-law, immediately great joy came to her. At that time there was nothing more to ask. There was now the carrying out of love in action which would be understood by the recipient. Yes, there will no doubt be other things requiring prayer attention before the final answer comes. These, however, God will reveal at the proper time.

A step at a time is the way faith progresses—that is, unless the mountain falls "kerplunk" into the sea in one mighty splash!

*Question:* Could you give our prayer group some fresh ideas or ways to pray for the problems of others?

*Answer:*

This book is already long enough. There are countless numbers of good, helpful books in print on the subject of prayer and prayer groups, with all kinds of helpful suggestions and techniques. You will find them on the shelves of any religious book store, or in your local library.

Here I have attempted to help individuals communicate with God and with each other, through love, and in prayer which is healing and freeing.



Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

John 16:23, 24

