



Sometimes it can feel so hard to pray for other people, especially when nothing seems to change.

This booklet looks at how both Jesus and Paul prayed, and how using the same principle they used – the 'may' principle – can help you to pray for others more effectively and with more confidence.



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PRAYING FOR OTHERS



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'Praying for Others'
by
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Pray for Others

It's such a privilege to pray for other people, knowing it's what God wants you to do and that He will answer as you pray in faith. Pray for others what you believe He wants for them, and pray that they may hear His voice and respond to it. God will do everything He can, without force, to bring that person to receive what you've prayed for them. Exciting? Definitely!

Being Born-Again

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for yourself personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again and have a new perfect spirit. God becomes your Father and you His child. Romans 10:9 says – *'If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'* Tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you do, say and think. Choose to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for you and is now alive. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Say it with your voice and believe it in your heart. If you've done that sincerely, you are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. Everything you've ever done wrong or ever will do wrong is forgiven, and after this life is over, you'll live in peace and joy with your loving Father God for ever. As a child of God, you now have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God's love for you and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

Are you sometimes unsure how to pray for someone? Or do you feel your prayers for others aren't being answered? Are you frustrated that someone you love is struggling and your prayers don't seem to be making any difference?

How Can You Be Sure God Hears You?

1 Peter 3:12 says – *'the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears open to their prayer.'* God hears the prayers of people who are righteous or perfect. If you know full well that you aren't, don't panic. No-one can make themselves righteous by their own efforts. But the wonderful news is that you can be righteous because of what Jesus has done for you!

Jesus took the punishment for all the things everyone has done, is doing and will do wrong, what the Bible calls sin, when He died on the Cross. God can't pretend sin doesn't matter. But He loves people so much that He doesn't want to punish them, so He punished His Son Jesus instead. This means your sins are forgiven; and when you are born-again, that is you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, that forgiveness becomes real to you. God gives you a new, righteous spirit. This doesn't mean that it's then ok to sin - it isn't - it will lead to many problems in your life and the lives of others, but that sin will not affect your righteous spirit. And it doesn't mean you'll never sin again. But when you do, God wants you to confess it to Him, turn away from it and receive His forgiveness. So does God hear your prayers? If you are born-again, the answer is yes – you are righteous because Jesus died for you and you responded. (To read about being born-again go to the end of this booklet.)

God's Will

The teaching in this booklet applies to praying for something that is in God's will - something that you know God wants. There are so many things in the Bible which God wants for people, such as knowing Him, healing, living in love, joy and peace, having needs met, to name but a few. If you're not sure what God's will is when you're praying for someone, don't just pray a woolly prayer with 'if it's Your will' tagged on the end. Ask God to show you His will and when He does, pray for that.

Free Will

God made people with free will so they can choose how they live. They can accept Jesus or they can reject Him. God didn't make people puppets on strings or pre-programmed robots so He could force them to live His way. God loves you and wants you to love Him back freely. He is always drawing you to Himself in love, but He leaves you free to choose to love Him back or not. That way, when you do, He can have a real love relationship with you, not a forced one. It's the only kind of relationship He wants.

When you're praying for someone remember they have free will too. This is what makes praying for someone else different from praying for yourself. You have control over your own will, but not over anyone else's. Jesus said in Mark 11:24 – *'whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you shall have them.'* This wonderful principle applies to things that you ask for yourself. It says you have to believe you will receive what you prayed for. As you pray for someone else your part is to believe God will answer, but you can't believe that the person will receive the answer because they may choose to refuse it. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus says to Jerusalem – *'How often I would*

Praying for Healing for Others

Jesus made it very clear that faith is needed for healing, so you can't just command healing in Jesus's name for someone who isn't with you and expect results. There has to be faith operating from their side. On just a few occasions, Jesus healed someone who wasn't with Him but in each case, someone very close to the sick person had come to Him on their behalf in faith. He responded to the faith of that person rather than that of the sick person, but faith was still operating on the side of the sick person.

So the very first thing to pray for someone who isn't with you and needs healing is that God will reveal His love to them and His desire for them to be well and that the person may hear what He's saying and respond. Ask God to send someone to them who will explain it to them and pray that the person may be willing to hear and respond and reach out in faith for their healing.

There was just one time when Jesus couldn't heal many people. It was in His home town where the people who had known Him from a child wouldn't believe He was the Son of God and so had no faith in Him. Mark 6:5-6 says – *'He could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people, and healed them. He marveled because of their unbelief.'* So you can't command healing unless you know the person has faith in Jesus for it. But if you spend time with them and explain how Jesus has won their healing for them on the Cross, their faith might rise so you can command healing in Jesus's name.

(For more detail on healing, read the booklet 'God Wants You to Be Well'.)

faith and how he needs to believe that God will answer his prayer. If he responds positively, you can pray for him while you're together asking God for help for the marriage. However, when he leaves you, it is still up to him to believe. You can't make it just happen and God won't make it happen. He loves him too much to override his free will. You can continue to pray in his absence that he may hear God and that he may respond and so save his marriage. God wants to guide him step by step bringing healing to him, his wife and his marriage, but if he won't co-operate God can't do so. He will have answered your prayer, but somewhere along the line the husband has rejected the way God is leading him.

Praying for Someone to be Born-again

2 Corinthians 4:4 says that the devil – *'has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ ... should not dawn on them.'* The devil doesn't want people to be born-again; he wants them to keep struggling, trying to get by on their own instead of with all the power, wisdom and love God has for them. So he has blinded their minds – the world is full of people who just won't consider Jesus or who will go to great lengths to 'disprove' Him.

But Jesus has defeated the devil on the Cross and as a born-again believer you have His authority. So use it – bind the spiritual blindness that is on the person in the name of Jesus that they may be free to receive His Good News. Then pray that God will send someone along to tell them about Jesus, and that they may be open to listen to what that person says and respond.

have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!' Jesus wanted to love and protect the people of Jerusalem, but they refused to allow Him to do so. God will never override someone's free will. His love for them won't allow Him to do that and He is faithful – He will never go back on the way He designed people to be.

When you pray for someone and nothing changes, it isn't that God didn't hear your prayer or answer it. For instance, say you are praying that the husband of a friend will change his ways and work with his wife to save their marriage. That is a prayer which is pleasing to God and He will answer it and will speak to the husband about saving his marriage. But if the husband fails to hear because his mind is so occupied with other things, or hears but refuses to respond, God will not force him. Don't think God hasn't heard or answered your prayer and blame Him, when the blame lies with the person's inability to hear what God is saying or his refusal to respond to Him. Each individual is responsible for their own response to God. You can't make it happen for another, but you can pray that it may.

The "May" Principle

New Testament prayers are based on the 'may' principle. Jesus prayed for believers in John 17:21-23 – *'that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that you sent me and loved them, even as you loved me.'* Jesus wants all born-again Christians to be united, or one in Him. But He didn't ask God to make them one; He prayed that they may be

one. God has answered that prayer – He has made it possible for believers to live at peace with each other. He has shown them how to do it, but they haven't all responded. Some Christians have used their free will to refuse. Although there are wonderful examples of Christians living and worshipping in peace with each other, the church as a whole has rejected God's answer to Jesus's prayer.

Another example is in Ephesians 3:16-19 where a man called Paul prays for the Christians in Ephesus – *'that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strengthened to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen.'* Paul didn't ask God to make these things happen; he asked God to grant the people, or give them, the ability to receive all He had for them. God answered that prayer and the probability is that many of the Ephesian Christians received what God was offering while some either failed to recognise what He was doing or refused it and so missed out on God's blessings. Paul prayed that God would give so that they may receive.

To go back to the example of a failing marriage, follow the 'may' principle: don't ask God to make the marriage work, because He's not going to force that on the husband. Instead ask God to guide the husband to think about it and desire it, and pray that he may respond positively. God will answer that prayer. He will make reconciliation possible, and He will draw the husband back to his wife, telling him what will help and what will not. He may

hear God's words and respond, or he may not and the marriage fall apart. But if the marriage comes to an end, it doesn't mean God hadn't answered your prayer; He had answered it, but His guidance had been rejected. He will never override free will.

Faith

Faith is so important. God works through people who believe in Him. You don't have to beg God or repeat your prayer over and over – you can't persuade Him. What you need to do when you pray for someone is to have faith that God will answer. But you can't make the other person have faith to receive that answer, so pray that they may have faith. Ask God to send someone along to show them His love. And pray that they may listen to the person He sends and respond in faith.

If you know the person has faith for the answer to the prayer, you can pray together. In Matthew 18:19 Jesus says – *'if two of you will agree on earth concerning anything that they will ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.'* This is a wonderful promise, but it applies just to the two people praying – it will be done for them, not for someone else.

Is the Person With You?

There's a difference between praying for a person you are with and praying for someone who isn't there. God isn't going to supernaturally 'make' your friend's marriage suddenly work. He will be guiding her husband every step of the way in answer to your prayer, but he has to choose to respond to God.

Now if you are with the husband, you can talk to him about God's love for him and how He wants to restore his marriage and that He has a plan for him and his wife. You can talk about