

Prayer Ministry at Bridgeway

Praying for the sick, wounded, and spiritually oppressed

Goals for this seminar

1. To develop a deeper Biblical understanding of prayer and God's purposes in prayer.
2. To increase expectancy when we pray for people and increase our faith in the power of prayer, knowing God is intimately involved in our daily lives. (Rom. 8:11, Eph. 3:20, 2 Cor 4:7)
3. To help us learn to be naturally supernatural; to know that praying for the sick, wounded and spiritually oppressed is part of the normal Christian life and not just for 'professionals' or highly gifted people. God often chooses to do extraordinary things through ordinary people. (Jas. 5:17-18)
4. To outline some practical guidelines on how to pray for people in most situations. The 5-part prayer model we use helps reduce the anxiety of praying for a complete stranger and gives us confidence we can do this.

Important thoughts on prayer

1. What is prayer?

Prayer is an expression of relational intimacy with God. The true core essence of prayer is a 24/7 relationship of dynamic intimacy with our Creator. Prayer is much more than just a monologue of asking God for something. It consists of pouring out our hearts to Him; hearts which are full of deep questions and longings, as well as, times of confusion with understanding God's purposes in the circumstances of life. We can express our frustrations as part of the intimate relationship with God in our prayers. Although frustration can be an expression of disappointment and even anger, our frustration is not at God or with God, but it is with living in a fallen and broken world filled with evil, sin, disease and death. Sometimes we may cry out "Are you there, God?" (a rhetorical question) The beauty of the prayers in The Psalms is the deep, raw emotion that is expressed in them: e.g. David in Ps. 63:1-2: "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." Other examples are Ps. 42:1-3 and Ps. 73 where we see Asaph's deep feelings and questions. Remember David is called by God "A man after my own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14) When we cry out to God we're not just venting into the air but expressing our innermost feelings with the One who knows everything about us and still loves us. A lot of our prayers consists of asking for the Kingdom of Heaven to come now as Jesus taught us to pray. (Matt 6:8)

2. Why pray?

Three reasons should be apparent.

- a. Never expect God to do for us apart from prayer what He has sovereignly ordained to do only through prayer. Jas. 4:2 clearly illustrated in Isa. 30:18-19: "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to

- you. For the Lord is a God of justice; He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry." As soon as He hears it, He answers you.
- b. Prayer highlights the depth of our poverty and magnifies the Giver, not the one asking. Our asking glorifies the Giver.
 - c. Another reason to pray is that prayer is intimately connected to our joy. 1 Thess. 5:16-18, John 16:24 "Whatever you ask of my Father in my name He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (see also 1 John. 5:14, Js. 4:2-3)

A good thing to remember: If you find times where joy is absent in your life, then look at the status of your prayer life. Prayer is not a duty. It's a source of deep abiding joy in God. It's not always praying for others but praying for yourself is absolutely necessary. (Ps. 86:11, Ps. 101:2)

Learn to pray the Scriptures, not only over others, but also for yourself. e.g. Eph. 3:14-21: "For this reason I bow my knees before the father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant me to be strengthened with power though His Spirit in my inner being so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith that I being rooted and grounded in love may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask or think, according to the power at work in me, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Ask the question "What is intimacy with God?" How do we position ourselves to deepen it? In Js. 4:8-9, James is clear that repentance is connected to drawing near to God while we seek to spend time with Him. (Ps 139:24-25)

As John Calvin said: "Repentance is not merely the start of the Christian life, it is The Christian Life." But a major part of drawing near to God is also worship. C.S. Lewis said, "It is in the process of being worshiped that God communicates His presence to man." Of course, worship is a large part of warfare against the enemy.

C.H. Spurgeon said, "If the arch enemy cannot have you in the hereafter, he'll settle for making you wretched in the here and now." Satan lays the ax at the root of our praise, so that God might cease to be glorified.

Drawing near to God in intimacy is full of worship, seeking and asking, and repentance.

General thoughts on praying for others

1. God is sovereign, so there's always some mystery concerning His purposes. (2 Cor. 12:7-10, John 5:19)
2. God sometimes has a redemptive purpose in mind for allowing suffering. (Ps. 119:67, Rom. 5:3-5)
3. Faith certainly plays a role in healing. Matt. 9:28-29 – having faith God is able to heal. Of course, there are different expressions of faith. Eph. 2:8-9 speaks of saving faith. 1 Cor. 12:9 speaks of the spiritual gift of faith.

The Prayer Model

This is not a methodology or a recipe. It is simply a help in directing us to know how to pray for others and help us engage the Holy Spirit in our prayers.

1. The **Interview** is designed to help determine why the person has the condition for which they need prayer. Ask simple questions:
 - a. How can I pray for you?
 - b. When did this condition first start and was anything significant happening in your life at the time?
 - c. If pain is the problem, use the scale of 1-10 to measure the intensity.
 - d. The interview is often times when the Holy Spirit will speak to you so keep your spiritual ears open!
2. **Diagnosis** —What is the cause of the condition?
 - a. Natural issues: Living in a fallen world where there are accidents, disease, viruses, physical and emotional problems.
 - b. Sin based issues causing physical problems – don't put a guilt trip on them.
 - c. Emotional causes: unforgiveness, deep wounds from past issues, bitterness
 - d. Family history: alcoholism, legalism, abuse, occult involvement, word curses, familial spirits
3. The **Prayer** (choosing the kind of prayer)
 - a. Prayer directed to God such as petition for the Spirit's presence, petition for the Kingdom to come, petition for the release of God's power.
 - b. Prayer from God (a command): "Be healed in Jesus' name"
 - c. Avoid authoritarian statement: claiming something is already done presumptively. Don't think you have to say a perfectly articulated prayer. God is more concerned with our heart than with eloquence.
4. The **Practice**
 - a. Ask permission to lay hands on them. Be very appropriate and respectful.
 - b. Be aware of physical manifestations such as trembling or feeling warmth and just bless God's touch.
 - c. Ask if they feel anything. Anoint them with oil if they are willing and desire that.
 - d. Enlist someone of the same gender if you sense that is necessary.
5. **Post Prayer Suggestions**
 - a. Tell them healing can be a process. Encourage them to continue to receive prayer and to not give up hope.
 - b. If nothing happens as far as healing, don't say it's because of their lack of faith.
 - c. Consider giving direction: reconciliation pursuit, forgiveness, more prayer, inner healing ministry
 - d. Don't use the prayer time for counseling (that might come later).
 - e. Don't pronounce healing. If they are healed, let them pronounce it.
 - f. Remember: If nothing happens, it is not failure.

Praying for the spiritually/demonically oppressed

1. Pray for discernment and know what the Scriptures say. (Luke 10:17-20) Tell the person what you're doing.
2. Declare your authority in Christ.
3. Be aware that manifestations can have different causes including medical reasons. Ask pertinent questions.
 - a. Ask them to affirm their faith in Christ and the cleansing power of His shed blood.
 - b. Ask them how they feel.
 - c. Ask when their symptoms first appeared.
4. Look for an open door: drug usage, sexual immorality, occult involvement, family history, etc.
5. Don't panic. (1 John 4:4)

Example: Look directly into their eyes and say:

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the power of His shed blood, I take authority over any demonic spirit, either present in or around *insert the person's name.* In the name of Jesus Christ, I command every demonic spirit to leave and never return. Then pray for filling of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 12:43-45)

Suggested Reading

1. Foster, Richard J. – Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home
2. Hvass, Deb – 5 Heart Positions of Prayer
3. Miller Paul, E. – A Praying Life
4. Sorge, Bob – Secrets of the Secret Place
5. Whitney, Donald S. – Praying the Bible