



Do It Yourself

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This month (March) I have been studying "prayer" with some neighbors, so I thought this would be a good message to use again right now.

For forty years I mowed the lawn. When the lawn mower gave out, some years ago, I considered: shall I buy a new mower, or just pay someone to mow the lawn? Guess what I decided ...



Similarly, a few years ago my wife decided to take over most of the snow shoveling. She enjoys it, and I pretty much don't. So I said, "Okay." I still help a little. Sometimes. When it's really necessary.

One morning, on the way to the gym, I had a thought: wouldn't it be nice if I could get someone to do my exercising for me. Then I could sleep a bit longer, and have a leisurely breakfast.



That was a ridiculous thought, wasn't it? If I don't do the workout myself, I don't get the benefit of it. The more faithfully I do it, the more benefit I get.

It occurs to me that prayer is a lot like that. You can ask someone — a friend, a family member, a pastor, your whole congregation — to pray for you. And that's not a bad thing. But if you don't pray yourself, you miss much of the benefit to be gained from prayer.

Think about it: when you pray, you are able to communicate directly with God. Think of the sheer size, the awesome power, the glory, the majesty, the generosity, the goodness and love of the Lord; and then think of how puny and weak and sinful and selfish we human beings — including you and me — really are. It is mind-boggling to realize that God not only wants each of us to come to Him in prayer, but He commands us to do it. And He promises to hear us.

In Old Testament times it was common to have someone else pray for the people. Certain men, like Moses and Samuel and Elijah, were anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit and were made prophets. They spoke the words of God to the people, and they often offered prayers for the people. But individuals also prayed their own prayers, and were heard and answered by the Lord. Abraham, Isaac, and David are notable examples of men who knew they could approach God with their concerns and expect Him to respond to them.



In the New Testament, too, there are examples of prayers offered for the people, and corporate prayer where all pray together, though only one speaks; but the major prayer emphasis in the New Testament is this: you must pray.

Jesus' teaching on prayer

"... When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ... Do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ... Pray like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...'" (Matt. 6:6,7,9)



Jesus was pretty scornful of people who pray to show how pious they are. Unfortunately, that still goes on today.

"... Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." (Matt. 21:22)

How does one "have faith" when faced with a need? I wish there was a simple answer. All I can think to tell you is, think about the One to whom you are praying. Is He able to do what you ask? Of course He is. Does He love you and want the best for you? Absolutely! Then maybe "having

faith” is simply trusting God to do what is best. He always will, you know.

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25)

Some denominations like to say, “Get right with God.” They may mean different things by that, but to me it merely means obey Him to the best of your ability. So, with God’s help, forgive those whom you ought to forgive. Besides that, unforgiveness is a heavy burden that you should not be trying to carry around.

He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. (Luke 18:1)

Jesus seems to be saying, If you don’t get what you ask for right away, keep asking until either you get it, or God makes it clear to you that He has a better answer.

“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:40)

Perhaps one thing we ought to pray for more than anything else is for God to carry out Romans 12:2 in our lives. **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Jesus obviously told His followers to pray, and to expect to be heard and answered. The only requirement was faith.

Paul’s teaching on prayer

Besides his frequent mention of his own prayers, the Apostle Paul had a few things to say about our individual prayers in his letters to the New Testament churches. For instance:

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” (Rom. 8:26)

Many believe this refers to praying in tongues; others think that doesn’t happen anymore. Either way, it certainly means we must allow the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers — both the words we say and the spirit in which we say them — because without His help we can’t do it very well.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”. (Rom. 12:12)

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” (Col. 4:2)

These are saying much the same thing Jesus taught in His parable — don’t get tired, don’t give up — hang in there until the need is met.

“... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil. 4:6)

What should we pray about? “Everything,” but especially those things that might cause us to worry. Don’t worry — just pray!

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

This is talking about our attitude. We can afford to be positive and up-beat — God loves us, He is able to do more than we can ask or even think, and He wants us to be thankful and joyful always. Our circumstances may be bad sometimes, but He is always good and loving, and ready to listen to our prayers.

In a very real sense praying for others, praying for God’s will to be done and for His kingdom to come, is work that the Lord has given us to do. It doesn’t take special skills. Any of us can do it. We can’t all be Billy Graham or Mother Teresa, but we can all pray. By praying we become part of the solution, not just another part of the problem.

So what are the benefits we get from praying? I can think of some ...

1. When we pray, we enter into the very presence of God. The more we do that, the more we come to appreciate how wonderful that is, and want to continue it. It’s like a small preview of Heaven.
2. When we pray, thanking and praising God, we are also telling ourselves the truth about Him, making Him more and more real and present in our lives; exercising and increasing our faith.
3. When we pray specific prayers, other things we should pray about often come to mind.
4. Finally, when we pray, somehow it helps. We may not understand how or why, but we can be confident that it does.

Prayer changes things. Often it changes us.

May your prayers be all that God wants them to be, so that you, and others, and even God Himself, may be blessed through them.

Brother Roland

On the Wings of Prayer

Just close your eyes and open your heart
And feel your worries and cares depart.
Just yield yourself to the Father above
And let Him hold you secure in His love—
For life on earth grows more involved
With endless problems that can't be solved—
But God only asks us to do our best,
Then He will "take over" and finish the rest—
So when you are tired, discouraged and blue.
There's always one door that is open to you,
And that is the door to "The House of Prayer,"
And you'll find God waiting to meet you there,
And "The House of Prayer" is no farther away
Than the quiet spot where you kneel and pray.
For the heart is a temple when God is there
As we place ourselves in His loving care,
And He hears every prayer and answers each one
When we pray in His name, "Thy will be done,"
And the burdens that seemed too heavy to bear
Are lifted away "On the Wings of Prayer".



Feel free to ask ...

If you have questions or concerns about the Bible or the Christian life, you can send them to me, and I will try to address them in coming months in the "Good News Guide." If I can't answer a question adequately, I'll try to find someone who can. I can't promise every question will get a satisfying answer because, frankly, there are a lot of questions that we won't have answers to until we're in Heaven with Jesus, and maybe not even then. But I'll try. The answers to your questions will, I hope, be a blessing to others who may have the same questions and concerns. Send them to me at this address:

Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville, PA 17222

Prayer of an Unknown Confederate Soldier

I asked God for strength,
that I might achieve.
I was made weak,
that I might learn humbly to obey....

I asked for health,
that I might do greater things.
I was given infirmity,
that I might do better things....

I asked for riches,
that I might be happy.
I was given poverty,
that I might be wise....

I asked for power,
that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness,
that I might feel the need of God....

I asked for all things,
that I might enjoy life.
I was given life,
that I might enjoy all things....

I got nothing I asked for—
but everything that I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken
prayers were answered.

I am among all, most richly blessed!

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

**May the Lord make his face to shine
upon you, and be gracious to you.**

**May the Lord lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you peace.**

Amen.

Prayer

Prayer is one of the easiest things the Lord asks us to do — but also one of the hardest, if we let ourselves be distracted by worldly pursuits and all the little things we have to do or would rather do. My hope and prayer is that, with God's help, all of us would become more faithful in prayer. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

R Z O I Z F C D C G E Y U F U C T R U S T I N G G O D J N V E
R J J G B A Z Q Y L Y X N U C F S R R T G C E I N G A N C P V
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C E M A K B E V T N D I R U K H I F L R U A W I H V Y U O K E
O H A W J M S I E O M P T E H T I L I P A Q S I N B I D S A H
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F G R E Z N H P Z I E H Z C O T T P G F H J S J N B O C G H Y
E N S P S G T F T E E S M O A U I I O S G L F E L H W F K U P
S I Z M E D M H K H I Q S N X N T R W M I O Y L C I E T F X P
S R C M Q J J F Y V P D N F C D G C V J I N I F T M A A Y Z Y
E A B J P O P P M R U P H I Q I Z Y E E R W R H Z W O X V L O
D E I C Y G O Y G A Z H B D V P S I T A S U T D E M S D I E Z
S F C K Z C B H B X T V Y E P S E L F I S H M O T I V E S Z N
I T D L R E J Q Z D U L N N Y J W U H L E I L Q L O O M D I D
N O R I D N Y R M T Y E T T U Q F K D M I K N S C X X F X B W
L N T S D R O W F O S T O L H T I W I N B E D G E K R J S H T
I E I G M G L N Z S L S M Y X R J N C B X A X G N J S O Q Z R
S Y T I N U M M O C N I D N A C D Q A K N J H Q Q M F Z W T Y

Words:

* **When to pray**

AT ALL TIMES
WITHOUT CEASING
OFTEN
NEVER GIVING UP

* **Whom to pray for**

THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE
THOSE IN AUTHORITY
YOUR ENEMIES

* **What to ask for**

WISDOM
GOD'S KINGDOM COME
HIS WILL BE DONE
ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

OUR DAILY BREAD
FORGIVENESS

* **How to pray**

PRIVATELY
AND IN COMMUNITY
WITH HUMILITY
FROM THE HEART
WITH JOY
WITH PRAISE
WITH THANKSGIVING
CONFIDENTLY
TRUSTING GOD
IN THE SPIRIT
WITH THE MIND
REMEMBER THE PATTERN

* **How not to pray**

LIKE THE HYPOCRITES
SHOWING OFF
WITH LOTS OF WORDS
SELFISHLY
PRESUMPTUOUSLY

* **Hindrances to prayer**

DISTRACTIONS
UNCONFESSED SIN
CHERISHING SIN
NOT FEARING THE LORD
IGNORING GOD'S LAW
UNFORGIVENESS
SELFISH MOTIVE