

LESSON 5 Think About Others When You Pray

What do you do when you know of someone who is hurting or in trouble? You would probably say, “I would try to help him.” But what if you are too far away? What if he needs something you do not have? What if he has a difficult problem that is beyond your ability to solve?

In those situations, you can pray. Even when you think you can help someone, you should still pray. He or she may have needs that cannot be seen. As you pray, God may show you those needs and speak to you about how to help.

This lesson explains some of the keys to praying for others. It will help you know what to pray for and how to pray. As you put what you learn into practice, you will be following the examples given in the Bible and will also participate in God’s work in the lives of others.

The Plan

- A. Look at the Needs of Others
- B. Pray for Your Family
- C. Pray for Others
- D. Help Meet the Needs

The Goals

- 1. Identify with individuals who have needs for which you can pray.
- 2. Describe the importance of praying for members of our family.
- 3. Describe how we should pray for others.
- 4. Explain our role in meeting others' needs.

A. LOOK AT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

Goal 1. Identify with individuals who have needs for which you can pray.

Jesus looked at the people about Him and saw their needs. He felt concern for all those who suffered. He welcomed the poor, the outcasts, the blind, the lepers. Even while the crowds were listening to His teaching, Jesus knew they were hungry and told His disciples to give them something to eat.

Jesus' love for people made Him suffer with those who suffered. The love of God in us will help us to look through Jesus' eyes at those who are blinded by sin, victims of Satan, lost, and headed for eternal suffering. Such love will drive us to prayer, even as it did to Jesus. Jesus even looked at the need of those who mocked Him as He hung on the Cross for their sins. There He cried out,

Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Time and again Jesus was “filled with pity” or “moved with compassion” as He looked at the people's needs. *Compassion* means “suffering with, feeling another's suffering as if it were

your own.” This compassion led Jesus to prayer and work. His miracles were to a great extent the result of His compassion, the manifestation of God’s love in meeting people’s needs.

Matthew 14:14 “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”

Some people think only of their problems or interests and do not see the needs of those around them. Worse still, some people see the troubles of others without feeling any concern, pity, or sympathy for those who suffer. We must pray that God will make us more sensitive to the problems of the people around us. Then will God will pour into us His love for the people we are praying for, and we can pray with the compassion of Christ.

Concern for those who have needs produces effective prayers. It brings deep earnestness in intercessory prayer (prayer for others) and produces faith for the answer as we realize God’s concern over the need.

Application

- 1** Copy in your notebook the needs in the chart that follows Luke 11:9 in Lesson 1, page 26. By each one write the name of someone you know who has that need.
- 2** Think of the needs of every person you meet today. Write in your notebook the names and needs of any for whom you feel especially concerned.
- 3** Ask God to help you love people and feel their needs as if they were your own. Pray with compassion for the people on your list.



B. PRAY FOR YOUR FAMILY

Goal 2. Describe the importance of praying for members of our family.

The Bible has many examples of men and women praying for their children and other members of their families. Abraham’s prayers saved his nephew Lot from death when the city of Sodom was destroyed. God answered prayer in the choice of a wife for his son, Isaac. Isaac prayed for God to heal his wife

Rebecca. She prayed for her children before they were born. Manoah prayed that God would let them know how to bring up their son. Job prayed every day for God to keep his children from sinning or to forgive them when they sinned. Parents took their babies to the temple and dedicated them to God. Mothers took their children to Jesus for His blessing and for healing.

Throughout the Bible God wants the whole family to serve Him together and enjoy His blessing on their home. If any members of your family have not yet accepted Christ as Savior, your most important prayer for them is their salvation. Here is a wonderful Bible verse that tells what we may expect if we believe.

Acts 16:31 ““Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.””

This is a verse to memorize and quote when we pray for the salvation of our family. This strengthens our faith as we remind ourselves that God wants the whole family to believe and be saved. By faith we can claim their salvation.

Love for our families should make us patient and kind with them even when they strongly oppose the gospel. Of course, Satan does not want our family and friends to be saved. Sometimes the more we pray for them, the more they seem to rebel against the things of God. Therefore, it is important that we: 1) keep on praying and praising God in faith for the answer, 2) be patient, 3) show them that we love them, and 4) obey the Lord as He shows us how to witness to them or pray with them.

Prayer + Patience+ Love + Obedience = Results

Application

4 Mark an X beside any prayers for the family that we find examples of in the Bible.

-**a**) Food for the day
-**b**) Healing
-**c**) Guidance in rearing children
-**d**) Protection
-**e**) Forgiveness for sin
-**f**) Protection against sinning
-**g**) Dedication of children
-**h**) Blessings for children
-**i**) Guidance in choice of a spouse

In the exercise above underline any prayers that you have made for any member of your family. Place an X *after* any that you plan to talk to God about now.

5 In your notebook, list the names of your family and relatives. Ask God to help you recognize and feel their needs. As He helps you see them, write the needs beside the name of each one, then pray for them each day. As God answers your prayers, write the date when the need was met. If you have no family or relatives, you may want to do this for some other family or friends.

6 Memorize Acts 16:31 and quote it as you pray for the salvation of your family (or for the family of any Christian friends).

C. PRAY FOR OTHERS

Goal 3. Describe how we should pray for others.

What a privilege we have in working with God to help others through prayer. People everywhere need encouragement and help. Consider the schoolteacher, church leaders, government officials. They, too, need God's help. We pray for our nation and

for others, for all those who suffer, for those who need Christ, for new converts, and God's people everywhere. God is concerned about every human need and has a solution for every problem. We work as His partners by sharing His concern, taking people's needs to Him, listening to His instructions, then doing what He tells us to do. His Word shows us how to pray for others.

1 Timothy 2:1–4 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Matthew 5:44 “I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Jeremiah 37:3 “King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: ‘Please pray to the LORD our God for us.’”

Psalms 122:6 “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May those who love you be secure.’”

Jeremiah 42:3 “Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.”

James 5:13–16 “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

The oil mentioned here had no power to heal, but it represented the Holy Spirit who would do the work. In Bible

times, oil was placed on a person's head when dedicating him to God and His service. Prayer for healing included confession of faults and dedication to God. Many people today tell how God healed them of even incurable diseases as they obeyed His instructions in James 5:13–16.

Let us pray together now:

Our heavenly Father, we love You because You are worthy of our worship and love. You are the all powerful God, Creator of all things, here with us now and inviting us to pray.

You see all of our faults and failures. We confess them to you. We ask You to forgive us and to help us do what You want us to do. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins. Thank you for making us Your children. So we come to You with joy to be partners with You in prayer for others.

Bless our families and meet each person's need. Please show us how we can help each one. Some of them need Your salvation. Help us tell them about You and show them Your love in all we do and say.

We pray for the leaders of our nation and of other nations. Give them wisdom. Help them to know and serve You. Bring Your peace to the world. Provide food for the hungry, health for the sick, and freedom for those who are oppressed.

We pray for our friends and fellow Christians, for our pastors and churches. We pray for Your people and Your work in every land, that Your kingdom may come and Your will may be done in earth as it is in heaven. Help us to do our part that this may be so. We ask in Jesus' name and for Your glory. Amen.

Application

7 Read carefully again the Bible verses in this part of the lesson, asking God to show you any area that you may have neglected in your prayers. Write in your notebook whatever He tells you to do about it.

8 Pray the preceding prayer again. Make each part definite instead of general: “I love you . . . my faults (name them) . . . my family (name them and pray for their special needs).” Name the leaders you are praying for. Mention any specific problems, the special areas of need. And thank God for the privilege of helping through prayer.



D. HELP MEET THE NEEDS

Goal 4. Explain our role in meeting others’ needs.

God sets many forces into motion in order to answer prayer and meet human needs. First, He helps us see a need and shares with us His concern about it. Then He shows us how to pray about it and gives us faith for the answer. He lets us know what He wants us to do and helps us to do it so that we will have the blessing of working with Him as partners. God also works in other people and in supernatural ways to do what would be humanly impossible. He even sends His angels to work out His will and answer our prayers.

HOW GOD ANSWERS PRAYER	
Tells us what to do	Works in circumstances
Tells others what to do	Works in us
Tells angels what to do	Defeats the evil powers
Works in nature	Works miracles

Jesus’ miracle of feeding the 5,000 shows us one way we can help Him answer prayer. He prayed over a boy’s lunch, multiplied it, and put it in the hands of the disciples to share it with the crowd. The boy could have eaten it. The disciples could have eaten it. But because they gave it to others the miracle took place. As they shared, God multiplied it until everyone had plenty to eat and twelve baskets full were left over. We, too, must do more than pray for the needs of those who are hungry—either for natural bread or for the Bread of life. God will bless us and supply all of our needs too as we pray and share with others. Jesus said,

Luke 6:38 “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The book of Nehemiah is an inspiring personal testimony of how God works in the person who prays, in others, and in circumstances to answer prayer. Nehemiah, in exile in Babylon, had a good position as a trusted servant of the emperor. But he was concerned for the needs of others, especially those of his countrymen who had returned to Jerusalem. When his brother brought him news of all the trouble there, Nehemiah responded:

Nehemiah 1:4 “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Nehemiah prayed about the walls that needed to be rebuilt to protect the people from their enemies, and God put in his heart a plan to do something about the need. Nehemiah felt so concerned that the emperor noticed it and asked why he was sad. Nehemiah was afraid because no one was supposed to look sad in the presence of the emperor. He could be punished or lose his life for displeasing the emperor. But Nehemiah sent a quick, silent prayer up to God and took the opportunity to speak to the emperor about the needs of his country. Nehemiah had prayed, “Give me success today and make the emperor merciful to me.” And God did exactly that. Instead of being displeased, the emperor discussed the problem with Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 2:4–6 “The king said to me, ‘What is it you want?’ Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, ‘If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.’ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, ‘How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?’ It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.”

What a thrill! The emperor becomes a partner in Nehemiah’s project as God answers prayer. He gives Nehemiah a leave of absence, authorization, supplies, and a military escort to protect him.

God helped Nehemiah time after time in answer to prayer. He rebuilt the walls and served as governor in Jerusalem. Nehemiah gives his secret of success in the words, “Because God is with me.” We might also say that great things were accomplished

through his prayers because he was willing to be a partner with God in answering them.

Application

- 9** Nehemiah is a good example of praying for others because he
- a)** had a good position and influence in the government.
 - b)** made specific requests and was ready to act.
 - c)** trusted the emperor as an enemy of God.

10 Review the needs you have written in your notebook and have prayed for in this lesson. Ask God to show you what He wants you to do about them. Listen for His answer. Write in your notebook any ideas that He gives you about how He wants you to help answer your prayers. Then take the opportunities He gives you.



Check Your Answers

9 b) made specific requests and was ready to act. Phrase c) is false. Though Nehemiah was in exile, he did not look at the emperor as an obstacle to the solution but as a potential partner.

4 All of these examples are in the Bible.

The other exercises in this lesson are actual practice in prayer. I hope that they have helped you.

