

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is a Family that Prays For One Another

Ephesians 6:18-20, Hebrews 11:6, James 5:13-18

The letters of Paul are filled with exhortations to pray for one another and examples of how he prays. In fact, Paul encourages us to pray without ceasing. Other New Testament writings to the churches, likewise, have a great deal to say about praying for one another. Pray is the one effective ministry we can always have for one another at any time, in any place, and under any circumstances. Prayer is the nerve connection of the body to its Head and, through Him, to every other member.

I. A Quick Survey of Selected New Testament Letters

- A. Ephesians
- B. I & II Thessalonians
- C. James

II. The Primary Objective of Prayer for One Another

- A. Notice the focus and central theme of Paul's prayers
 - 1. Circumstances give rise to persistent prayer
 - 2. While not ignoring the pressing needs created by adversity, the primary desire is that the trials result in a stronger faith and bold courage in following Christ
- B. How does intercessory prayer correlate with caring for one another?
 - 1. The first objective of every member of the congregation is to encourage every other member of the congregation to grow up in Christ and in His likeness
 - 2. While we have a duty to care for one another in practical ways, we are not to take the place of God in another person's life, but rather encourage them always to look to God
 - 3. A useful comparison is found in God's word to Ezekiel (3:17-19) where Ezekiel is responsible for giving the warning, but the one warned is responsible to take action (*also Amy Carmichael*)
- C. If Romans 8:28 is true (and it is), then every circumstance of life is primarily an opportunity to grow in faith and likeness to God, and to become a deeper, richer reflection of His joy and character.
 - 1. There *IS* a silver lining around every cloud
 - 2. Our primary intercession should be focused on achieving these purposes of God in one another's life

III. How Do We Pray for One Another & Pray Without Ceasing?

- A. It is more important *THAT* we pray, than *HOW*, although growth in the practice of prayer is important
- B. Prayer arises out of genuine love and concern for one another, we must first open our hearts to the lives of others
- C. Ceaseless prayer is like a compass needle pointing North; remove any distractions and immediate Northward focus is automatic

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

(Eph 6:18-20 NASB 1995)

6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb 11:6 NASB 1995)

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul mean when he tells the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing?
2. What is the primary goal of all prayer for believers?
3. What is God after in our lives? What does He want most to do for us?
4. Does God care that we suffer physically and emotionally? If He cares, why do so many believers still suffer in these ways?
5. What is our responsibility to one another in terms of practical care?
6. What is NOT our responsibility in the care of one another?
7. Is it possible to get in the way of God's work in a person's life by coming to their rescue? Explain how this might happen.
8. What can we do when a person does not get what they expect and walks away from church or even the faith?

would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 Then he prayed again,
and the sky poured rain and
the earth produced its fruit.
(Jam 5:13-18 NASB 1995)

NOTES

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Paul R. Martin
Senior Pastor
Alliance Bible Church of McHenry, IL

