

Pray This for Others
September 23, 2018

You love your friends. And you want good things for them. You love your family members and you want good things for them. You love your brothers and sisters in Christ and you want good things for them. For all those you love you want health, peace of mind, adequate income, good relationships, and happiness. There may be other things you want for them. This morning I want to suggest some additional things to add to that list and how to make them a reality.

Paul the missionary has a list of good things he wants for his brothers and sisters in Christ. He wants to see them living for Jesus. He wants to see them pleasing the Lord. He wants to see them bearing fruit in good deeds. He wants to see them increasing in their knowledge of God. More than just facts about God, he wants them to be growing in experience of God, growing in relationship to God, growing in intimacy with God. And he wants for them endurance, patience and joy that no negative life circumstances will diminish. He wants them to be thankful people.

We know Paul wants these things for other Christians because he says so in his letter to the Christians at Colossae. And these are all good things to want for those WE love.

And Paul also knew the secret of these things becoming a reality in their lives. That is the subject of the sermon today. Paul is writing to the Christians in the city of Colossae and is praying for them something that will lead to the good things he wants for them.

Today we learn one of the best things to pray for someone else. This is what you can pray for everyone you love.

Some of you were not here last week as we began this series in the letter of Colossians. So we will read from the beginning of the letter this morning. Paul will thank God for three things about the Christians in the city of Colossae. Last week we looked at each in detail and their importance to our relationship with Jesus. If you have not already done so, I recommend you go to our website and read that sermon.

Colossians 1:1-8 (NIV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints-- the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

The new testament letters, except Romans and Colossians, were written to churches that Paul helped start. Paul went primarily to the larger cities to share the gospel. As people in those cities got saved, some of them spread the gospel to the smaller outlying

towns. This appears to be the case here. Epaphras is credited with sharing the gospel at Colossae. Paul has not been there. But through Epaphras he has heard of their conversion. And because of that, he has added them to his prayer list. Now let us read what he prayed for them.

Colossians 1:9 (NIV) For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

You can't go wrong in asking God to fill someone with the knowledge of His will because we all need to know God's will. Now Jesus explained the primary will of God in John 6.

John 6:28-29 (NIV) Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

God's primary will is that we believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus requires several things to have taken place.

1) To believe in Jesus a person must become convinced of personal sin.

So if you are praying this prayer for someone who is NOT a Christian, you can add something along the lines of, "Lord, convict him/her of sin. Create a hunger in him/her for forgiveness." This needs to be part of your prayers for this person because only the Holy Spirit can convince someone of sin.

One man told me that he had a good marriage, two fine sons, a good job, nice home, and pretty good health. He figured if God wanted more from him, he would not be so well blessed. He did not see a need for pursuing a closer relationship with God. He did not see himself as a sinner.

All sin is rebellion against God. And we are all guilty of sin. We need to be convinced of our sin and see ourselves in need of forgiveness in order to be motivated to pursue this from God.

2) To believe in Jesus a person must become convinced that Jesus is the savior they need.

Convinced of this the person will not pursue a different savior or try to manufacture self-righteousness.

So if you praying for a non-Christian, realize that this person will need to hear the good news of Jesus. Ask God for an opportunity to share the story of your own conversion. Ask God to present the good news to this person. This may come about by you inviting them to your church hoping they will hear it preached. Or you can tell them. I recommend the one verse plan, which I can teach you in about 20 minutes. Or you can give them a Gospel tract. One of the best is Steps to Peace with God. We can provide you with one of these.

In a few moments we're going to give you an opportunity to respond to the good news of Jesus. You may have recently come under conviction of sin and your need for

forgiveness. If you are ready to believe that Jesus is the savior you need, we will give you an opportunity to respond to Him in a few minutes.

So this is a good prayer to pray for a non-Christian. But Paul is writing to those who are already Christians. They have already believed on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. They have already been somewhat instructed in how to live for God. We trust that Epaphras taught them the basics of living the Christian life. The Christian life is where you grow to become sanctified (holy).

The word sanctified means living all that we are and have for God.

Everything else commanded of us in the New Testament falls under this.

The majority of God's will for all of us is revealed in the New Testament. But we need the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning.

The New Testament is full of spiritual truth. And much of that truth is spiritually discerned. You must first be born again to understand it. And secondly you need the Holy Spirit to interpret it for you.

Paul is writing to Christians who did not even have the New Testament. It had not been written or collected yet. They certainly needed the Holy Spirit to remind them of what Epaphras had taught them and to help them understand what Paul was writing to them.

But we need more help to live out the will of God. Not all that we need to know is in the New Testament. It says nothing about smoking cigarettes, taking drugs, or how to relate to the gender issues in our day. The immigration problem in America is not addressed in the Bible. If and where you should go to college won't be revealed in the New Testament. There are situations you will face at school or work or home that are not addressed directly in the Bible. We still depend on the Holy Spirit to fill us with the knowledge of God's will in all the situations the Bible does not address. Paul knows this.

Colossians 1:9 (NIV) For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

We all need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. But we need this through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Look with me at another time Paul used these two words. We are turning to Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV) In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

God lavished, great word, grace on us. He did so with all wisdom and understanding. There are the two words Paul used in the letter to Colossae. God used His perfect wisdom and understanding to develop a plan of salvation, to know when to implement this plan, and how to communicate it to us. All of this centers on Jesus.

Ephesians 1:9-10 (NIV) And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect

when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Jesus is at the center of all God has done. Jesus is at the center of us knowing and living out God's will.

Paul is praying for more than us simply knowing God's will, like don't steal, don't complain, pray continuously, and give thanks in all circumstances. Paul is praying that we will see how all of God's will for us fits together. He wants us to see how wise it is. He wants us to see the wisdom of it. He wants us to see the reasoning behind it. It will bring everything and everyone, eventually, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That would start with each of them. That will continue with each of us and those we are praying this prayer for.

We need to know God's will. We need to be both wise and understanding of how to live it out. And then all the good things Paul wants for them, the ones mentioned in verses 10-12 will become a reality in their lives, and in our lives.

Colossians 1:9-12 (NIV) For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and (be) joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Who are you praying this for? Who should you be praying this for? Pray it for yourself. Pray it for me. Pray it for all those here. Pray it for all your friends and family. Pray this through your church directory. Pray this through your Facebook pages. Pray this for your classmates. Pray this for your teammates. Pray this for your coworkers. Pray this for your neighbors.

There is no better prayer to pray for anyone than this, that God would fill them with the knowledge of His will through all wisdom and understanding. When you don't know what else to pray, pray for this. When you don't know how else to pray, pray this way.

As I said earlier, we give you now an opportunity to pray yourself into God's will. In a moment we are going to have a time of silent prayer. If you are convinced you are a sinner and desire God's forgiveness, then pray yourself into the hands of Jesus. God sent Jesus to die for you, to save you from the penalty of your sins, to forgive you and give you eternal life. God wants to forgive you. God has a plan to forgive you. Give yourself to Him through the plan of Jesus, today.