

WEEK 2: PRAYING FOR OUR RELATIONSHIPS



BEGIN WITH GRATITUDE

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 1 Thessalonians 1:2

Welcome to week 2 of our prayer and fasting journey. This week we will focus on our relationships: families, friends and others in our circles of influence. As we go through the week, ask the Lord to bring to mind people in your life that you should pray for. It could be an estranged family member or a friend from high school that you haven't spoken to in decades. If you can, reach out to the people you're praying for and ask them for specific ways you can pray with them. You might be amazed to discover that your text or phone call was just what the person needed to get them through the day!

Family is a wonderful blessing from the Lord. Your family might not be perfect (nobody's is), but God chose you to belong to that family for a reason. If you look back on your life experiences, you will see how your family background has shaped your faith and convictions. God can use even the bad and painful aspects of our families to reveal himself to us and to draw us closer to him. Who in your family are you most thankful for today? What other relationships has God brought into your life that have been a great support? Spend time naming family members and friends that you are thankful for and pray for God's blessing over their lives.

My prayer: Dear God, today I thank you for:

Thank you for placing them in my life, for making them my family and my friends. Thank you for all the experiences we've had together and the lessons that came out of them. Bless them today and put your love in their hearts.

HEALING & RECONCILIATION

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:24—25

One of the biggest hinderances to effective prayer is unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is a trap that the enemy uses to keep us from experiencing God's love and blessing in our lives. Our sinful nature can make relationships difficult, hurtful and painful. It can be difficult to forgive those who have hurt us, especially when it is close family and friends. But the Bible is very clear: unless we forgive those who have hurt us, God will not forgive us. So, not only do we carry the burden of what the other person did against us, we also continue to carry the burden of our own sin because we haven't received true forgiveness from God. This robs us of joy and peace and can cause great anguish in our hearts. We have this amazing promise from Jesus that we will receive what we ask for in faith. But as long as there is sin in our hearts, we will remain cut off from God's presence and will miss out on the blessing of answered prayer. Reflect on your relationships today and ask God to reveal any unforgiveness or bitterness. Ask for forgiveness for the hurt you may have caused others and pray for the strength to forgive those who hurt you. Listen to God as you reflect and if He leads you to, then reach out and seek reconciliation. Forgiveness will not repair every broken relationship. But it will free YOU and bring you closer to God. Use the prayer guide below to put down the name(s) of any-one you need help to forgive, and also those you need forgiveness from.

My Prayer:

Dear God, you know that I struggle in my relationship with _____

Please help me to see them the way you do and to love them the way	you want me to. Help me to
forgive for	hurting me. Please give me
wisdom to know how to interact with them in a way that reflects Christ'	s love. Help me to create
healthy boundaries and patterns in my relationship with	

And forgive me for hurting _____

. Give me

courage to express my remorse to them and seek reconciliation if possible. Help me to live out my faith boldly in all my relationships and to be an agent of reconciliation (1 Corinthians 5:18). Amen.

BREAKING NEGATIVE PATTERNS

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Today we continue to pray for our families focusing on praying for victory over negative patterns. We all have a generational legacy; a way of seeing and responding to the world around us that was passed down from our families. Each of us has emotional, behavioral or physical traits that we learned or inherited from our parents or other key influences in our lives. Perhaps you've heard the saying, "Mirror! Mirror on the wall! I am my mother after all!" It's wonderful when we have meaningful traditions and habits passed down. Unfortunately, some of the things we learned or inherited have negatively impacted our lives maybe without even realizing it. Some of these patterns are obvious and easy to see. But other patterns are more insidious and can be hard to identify. We need the Holy Spirit to shine his light in our lives and reveal the things that have been passed down to us that go against God's design and purpose for our lives. This is not a comfortable exercise but it is necessary for the growth and well-being of our families. Our scripture today says that we have been redeemed from the way of life that was handed down to us with the precious blood of Christ. God paid a very high price for our freedom so that we wouldn't have to follow negative examples from our past.

Take some time and review how your family handled conflicts, showed affection, communicated with each other, used their time. What negative patterns come to mind, patterns like alcoholism, drug abuse, anxiety, broken relationships, rebellion, etc. Write down all the things that come to mind. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything that you might have missed. Reflect on which areas of your own life you see any of these negative patterns in your own relationships, or any areas in which you still suffer the negative consequences of your family's behavior.

Prayer

Dear God, I see patterns of _____

that were passed down from my family.

Please help me forgive______ for the ways they hurt me.

I also see patterns of _____

manifested in my own life. I confess these negative patterns and the hurt they have caused to my spouse, children and friends. I pray that you would break these patterns over my life and my family. Give me your strength to walk in the freedom that you have given me. Renew me and my relationships and help me to pass on a positive legacy through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

A FAITH LEGACY

"...when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever." Joshua 4:6-7

A legacy of faith is the best gift you can pass on to your family and generations that come after you. Material wealth is good but it is temporary. But an inheritance of faith will never fade away. When the children of Israel had passed through the Jordan river, God wanted to make sure that they would not forget the great miracles He had performed getting them across the Jordan river. So he asked them to set up a memorial that future generations would see and learn about. Our faith in Christ is supposed to be like those memorial stones; something that people in our lives can point to and say, "What does this mean to you?" We all have a sphere of influence within and outside our families. We make an impact on our relatives, friends, neighbors and colleagues sometimes without even realizing it. What are your "memorial stones"? What has God done in your life that you are passing on to those around you.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for all the things you have done in my life. Help me to live in such a way that others can see your work in my life. Let my faith be a memorial for all those around me, now and for generations to come. Amen.

GODLY FRIENDSHIPS

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20

"Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are."

Friendships are a wonderful blessing from God. He intended us to live in community because that is how we grow and thrive. The right friends can shape our lives in positive ways and provide support in times of crisis. Goldy friendships can help us experience God in new ways and strengthen our faith. They can help us grow in our jobs, businesses and our families. They can be a source of wisdom and guidance. But the scripture tells us that the wrong company can lead to harm and corrupt good character (1 Corinthians 15:33). Do you godly friendships? Spend time thanking God for these people and praying for his blessing in their lives. If you don't have godly friends, ask God to connect you with the right people. Commit to be a godly influence on your friends so that they can encounter God's love through you.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the friends that you have given me. Thank you for the ways they have supported me and blessed my life. Help us to continue growing in our friendships Please connect me with more people who can be a godly influence in my life. And help me to show your love in all my relationships. Amen.

THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:13

Do you ever feel like relationships with other people would be so much easier if it wasn't for, well, other people? Loving others well can be hard because our sinful nature tends to get in the way of our good intentions. It's easy to find fault in others when we look at them from a worldly perspective. We are called to bear with one another, forgiving one another because *God has forgiven us*. Romans 3:23 says that ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That is the key to seeing others from a godly perspective—remembering that we ourselves have shortcomings and failures that need to be forgiven. Are there people in your circles of influence (family, colleagues, neighbors e.t.c) that you don't think very highly of? People you don't like very much? The way we see others influences how we treat them. Instead of seeing simply as annoying, or needy or messed up, think of them as someone who is dearly loved by God. Then ask God to help you demonstrate that love to them in the way you respond to them.

Prayer: Dear God, forgive me for the times when I don't see others through your eyes. Help me to respond to everyone I come across with love and compassion. Help me be quick to forgive because of how you have forgiven me. Amen.

A BOLD WITNESS

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5

Sharing our faith with family and friends can be difficult. After all, they know us better than anyone else. They know our "before" and "after" and are more likely to call us out when our words don't match our actions. The good news is that we don't need fancy words or long theological debates to convince them of God's work in our lives. When Paul first went to the Corinthian church, he did not rely on eloquence or human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:1). He resolved to focus on knowing Jesus and allowed the Holy Spirit's power to work through him. When we allow God to transform our lives, His power will speak for itself. Rather than worry about what to say to family and friends who don't know Christ, ask the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power through you. Pray that He would give you the right words when opportunity to share arises. Pray that your life; both your actions and word will be a bold witness for Christ.

Prayer Exercise

Write down the names of people in your circle of influence who are far from God. Spend time throughout the day praying for each one, asking that God would reveal Himself to them. Pray for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with them. Pray for openness and readiness. Where possible, reach out and find out how you can pray for them specifically.