

WHAT TO PRAY FOR A GROWING CHRISTIAN

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Ephesians 1:15-19

You can't be in relationship with Christ and it not positively shift how you manage relationships with other people. The Lord's embrace of you makes you embrace others. You can almost tell how intense one's vertical relationship is with God by watching their horizontal relationship with other people. The enemy will never surrender to our ability to grow up as a Christian. Some people around you won't ever release you to grow up in Jesus. Your old nature will also try to hold on to its dominance in your life. Things that used to control you will also tempt you to go back. Each fresh battle and setback will make you doubt your attempt to grow in the first place. Every disappointment makes you doubt God. You wonder, "If God is good, why is He not good to me?" Most of us want to win the battle over the flesh. However, all of us have to testify it is not easy. What the kingdom demands, makes you battle between flesh and spirit. The truth of the matter is spirit doesn't always win.

Paul teaches us that one of the most valuable things Christians have but is often minimized is the discipline of prayer. Paul knew those who believed needed to be saturated with prayer because of what they would have to face. At this critical place, God has called you to pledge to pray for each other.

Paul prayed first for the saints in Ephesus, that each of them would have increased intimacy with God. He saw their ability to survive and get to what God called them to be connected to: their ability to get to know God better. He prayed that they would develop such intimacy with God through Christ so that they would come to know God better. Living better is not about the size of your bank account. To live better you must know God better. You can pray for your neighbor to stop doing what they are doing wrong. They will stop doing what they do and find something else to do. Don't pray for that. There is another method. Pray that they know God better. If they know God better, they will begin to recognize within themselves what they need to change.

How many of us have prayed to God with specificity about something we want God to do in our lives? Maybe those prayers work sometimes. However, Paul says there is another way. Knowing God better will give you another way of looking at things. Knowing God better will raise the level of your aspirations and ambitions. It will open you to different options. It will coat the inner lining of your life so that you aren't easily deterred. You will recognize you just need to grow up in God. It is so simple and yet so profound. Knowing God better helps you to understand life better.

Do you know why some of you are still grounded? You won't grow up to meet the God of the sky. If you grew up to know the God of the sky you wouldn't be bothered by the little ground issues but you could look down on them from the air. You have to know God better. If you know Him better, so what, if people don't like you. So what, you were laid off. Once you get airborne, you will realize that God has so much more space. He can do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask. **Ephesians 3:20**

Paul prayed secondly, that the hearts of the saints of Ephesus could see. How can the heart have eyes? We know the heart can be broken, hurt, or bruised. Too many of us have let our hearts do everything but see. It might explain why our hearts have been damaged. You let the heart feel when you should have let the heart see. Paul prays that your heart would be enlightened to what it sees. Once you let God give you the capacity for the heart to see, it will continue to see. If you keep fighting to know God better, the heart will be able to see. You will be able to see that everything that dresses good, drives good, or sounds good, is not good for you. You wouldn't waste your time with some of these dead-end relationships. Paul knew that the saints in Ephesus believed that the heart was the center of human personality. If the heart stays blind it will negatively impact one's personality, which will affect the way a person lives. You want the heart to see so that it won't open itself to everything. This ensures that decisions are filtered. Reason and revelation work hand in hand in the decision making process when the heart can see.

When your heart can see, you can focus on hope and not reality. Hope means absolute certainty that we have victory in God through Christ Jesus. **Romans 8:23-24, Colossians 1:5, I Thessalonians 1:3, I Peter 3:15** Don't get inspired by what you see but by what you hope. You live victoriously in God despite the reality because of your hope in what God says. Yes, it seems we are going through a recession. Strong spirituality says that you are going through the same thing others are going through but you trust that God will supply your needs. We are not opting out. We are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:37** *"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness..."* It may be a little rough but you still have joy. The God we serve is able to supply our every need according to His riches in glory. **Philippians 4:19** You can't opt out but you can hope in. Ask the Lord to help you know Him better and to help your heart to see so that you can focus on hope. If you focus on the evidence around you, you will not have what's necessary to feed your faith. **Hebrews 11:1** You cannot opt out of reality but you can hope in God so that you won't be affected like the others. *"Oh what needs we often forfeit, oh what needless pains we bare just because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."*

Peace

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