



## **Resolve your own “prayer past”**

Many times, we have what might be called "prayer baggage." That is: unresolved issues that grow out of seemingly unanswered prayers in our past. Sometimes revisiting these issues with the Lord helps to settle potential barriers to prayer that grow out of these disappointments.

- How have I handled unanswered prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How do I deal with my disappointment/bitterness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Am I sure that my expectations are/were the same as the Lord's?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Do I have doubts about His promises related to prayer?

## **Equip/train the prayer partners that undergird your ministry:**

- Help them work through the questions above, resolving their own “prayer past”
- Define their role:
  - my expectations of their part in the ministry
  - if/when to interject their ideas during class
  - how to communicate with each other during a class

Define “proactive praying” based on discernment. Train them to be alert and constantly in prayer, as they partner with you, so that they can anticipate any changes of direction or important issues to mention.

- Alert them to possible pitfalls & how to avoid them. Included below are some of the common beliefs/assumptions that create opposition to prayer and some helpful suggestions or verses to consider as they overcome these beliefs:

1) The thought: “My prayer won’t make a difference.”

- “Pray about everything. . .” (Phil 4:6) The Lord's command is very clear—He views prayer as vital.
- “The effectual prayer. . .” (James 5:16) Encouraging your prayer partner/team to memorize verses related to prayer like this one can be helpful.
- “We wrestle not against flesh and blood. . .” (Eph. 6:18) This verse highlights the real source of the battle against effective prayer and is a good reminder that prayer IS spiritual warfare!
- “Ask and you will receive. . .” (Matt. 7:7-10) Encourage the team to grow spiritually by exercising faith.

2) Being overwhelmed by the needs or problems of the hurting person

- Remind them of verses like: “Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord;” (Zech. 4:6) and “What is impossible with people is possible with God” (Luke 18:27).
- Encourage them to "debrief" with the Lord after each time of being a prayer partner. During debriefing, they should ask God to remove all the horrible memories of abuse, disturbing thoughts, etc., that they have been exposed to during the session. This will help them from being overwhelmed

3) Having no desire to pray

- Help them realize they can reject these thoughts or feelings.
- Remind them of times past when prayer was crucial/decisive.

4) Distracting thoughts

- Teach them how to “take every thought captive” (2 Cor. 10:5)

5) Having fleshly attitudes against the counselor/counselee

They may not agree with what you, as the counselor/pastor, are saying. The enemy can really make use of any unspoken disagreements and try to put a wedge between you and a prayer partner.

- Ahead of time, discuss an avenue for them to mention their disagreements. Some people may write notes to each other during the session, while others prefer to discuss disagreements later, after the person has gone home.
  - When appropriate, help them recognize and deal with pride
  - Help them realize that attitudes toward the counselee may come out of their own woundedness which needs to be resolved by the Lord. For example, if your prayer partner was sexually abused as a child, they may react negatively to a counselee who is a perpetrator of abuse.
- 6) Believing that “my prayers did it!” In this hindrance to prayer, the person takes the credit for what the Lord has done.

Point out that this is an issue of pride, and encourage the person to repent

## **Emphasize the centrality of the Word in their ministry**

Anyone involved in a prayer ministry needs to be saturating his/her mind with Scripture. Listed below are some skills related to steeping our minds in the Word that need to be emphasized:

- 1) Teach them how to use the “weapon of praise.”
  - Encourage them to memorize verses of praise and exaltation of Christ to pray silently back to God, especially when there appears to be a blockage or problems during a session.
- 2) Teach them how to “see His face in the Word.”
  - Train them to read a passage of Scripture and then ask themselves, “What does this show me about God's character?”
- 3) Teach them how to use the Word as the “sword of the spirit” against strongholds.
  - During a class, they should discern in prayer which strongholds or barriers to truth are in the person's life. They can pray through verses related to these strongholds.
- 4) Teach them how to turn Scripture into “affirmations of choice.”
  - For example, when doubts about the importance of their prayers arise in their minds, show them how to combat these thoughts. They can say things like: “I choose to believe the truth that ‘the effective prayers of a righteous man CAN accomplish much,’ (James 5:16).”
- 5) Teach them how to memorize Scripture.

- Many people feel defeated when they try to memorize because they only try one method—that of reading it through a few times and then closing their eyes and trying to repeat the verse. Although this method works for some people, God created each individual's mind to process information in slightly different ways. For some, picturing the scene the verse relates to is the most effective tool to memorization. For others, reading the verse slowly aloud, with particular emphasis on important words is helpful. Others need to use "eurhythmics," that is: large motions with their hands and arms that act out the verse as they say it aloud. Encourage your prayer partners/team to experiment and find the memorization method that works best for them so that they can be successful in memorization.
  
- 6) Teach them how to meditate on Scripture.
  - Show them how to take a verse and pray that verse back to God. For example, the verse "the Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psa. 34:18) They might meditate by praying through this verse as follows: "Lord, I thank You that your thoughts, Your compassion is toward those who are heartbroken and crushed inside."
  - Encourage them to ask the Lord lots of questions about a verse as they meditate on it. For example, use the verse, "Draw near to God and I will draw near to you." (James 4:8) They might mediate by asking the Lord, "What does it mean to draw near to You? Am I drawing nearer to You each day, each week?"
  
- 7) Give them written prayers.
  - Sometimes giving your prayer partners/team a list of specific prayer concerns and/or actual written prayers can be helpful. [See "Praying for Hurting People."]