

**Sermon Notes of
Elder Larry Omasta's Sermon on October 31, 2021:**

**"Praying for One Another
(James 5:16)"**

[In today's sermon, Elder Larry Omasta, at church in the Y, shows us that we are blessed by God when we pray for His intervention in other people's lives.]

Introduction:

- Now, the Television program "The World Tomorrow" was canceled by our denomination as we were going through our doctrinal changes from emphasizing the Old Covenant to understanding God's grace and love of the New Covenant.
- Larry was then transferred from Television over to Plain Truth Ministries (PTM), which was now directed by Greg Albrecht.
- So, he worked in the 1990s producing videos for them.
- He was the producer and director of these videos. Some of the titles were: "Creation or Evolution", "Babylon – Past, Present and Future"; "Paul, the Apostle of Grace" and "Victory at Jerusalem" which deals with the crucifixion, death and incredible resurrection of Jesus.
- Our dear family member Ron Kelly was the host and on-camera presenter of two videos – "Paul the Apostle of Grace" and "Victory at Jerusalem".
- Now, when that video project ended, Larry was retired from the Worldwide Church of God after 31 years of service.
- He then moved along to other jobs with other companies.
- But, unbelievably, he was asked by Greg to come back and work at PTM part-time in February of 2012, because one of their full time employees was retiring and moving out of the area.
- PTM had become an independent organization and was no longer associated with Worldwide Church of God.
- Now, one of the responsibilities he was given – is to pray to our heavenly Father concerning all the prayer requests that PTM receive either by the mail-in cards, or by online requests via our website, or by phone calls.
- And over the years, he's gained a lot of insight about prayer that he would like to share with everyone today.
- This was quite a responsibility that Larry was given by PTM and he didn't take it lightly.
- So, he prayed many times to God about how He would want him to pray concerning these prayer requests of PTM subscribers.
- Along with prayer and meditation, he also did some scriptural research about prayer, as well.
- Now, one of the key scriptures that deeply moved him was James 5:16, which he wants to share with everyone. This is from the Amplified Version.

James 5:16 (AMP), “Pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored. The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous believer can accomplish much [it is dynamic and can have tremendous power].”

- So, we need to constantly pray for each other – and why is that?
- It’s because we are all brothers and sisters in God’s family plus God is pleased with us when we pray for each other, because we’re showing His love to others through our prayers.
- So, we really do need to pray for each other.

- And we also need to pray for the community members that we’re going to be involved with through our neighborhood outreach programs that Pastor Craig has recently talked about.
- We know that people are going to ask us to pray for them and alongside them, because they are beginning to have a desire to be connected with God and need the prayer example.
- So, again, we understand that we show God’s love to others through our prayers.

- **Jesus told us in Matthew 22:37 (NIV), “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38) This is the first and greatest commandment. 39) And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**

- So, one of the important ways we love our neighbor is to pray for them.
- Now, when we first became Christians and accepted Jesus as our Savior, our prayers were centered on us, our needs, and our spiritual trials we were encountering.
- And this is natural.
- But, then, as time passes, the Holy Spirit encourages us to pray for our family members and close friends and eventually to pray for others we encounter or others we are asked to pray for.
- So, as we grow spiritually, our prayer list expands.

- It’s interesting to note that Jesus told us to even pray for our enemies, those who are against us and those who have hurt us.

- This is not a natural thing to do, but what is spiritually driven.
- So, that means no one should ever be excluded from our prayers.

Matthew 5: 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44) But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45) that you may be children of your Father in heaven. [He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.]

- It’s interesting to note that Jesus tells us that when we pray for our enemies, we really become God the Father’s children.
- As we see, our prayer life includes so much more than just praying for ourselves.
- So, today, we need to think about how much time we spend in our prayer life praying for ourselves and then praying for others.

- I have begun to see that we need to be praying for others – probably at least 25% of our prayer time.

- And on certain days, due to tragic circumstances, our prayer life should be split right down the middle – half the time praying for others and half the time praying for ourselves.
- And that's not always easy to do, knowing our human nature. But with the Holy Spirit, all things are possible.

Important aspects of our prayers for others:

- So, now let's discuss the various aspects that we need to include when we pray for others, both Christians and not-yet believers and especially those who are going through some difficulties in their lives.
1. First of all, we need to pray that the person recognizes that they are going to experience some tough times in their life, which was predicted by Jesus, as we'll see.
 - Now, unfortunately, many Christians today, believe that when we accept Jesus, we won't experience very many hardships, trials, and illnesses in our lives, if any at all.
 - We assume that Jesus will prevent bad things from happening to us, which is not true. It's not true, because it's NOT what Jesus said.

Jesus told us in **John 16:33 (AMP)**, **“In the world you [meaning believers in Jesus] will have tribulation and distress and suffering.**

- Wow! We need to really understand this. Jesus doesn't come into our lives with a magic wand to solve our physical pain and problems.
- He doesn't take us from the storms of life but promises to be with us during those storms and to bring us safely to the other side, and give us His peace and comfort.
- But, unfortunately, as part of our human nature, many Christians believe that the severe illness or other difficulties that they are experiencing is a punishment from God because they have sinned.
- And they believe that if they hadn't sinned, they wouldn't be suffering.
- This is so clearly described in John 9, when Jesus and his disciples encountered a middle aged man who had been blind since his birth.
- This is what the disciples asked Jesus:

John 9:2 (NIV), **“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

- And Jesus told them that neither this man nor his parents had sinned.
- So, we see that sin wasn't the cause of this man's blindness.
- We also need to pray that when people going through physical trials that God will show them that even though they've sinned and don't live perfect lives, He doesn't punish them for their wrong actions, but rather, their wrong actions have negative consequences.
- We need to understand this incredible truth and also to share it with others, especially not-yet-believers.

- Jesus proclaims a new way of life, through His birth, death and resurrection whereby our sins cannot excommunicate or separate us from God's love and grace.
- It just simply can never happen!

- So, we need to realize that Jesus came to this earth with a special mission.
- And that mission was not to necessarily improve our physical lives, but rather to enrich us with a spiritual life.
- Jesus was more concerned about the spiritual facets of our lives than the physical things we experience.
- Now, Jesus does bless us physically, but that's not His main emphasis for us.

- Often times He lets us go through physical trials so that we will grow to become more spiritually mature.

- This is just so amazing to understand.
- Pastor Craig just gave a fantastic sermon about this as he showed us the paradox of how our spiritual perfection can come about through physical suffering.
- It's interesting that Jesus told us in:

John 10:10 (AMP), "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]."

- Again, Jesus is talking about our spiritual lives overflowing, not our physical lives.
 - Jesus came to give us our spiritual life in the fullest sense – which is eternal life in the Kingdom of God which goes on forever and ever.

 - So, first of all, we need to pray that the person recognizes that they are going to experience some tough times in their life and that it's not God causing it.
2. Now the 2nd aspect we need to include in our prayers for others is to pray that they don't become discouraged, as they're going through their trial and especially that they don't feel that God has abandoned them – which He hasn't.
- We need to earnestly pray that they feel God's presence in their lives and for them to realize that, in spite of the difficulties they or their family members are facing, God hasn't abandoned them, at all.
 - He is with us all the time, because He loves us all so very much.
 - We're given these words of encouragement in

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV), God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

(AMP) For God has said, "I will never [under any circumstances] desert you [nor give you up nor leave you without support, nor will I in any degree leave you helpless], nor will I forsake or let you down or relax My hold on you!"

- We need to pray that these people, who are fearful that God has abandoned them in their trials, especially when they're feeling down or depressed or despondent, recognize that, in the words of Hebrews, God will never leave them and that He will never relax His hold on them.

- We also need to pray that they will take their trials and temptations to the Jesus in prayer and He will give them relief.
- And one way Jesus does that is that He will often remind them and all of us, through the Holy Spirit, to remember God's words of encouragement that are spread throughout the Bible as we read through and study the scriptures on a daily basis.
- One encouraging set of verses that comes to mind is **Psalm 23**. This is from the **Amplified Version** – here is what David tells us:

Psalm 23 (AMP), The Lord is my Shepherd [to feed, to guide and to shield me], I shall not want. 2) He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still and quiet waters. 3) He refreshes and restores my soul (life); He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 4) Even though I walk through the [sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort and console me.

- As we close this aspect, we need to ask that God will inspire them to deeply understand that He loves them so much no matter what trial they're going through and that they are saved: yesterday, today and forever and given the incredible blessing of eternal life.
 - We all need to respond to these blessings God has given us through Jesus.
3. And now finally, the 3rd aspect we need to include in our prayers for others is to pray that they respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to draw them closer to Jesus and God the Father in their personal relationship with Him.
- During His earthly ministry, Jesus gave us a lot of physical analogies and metaphors to enlighten us and to encourage us to better understand spiritual concepts.
 - Let's read one of these amazing analogies in John 15:5:

John 15:5 (AMP), I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing.

- Jesus being the vine is a tremendous example to show all believers that we need to be attached to Him to bring forth spiritual fruit – in other words, to grow spiritually.
 - Now, the branches, you could say, are intimately connected to the vine.
 - And therefore, we, too, need to be intimately connected to the vine of Jesus before we can bear fruit.
- So, this means that our relationship with Jesus can't be just casual.
 - It needs to be intimate and intimate on a daily basis.
 - Now, Jesus doesn't force us to keep an intimate contact with Him.
 - We must choose to do so. And when we do, on a regular basis, our relationship with Him grows more and more profound.
- As Pastor Craig often tells us, that when we're building our relationship with God, we need to do it through conversation, curiosity, and contemplation, which is prayer, study and meditation.

- Now, one important factor is to pray in the morning and ask God the Father and Jesus, through the Holy Spirit to guide us that day and to inspire us with His wisdom as we talk to others and make decisions.
- And even when it can only be a brief prayer, due to that day's circumstances, we won't be alone – God will be there with us to rescue us from doing bad things.
- And then, later on in the day, when we have the time, we can engage in our lengthy intimate conversation with God the Father and Jesus as we talk to God about our needs and desires as well as praying for the needs and desires of others.
- And finally, we need to pray that people to understand and realize that God loves all of us just as much as He loves His Son Jesus despite our humanity, despite the fact that we stumble and don't live perfect lives.
- And we need to pray that people would be given the understanding that we shouldn't live in a state of fear, shame, guilt or doubt, but rather, we should live in a state inspired by God's loving relationship with us.
- Robin and Arlene wanted me to mention that at 9:45 AM, 15 minutes just before church starts, in the front room here at the Y, there is a prayer meeting for all of us to join together to pray for each other's needs.
- Now, what's so amazing is that there's a special blessing given to us by God when we take the time to pray, in a heartfelt passion, for others.
- What happens, when we do this, is that we become drawn into a more intimate and familial relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- The words of James 5:16 are absolutely so incredible because they are so inspired:

James 5:16 (AMP), Pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored. The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous believer can accomplish much – it is dynamic and can have tremendous power.

So, in conclusion, let's pray:

Closing prayer: