

How to Pray for a President You May Disagree With

I was honored to be part of an assembly of faith leaders who supported, counseled and prayed for former President Donald Trump. As a Christian leader, I feel as though one of the believer's highest callings—after surrendering to Jesus Christ—is to support and submit to our governing authorities (see Rom. 13:1-7).

Given the invitation and opportunity, I'd gladly do so for our new president, Joe Biden.

I have prayed privately and publicly for American presidents going back to former President Carter. I've prayed for presidents I've agreed with and presidents I've disagreed with. I believe it is what every Christian is called on by God to do. Paul wrote, "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4, NLT).

I intend to do just that for our new president.

The varying forms of "pray" (such as "praying," "prayer" and "prayed") are found over 370 times in the Bible. It is an exercise that God's people should do on a consistent basis. The question arises, then, how do we pray for the president? Since prayer is meant to be a joyous, life-giving and powerful experience, yielding real results (see Jeremiah 33:3), how can we best support the president, vice president, and, for that matter, any governmental authority through prayer? Let me suggest four ways to pray:

Pray Regularly

Pray for President Biden and his staff on a regular basis. Pray that he'd govern responsibly, righteously and with rigor. Pray that he would surround himself with those who will give him sound and godly counsel. As the apostle Paul encouraged us, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). This means we should frequently pray for President Biden.

Pray Customarily

Customary prayers are a known, practiced manner of praying. Customary prayers are prayers given in a more formal manner. So pray for the president at the dinner table and during your family prayers, and encourage your church to pray for him. President Biden is leading the U.S. under God's sovereignty; pray that he would seek the security of the Savior on the national stage.

Pray Instinctively

A Christian's first reaction when anything happens should be prayer. The first thing Christians can do is the most powerful thing they could do. Typically, the first thing we should try is the last thing we do try. Prayer should not be our last resort; it should be instinctive, an honest expression of the needs of our country. During the next four years, whenever you hear of a policy decision, an international crisis or a Cabinet appointee, pray immediately for God to give the president wisdom and clarity. When you see him speaking on the news, meeting with heads of state and answering the press, let your reflex be a prayerful one.

Pray Specifically

Our prayers should be specific and have perspective. Early Christians began their prayers by recognizing who they were praying to, which elevated their perspective (see Acts 4:24). When you pray realizing that you are communicating with the

Creator, Sustainer, Life-giver and Redeemer of the world, it becomes easier to have faith. So be specific. Don't generalize; rather, itemize. Pray for the specific needs of our president, country and world. Pray that the president would garner God's perspective.

You may disagree wholeheartedly with the president's policies, ideas and values. You may bristle against his principles and his viewpoints. You can dissent; you can argue; you can engage in the process to change it. You can and you should—that's democracy at work. But first and foremost, pray. You can always do more than pray after you pray, but you can never do more than pray until you've prayed.

As Martin Luther reminded us, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." We have the greatest opportunity as a Christian community—to help breathe life, through prayer, into the sails of our country's new captain. {eo}

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