

Why You May Not Be Breaking Through

Recently, I prayed with a young woman I had not previously met who was suffering many stresses in her young life: a struggling child, her grandfather's recent stroke, a difficult ex-husband and a lack of peace. She is a born-again believer and deeply desires God to move in her life. As we prayed through these issues one by one, I sensed the Spirit urging me to ask her if she had forgiven her ex-husband. I had no idea what had transpired between them ... only that this was a sticking place in her journey of transformation. I took a deep breath and asked the question, "Rosa, have you been able to forgive your ex-husband?"

Her eyes opened wide, and she looked startled. "No, I haven't been able to go there. There was so much abuse." I prayed for the painful situation in her marriage. Then, I prayed for her ex-husband, asking God to transform him by the renewing of his mind and to change his story and draw him to Jesus. Afterwards, I asked her, "Rosa, do you think you could begin to pray prayers like these for him?" I explained that unforgiveness and bitterness were harming her spiritually and that as she learned to pray for her ex-husband's salvation and transformation she would gradually begin to see God change her heart and bring her to a place where she could truly release all of the pain she had experienced into the Father's hands. She could be free from the bondage of unforgiveness and be delivered from her anger and resentment towards him. Rosa agreed, although a bit reluctantly, to begin to pray for him and to consider the possibility that her prayers could make a difference in his eternity as well as give her greater peace in her own journey. I am excited to watch God move in the lives of this family as He begins to work in response to Rosa's prayers.

Is there someone you need to pray for today who has damaged or hurt you in some way? Perhaps you are angry with people you don't even know – politicians, workers on strike, someone who continually parks in your space, etc. Can you ask God to give you the grace to pray for them? So often an inability to pray for certain people blocks the fullness of God's blessing. We allow the "enemy" to give us feelings of hatred and a desire for revenge ... when Jesus says, "... love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). This is not an easy or simple assignment for many ... but it is the way of the kingdom. If we desire a life that follows Christ, we must obey this directive from the One who prayed from the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Prayer as everyday life compels us to connect with the Father through the Son no matter who or what circumstance tries to trip us up in the midst of our journey towards Christlikeness. Neglecting to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us is sin, which Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear ..." Instead, Jesus tells us, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you" (Matthew 6:14).

May the ministry of forgiveness continually be part of us as we step into each day's journey so that God will be honored and glorified in the midst of His people.

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