

Your 2-Part Prayer for Almost Any Problem You Face

You face a problem. How do you bring your faith into play when that happens? The way in which you do so makes a difference. And in that light, there's a two-part prayer that applies to almost any such situation

Perhaps you're the kind of person who naturally tries to figure things out and make things happen. That's good, right? You're generally pretty good at taking care of things. And as for faith, you believe in God. You may even believe He is a good God. But when facing "stuff," you pretty much try to work harder in dealing with the problem yourself.

Researchers call this "self-directing religious coping." This is one of three styles of "religious coping" that has led to a whole body of scientific research in this area. (Hey, I'm a doctor. I find this stuff fascinating.)

But perhaps that's not you. Perhaps you're the kind of person who naturally looks to others to help. Whether you'd admit it or not, you pretty much see parents, your spouse, your doctor or the government as responsible for your well-being. And when it comes to God, you pray "God, help me!" and sit back waiting for Him to fix things.

Researchers call this "deferring religious coping." In some ways it seems these people have faith. But things don't tend to work out very well for them.

I remember as a child and teenager wrestling deeply with what was "my part" and what was "God's part." It became frustrating and exhausting.

Is there another way?

Collaboration With God

Perhaps you've guessed by now that there is a third style: "collaborative religious coping." In this style, I see myself as working together with God. It's not trying to do stuff on my own. Neither is it sitting back and waiting for God to do it for me without my involvement. It's God and me working together.

And the scientific research shows that most of the time people who approach challenges from this collaborative approach actually come through better. They end up with better physical health, better mental/emotional well-being and better spiritual resilience.

This is nothing more than Paul talked about: "My beloved ones, just like you've always listened to everything I've taught you in the past, I'm asking you now to keep following my instructions as though I were right there with you. Now you must continue to make this new life fully manifested as you live in the holy awe of God—which brings you trembling into his presence. God will continually revitalize you, implanting within you the passion to do what pleases him" (Phil. 2:12-13).

God works. And we work. Working together.

That shouldn't really surprise us. We should have learned by now that we can't deal with stuff on our own. We can't truly change ourselves (see Jer. 13:23). Trying to do what only God can do is playing God. And that only wears us out.

But sitting back waiting for someone else, even God, to "fix" us only ends in frustration. It seems there are things God has given us to do.

Hence the two-part prayer.

How to Pray

There is *never* a time when it's wrong to pray. God cares about our circumstances. Prayer is much more than simply marking out a "Christmas list" of stuff we need and want. Prayer is coming into alignment with what God's purposes are, sharing ourselves with Him and welcoming Him into the situation.

If you're facing "stuff," I encourage you to get alone with God. Let your "stuff" roll out; beg, cry, plead, yell, scream, if you need to. And then don't run away. Get quiet.

And then invite Jesus into the middle of your circumstances. This is no arms-length "God, fix this!" It's inviting Him to be with you right there.

So first:

1. Jesus, come! Intervene. Be right here in the middle of my circumstances.

And then:

2. Jesus, what step do You need *me* to take next?

This is not figuring out something to do and then asking God to bless it. And it's not sitting back until some voice from heaven blasts through the sky telling you what to do. It's prayerfully seeking His presence and enough light to just take one next step.

Examples

A few ideas of what this two-part prayer might look like could help.

Perhaps you're facing a physical illness. Part 1: *Jesus, come be here with Your healing presence. I need You!* Part 2: *What lifestyle changes do You want me to make? What medical interventions would You have me embrace?* And then it of course means you follow through on whatever steps He directs you to

take next.

Or perhaps you're facing a marriage crisis. Part 1: *Jesus, help! I turn this marriage over to You. We need You!* Part 2: *What kind of spouse do You need me to be in this season of our marriage?* That might include setting boundaries, learning about communication or intimacy and so forth.

Or perhaps you're wrestling with a long-standing sinful or unhealthy habit. Part 1: *Jesus, I can't do this myself. Please come and help me!* Part 2: *How do You want me to order my life to move forward from here?* That might include changing the mental diet you take in or the people you hang out with. It might include getting help, or creating a wise "escape plan" for when you are tempted.

It's both-and. God works. And we work.

Working together with God will be the most effective way of approaching almost every problem.

Your Turn: *Do you naturally tend to try to handle things yourself? Or do you naturally tend to sit back and wait for God to "fix it?" How might you collaborate with God more? Leave a comment below. {eo}*

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