

3 Life-Changing Benefits of the Special Gift of Prayer

Ever looked for that special gift for someone and never quite found the perfect fit? Why not consider giving the gift of prayer? If you think about it, prayer is probably the one gift most people really need and seldom receive. I'm not talking about simply adding someone to your prayer list, I'm talking about giving someone one hour of intense prayer in the Spirit where the entire hour is spent praying God's will into that person's life. It's not a gift that can be given easily or by just anyone, but if you truly care about someone, it can be the best gift they have ever received.

There are three benefits I've found of giving this special gift of intercession which are as follows:

- **The Gift of Prayer to Release the Gifts and Callings of God**

The Apostle Paul gave us a picture of intercession that extends beyond casual prayer when he said, "My little children, of whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). How many people do we meet whose lives would count for the kingdom of God if we interceded until Christ was formed in them?

Any in-depth conversation with a committed believer eventually reveals the deepest longings of that person's heart, whether it's for a great marriage, finances, family members delivered from bad habits, a need they long to fulfill or an unfilled ministry that continually tugs on their hearts. They have desires, but no release within them to go to the next level spiritually to fulfill that desire. Your intercession could be the very action that births the gifts and callings of God within that person.

▪ **The Gift of Prayer That Is Seldom Given but Most Needed**

For years, I taught high-school mathematics in a Christian school. On any given day, approximately 125 teenage students spent time in my classroom. There was no lack of needs to cover in prayer. The teen years are formative and difficult. Emotions run from happy to sad and back in 10 seconds or less. Relationships are difficult. Let's face it: Growing up is hard work. My normal procedure when I prayed for my students was to bow my head and pray for different ones as they came to my mind. Often I knew their needs, which made it easier to pray for them.

One day in particular stands out because I was particularly tired and hungry, but there was an intensity to pray in tongues that kept building up in my spirit that I couldn't shake. Several times during the morning, I nervously checked the wall clock to see how much longer until I was alone. Finally, when the lunch break came, I locked my door and knelt behind my desk and prayed until there was a release. I had assumed the Lord wanted me to pray for the students, so I was shocked when He spoke to me a profound truth that made me look at intercession differently.

When I stood up, the Lord spoke to me and said, "You assume that since these children come from Christian homes they receive a lot of intercession. But that's not necessarily true. Many of them have never had an hour of intercession in their lives. Today you prayed for intercessors to stand in the gap for each of them."

I was shocked. Never in my wildest imagination had I considered the fact that the students, who came to me from great homes with born-again, Spirit-filled parents, might not have serious intercessors in their lives.

Maybe that's why children from good Christian homes often fail

to fully come into all that God has for them. They lack the intercession that will cause them to develop spiritually to make a difference in this world.

▪ **Prayer for Others Can Turn Our Own Situation Around**

Prayer works two ways. When we give; we receive. I learned this firsthand when I found myself in desperate need of healing. Having gone through a gauntlet of doctors who had no answers as to why I was in pain and continually exhausted, I was discouraged. When the last two doctors suggested I take tranquilizers to handle the anxiety, I panicked. Mind-altering medication was not the answer. I had no idea what to do or where to turn for help. One day I read, "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

I'm a list-maker, and on any given day have a minimum of three to-do lists that help me stay on track. So, I made a Top 10 Prayer List of friends for whom I would pray. I determined to pray one hour of focused prayer for each of the friends and to help make sure that I honored my commitment to pray, I sent each one on my list a note in which I stated my intention and would let her know when the prayer had been completed. Reactions to my gift of prayer ranged from ecstatic to grateful. Some wanted to give me a list of their current needs, which I declined. It took me over a month to complete my 10 hours of prayer. But it produced answers for my friends, for which I was extremely grateful. Giving the gift of prayer forced me to forget my illness and also helped me to focus on others.

It wasn't long before I received a miracle of healing in my own life. An out-of-state friend wrote me and introduced me to her sister-in-law who had just moved to my town and needed a friend. Once I met the sister-in-law, she introduced me to a doctor who had a new method of treatment for my condition. My intercession on behalf of others, I believe, also produced the

fruit of the answer I needed in my own life.

When I made my first Top 10 Prayer List, I had no clue how precious and needed the gift of focused prayer is to a person in need. This Christmas, consider making your own Top Ten Prayer gift list and start on a new adventure of not only seeing the needs met of those whom you know, but also your own needs. It's an exciting journey, and one I dare say you will never be sorry you took. {eoa}

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