

# Taking Someone Before the Throne of God

A common feature in Bible study groups—regardless of when they meet or what they study—is prayer. That’s good—and essential.

“Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints” Eph. 6:18).

As I visit various churches and different Bible study groups, I notice that, when we start sharing prayer requests, those requests are almost always health related. Physical needs are more obvious, and they are easier to remember and pray for. Those requests are good and needed, but it seems too often that physical needs are the only things about which we pray.

Let’s make the spiritual needs of others an equal priority: salvation ... growth in Christ ... strength to stand strong in the face of temptation or difficulties. These may not be as obvious or “in your face” as physical needs, but they are important—and in many ways they are more important.

On one occasion when Jesus was teaching, four men lowered a friend through the roof in order for Jesus to heal him. Jesus saw their faith and responded by forgiving the paralytic man. That’s not what the man was there for! Nevertheless, Jesus responded first to the greater need in his life—forgiveness and spiritual healing—before addressing his physical need (Mark 2:1-12).

God does answer prayers regarding someone’s health, but at the risk of sounding crass, that person still dies. We all do. One of the greatest miracles Jesus performed was the raising of Lazarus, a man who had been dead for four days (John 11). But consider this: Lazarus still eventually died (again). Physical healing—whether it’s overtly miraculous or the work of God through medicine—does bring glory to God, but regardless of how long the individual lives beyond the healing, he or she still will eventually experience physical death.

Spiritual healing, on the other hand, has eternal consequences. When we pray for someone’s salvation and the person responds to the call of God, that person’s life is changed for eternity. As we pray for the spiritual growth or strengthening of an individual, and as God answers and works in the life of that person, the kingdom of God is impacted for eternity. A changed life leads to other changed lives.

Please keep praying for those who are sick, facing a chronic illness, and fighting cancer, but let’s not stop there. Let’s make a concerted effort to pray for those who need spiritual healing.

I daresay we all have individuals in our lives who try our patience. They’re annoying. They frustrate us, and they may even make us angry. We may be tempted to pray more of an imprecatory prayer—a fancy way of saying, “God, slap that person silly.” I’m sure you’re more spiritual than that, so what we more likely do is pray for ourselves. “God, give me patience with this person ... Give me grace to handle this ... keep me from slapping this person silly.”

It’s good to pray for yourself but add this to it: Pray for the person. Pray for his salvation and walk with God.

- We are surrounded by unbelievers—even among our friends and neighbors—who need Jesus in their lives. Pray for their salvation.
- We are surrounded by believers who frustrate us. Pray for their spiritual growth. Ask God to use you in that person’s life to shower them with His love and grace.

The greatest thing you can do for anyone is to take them before the throne of God in prayer. The writer of Hebrews tells us we can come before God with boldness.

“Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

What a great invitation! I need a regular dose of God’s mercy and grace—but so do others. Let’s go before the throne of God on behalf of others so that they, too, can receive a dose of God’s mercy and grace.

My challenge to you comes with a warning. As you pray for that individual, God won’t just work in the life of that person; He will work in yours as well. You can’t pray for another person without God changing your own heart toward that person. Amazingly, that person you pray for won’t seem quite as annoying. You’ll soon find yourself more patient. As you pray for that person’s salvation and spiritual transformation, God will give you a heart of love and compassion.

Start praying for the spiritual needs of others and watch God work in that person’s life—and yours.