

CARE and PRAYER

Intro. – See Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:16-18; Heb. 4:14-16; James 5:13-18; and I Peter 5:5-7.

“The church has many organizers but few agonizers, many who pay but few who pray, many resters but few wrestlers, many who are enterprising and entertaining, but few who are interceding.”

This lesson is not a lesson on how to pray but on how fervent prayer should precede, accompany, and complete our care ministry to others – in total dependence on the grace of our wonderful God.

I. Why Should our Praying Accompany our Caring?

- A. Caring for others is a spiritual ministry requiring spiritual strength and wisdom. (I Cor. 12:12-13, 24-25)**
- B. Jesus reminded His disciples that without Him they could do nothing. (John 15:1-5)**
- C. Prayer humbles us and makes us usable in His hands as we depend on the Lord in our ministry. (I Peter 5:5-7)**
- D. We are commanded to pray as we care for others. (James 5:13-18)**
- E. We can be effective and productive in our care through proper prayer. (John 15:7-8, 16-17)**
- F. In all our compassionate caring for people we often do not know what God’s will is for the person, but in prayer we can submit our will to His. (Luke 22:42)**

II. When and Where Should our Praying Accompany our Caring?

A. BEFORE We Begin a Caring Ministry – whether we are preparing or delivering a meal, making a visit, writing out cards, planning a care phone call, etc.

- for personal cleansing so God can use us in this ministry**
- for God to be honored by your thoughts, motives, attitudes**
- for wisdom in preparing or in making the contact**
- for safety and efficiency in timing, travel, etc.**
- for alertness to detect other needs or ways to serve**
- for God to use your ministry to witness, encourage, etc.**

B. DURING Our Ministry of Care

- Silently–during moments of need for wisdom, patience, etc.**
- Audibly-before completing a visit or phone call (not necessary each time)**
- Be brief and simple, not flowery and professional**
- Be personal, mention person's name and specific concerns. (Attentive listening is required.)**
- Be faith oriented – trusting God with the situation, not demanding or determinative, but dependent on Him.**
- Be compassionate and caring in your attitude and prayer**
- Be yourself. Be real.**

C. AFTER Our Ministry of Care

- Thank God for the opportunity to serve and for using you.**
- Pray daily for the person you ministered to, esp. for any specific requests that you may have gleaned from them.**
- Call them soon again to see how they are doing and how God may be answering your prayer. Remind them of your continued prayer ministry on their behalf and ask for additional requests.**

Prayer for Care Givers

One other area where we might focus fervent and ongoing prayer support is for those family members or medical personnel who have the main care-giving responsibilities for a needy person. Provided below is a suggested schedule of requests that we might use to motivate continuous prayer support for these special people. (Most of this material is quoted from *Discipleship Journal, Issue 133, 2003.*)

SUNDAY: COMMUNICATION

Ask God to enable caregivers to express specifically how others can help. Pray for mutual understanding as caregivers communicate with the elder and his relatives, their own spouse and family, medical personnel, and service providers.

MONDAY: ENCOURAGEMENT

Care giving often feels like a ceaseless, thankless job. Pray that God will nudge someone from the family to acknowledge the caregiver's efforts and boost his or her morale. Ask for a listening friend for the caregiver. Pray that God will encourage them through time in the Scriptures, by prayer, Christian friends, etc.

TUESDAY: GRIEF AND LOSS

Petition God to enable caregivers to recognize when elders require counseling or help to cope with age-related losses. Pray for grace as adult children struggle to accept their parents' more dependent condition.

WEDNESDAY: HEALTH

Caregivers' health often declines from physical and relational stress and from depletion of their emotional resources. God can help them manage time and set priorities to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Pray that caregivers will tend to their own health, eating, and sleeping habits.

THURSDAY: PEACE

Caregivers may blame themselves for everything that goes wrong. Ask God to encourage them and to give them endurance when their efforts seem useless. They may need God's help to recognize and conquer unresolved resentment from past interactions, guilt over sins or negative feelings, and frustrations over caregiving duties. Pray for genuine peace in the home.

FRIDAY: SAFETY

Because of emotions, physical conditions, or medications, elders sometimes abuse caregivers physically, sexually, or verbally. Pray for protection from situations that may lead to abuse. Ask God to defuse escalating personality conflicts, frustrations, or unresolved resentment between elders and caregivers so neither abuses the other.

SATURDAY: SPACE

Caregivers need to maintain an identity and life apart from eldercare. Pray that the families will be able to maintain some normal family life. Ask God to motivate friends and church families to go the extra mile to help them have a social and spiritual life. Without some respite, caregivers begin to feel helpless, exhausted, and lost. Ask God for others to help lift and carry the load. Ask Him what you might do.