

Community Church of Issaquah
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Can We Just Pray It Away?

Rev. Vincent Lachina

Each morning when I sit in a quiet place and time seeking to feel the presence of the Lord, I take my prayer book with the names of those who have asked for prayerful support and I try to spend time with each one. There are times when the list is short and my meditative time doesn't last that long, and there are times when the list is long and if I give adequate time to each person or group, I may be in prayer for quite a while.

Like most people, I find it much easier to pray for someone else rather than myself. Most days, my name isn't on the list of those seeking prayer support. But sometimes we must remind ourselves of the very purpose of prayer time is to focus on ourselves. That isn't a selfish thing, it's an essential thing.

One response I get when interacting with an individual that always makes me smile is when I say, "Let's pray about you," and the reaction is, "Oh no, let's pray for someone else." We tend to want to divert the conversation away from ourselves and move it toward someone else or something else. Have you ever imagined how you would react to some of the teachings of Jesus if you were there when he spoke? Try this one as written in the book of Matthew:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?"

But we do worry and often about the most insignificant things.

During this our own prayer times, each of us should devote some time each day for spiritual self-care. Can you find a few minutes each day to focus on you? Are you willing to spend some time each day in prayer for yourself, asking God's attention on you? When we address our own prayer time and our inner beings, the aim is to fix what is broken. All of us have things in our lives for which we need to repair. Some things are small, "I wish I had been nice to that person instead of grumpy." Some are neither small or large, but still important, "I need to pay more attention to my loved one and let them know that I do love them." And some are big things for which we for which we stress considerably, like what is happening in our own world, large and small.

I'm not in a place where I can force you to spend time each day in prayer for yourself. Truthfully, I could never force you to do anything, and that's not my role as your pastor. What I want for each of you is that you will simply think about dedicating a few minutes each day examining your own life to see if there are things there that you want to bring to God.

Maybe in your prayer time you lifted up several other friends and loved ones who have some special needs. That's evidence of your faith in Christ and your love for those the Lord has placed in your life. So let me ask you, how much of your prayer time was devoted to you and your own needs? Have you spent any time lately with personal prayer only for yourself?

Likely, your life is undoubtedly busy, and it might be hard to deliberately make yourself park for a while and focus only on yourself. There are so many aspects in all our lives that distract us from personal inventory and contemplation, but I want to encourage you to give more thought to this focus on prayers for you. Since I can't be in your home

with you to assist you in this important observance, I'd like for all of us – each of us – to take just a few minutes now to turn our eyes inward and prayerfully seek God's guidance and His loving awareness of our needs in seeking his presence.

For a few minutes, I want us to focus only inward to ourselves. Let's all close our eyes and sit in silent prayer that focuses only on yourself. Ask God to reveal what you need to take care those things that are in your heart right now. In the quietness we are taking now, I ask that you close your eyes and pray silently now for just a few minutes just for yourself, nothing or no one else. Can we all pray in silence for a few minutes?

Amen.

Keep in mind the scripture passage from Matthew that was read to us today. It included what we call The Lord's Prayer. There are two words that begin that prayer that each of us need to consider. It begins with the words "Our Father." Not my father, not your father, but our father. The reality of that is a strong message for each of us as we pray. God is the Father of everyone, and our prayers should be and can be for anyone or everyone. When we move beyond praying for ourselves and say we are praying for our family or our country, that prayer is on behalf of others.

There are times in my life and perhaps yours as well when I struggle to find prayers for those whom I see as unkind or selfish, who appear to cause harm to others. I want to be Christlike and include even those I consider enemies in my prayers, but that is often a struggle. How do we pray for leaders in this country and other countries who focus on the things Christ told us to avoid, yet are rewarded by society in wealth and power? Yet, I have to remind myself of what Jesus taught us in praying—to include even those who wish us harm. But, it's like Jesus began his model prayer with the words, Our Father. Everyone's father,

and we should offer prayers that God will reveal his answers for us and for them.

There are also many in our family and friends whom we love and care for and praying for them often brings a sense of peace and joy. Even in times of stress or need or sorrow, we know that our words of prayer are lifted up in hope that God will answer and lives will be changed. During our time of prayers and praise each Sunday, I am always blessed when I hear you lift up the name and need of someone that we as a faith family can join together in raising up to the Lord. Sometimes, we may forget to call out the name of someone we wish to be touched by the Holy Spirit. Even though it might not be included in our family prayer time, my hope is that each of you will spend time in prayer for those the Spirit brings to your mind and heart.

Prayer time is a time to also include others whom we think need our prayers. This morning I would like for us to spend a few minutes focusing on the people and needs we would like to bring to the altar in prayer. That could be friends or family, and it could also be for the country in which we live. We're going to spend some more time in prayer, but this time prayers will include the things that are on your mind. Each row has a clipboard that is placed there just for the purpose of writing down names or thoughts to bring us to this time of prayer. I would ask that you take that board and on the page there, tell your faith family what you want to pray for today. You may enter a name of a person, a relationship, or how you would like to pray for our world, our country and more. Or perhaps you have something of praise to share with everyone. We'll take just a few minutes to write down what you wish to include in our family prayer time, and then we will come back to our Prayers and Praise Time together.

Will you now write down what we can include in this important part of our worship?

Thank you for sharing. Let me now share with everyone the people and thoughts that are a part of our Prayers and Praise today.

Join me now in our prayer time.

May each of us leave today with the comfort and peace of having spent time in prayer for ourselves and for others. God will answer with blessings, and may it be so.