

Prayer and Relationships

adapted from an article by Allyn Ruth Edmonds Simons

My goal is to explore some of the ways prayer can affect relationships. The experiences of my life have shown me the power of prayer to heal and strengthen my relationships with the people around me. While the relationships themselves indeed benefited by my prayers, I suspect that the real healing took place within me, in my ability to participate in loving and healthy ways.

I consider prayer crucial to living a life of love and charity. Left to my own inclinations, I might internally insult, ridicule and manipulate other people without giving it a thought. Only by seeking the power of the Lord's love through consistent, daily use of prayer am I able to experience love and charity toward others.

Try prayer for the peace and well-being of all those around you or for help with a specific relationship. I've found it useful to thank the Lord for the people that I have trouble with. This tends to be difficult at first, but as I practice it I begin to see what I have to learn from such people. I have discovered that when I practice a prayer of thanks for a person who troubles me, I learn much more from that relationship than from those relationships which come easily. For example, I once worked with someone who got on my nerves in many different ways. By thanking the Lord for her presence in my life I began to learn in a new way what patience and tolerance mean. Additionally, I discovered that what I disliked in her were often traits that I saw in myself at some level, and then my dislike began to diminish.

Some Guidelines for Praying About a Relationship:

1. *It is critical to examine one's motives when seeking to repair a relationship through prayer.* If I have in mind a specific outcome for a person ("Lord, please help her to see that she must do such and so...") this can block my ability to see how the Lord is working in a given situation. Therefore if my motive is to change someone else in some way, I may well be disappointed.
2. *The Lord has a plan.* Praying for another person means that I ask the Lord to give that person what I would want for myself, that is, the ability to feel His love, the sense of His presence in my life, the ability to do His will and to be useful to others, etc. In my prayers for others, I remind myself that I do not know the Lord's plan for other people, and what another does or says is between her and the Lord, and is not mine to manage.
3. *Be patient and persistent.* Prayer for healing in relationships may take persistence over time. There are relationships that I have prayed about over a number of years, experiencing relief and compassion at times and a return of hurt and confusion at other times.
4. *Prayer is cumulative.* What I learn about a relationship through the use of prayer is often built on the foundation laid through prayer about an earlier relationship. In other words, the work that I am doing this year will benefit me in the work I do next year.
5. *The Lord is listening.* I believe that every prayer is heard. If I feel like I am not getting an "answer" to my prayer, I may be too impatient or too set on an outcome to perceive the answer.
6. *The Lord is near.* Without question the most valuable outcome of prayer is that it brings me closer to the Lord. Through prayer I can feel His presence, His forgiveness and His love in my heart. And with His help I can offer that to others, regardless of my human limitations.