

SERIES INTRODUCTION

I wonder if you have ever struggled to believe this famous verse from the Bible?

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5 v 16)

James is telling us that when righteous people pray righteous prayers, things happen. Things change. The prayers of God’s people are powerful. But they are not powerful because we are powerful, or because the words we say are somehow magic, but because the Person we pray to is infinitely, unimaginably powerful. And our prayers are effective—not because we are special, or because there is a special formula to use, but because the God we pray to delights to answer our prayers and change the world because of them.

So what is the secret of effective prayer—how can you pray prayers that really change things? James suggests two questions that we need to ask ourselves.

First, are you righteous? A righteous person is someone who is in right relationship with God—someone who, through faith in Jesus, has been forgiven and accepted as a child of God. Are you someone who,

as you pray, is praying not just to your Maker, not just to your Ruler, but to your heavenly Father, who has completely forgiven you through Jesus?

Second, do your prayers reflect that relationship? If we know God is our Maker, our Ruler and our Father, we will want to pray prayers that please him, that reflect his desires, that line up with his priorities for our lives and for the world. The kind of prayer that truly changes things is the prayer offered by a child of God that reflects God's heart.

That's why, when God's children pray in the Bible, we so often find them using the word of God to guide their prayers. So when Jonah prayed in the belly of a fish to thank God for rescuing him (Jonah 2 v 1-9), he used the words of several psalms strung together. When the first Christians gathered in Jerusalem to pray, they used the themes of Psalm 2 to guide their praise and their requests (Acts 4 v 24-30). And when Paul prayed that his friends would grow in love (Philippians 1 v 9), he was asking the Father to work in them the same thing the Lord Jesus prayed for us (John 17 v 25-26), and which the Holy Spirit is doing for all believers (Romans 5 v 5). They all used God's words to guide their words to God.

How can you pray prayers that are powerful and effective—that change things, that make things happen? First, by being a child of God. Second, by praying Bible prayers, which use God's words to make sure your prayers are pleasing to him and share his priorities.

That's what this little book is here to help you with. It will guide you on how to pray for the world—both

close to home and further afield—in 21 different areas and situations. In a sense, each page is an extension of what our Lord taught us to pray: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6 v 10). God’s will is that this be a world that reflects his character—a world of love, truth, justice and, most of all, ever-increasing worship of his Son. Each prayer suggestion is based on a passage of the Bible, so you can be certain that they are prayers that God wants you to pray for his world.

There are five different things to pray for each of the 21 areas. So you can use this book in a variety of ways.

- ▶ *You can pray a set of “five things” each day, over the course of three weeks, and then start again.*
- ▶ *You can take one of the prayer themes and pray a part of it every day from Monday to Friday.*
- ▶ *Or you can dip in and out of it, as and when you want and need to pray for a particular aspect of the world around you.*
- ▶ *There’s also a space on each page for you to write in the names of specific people, organisations or places that you intend to remember in prayer.*

This is by no means an exhaustive guide—there are plenty more things that you can be praying for this world! But you can be confident as you use it that you are praying great prayers—prayers that God wants you to pray. And God promises that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”. That’s a

promise that is worth grasping hold of confidently. As we pray trusting this promise, it will change how we pray and what we expect to come from our prayers.

When righteous people pray righteous prayers, things happen. Things change. So as you use this book to guide your prayers, be excited, be expectant, and keep your eyes open for God to do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3 v 20). He’s powerful; and so your prayers are too.

Carl Laferton

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The Good Book Company



YOUR COMMUNITY

YOUR CHURCH IN
THE COMMUNITY

2 THESSALONIANS 3 v 1-5

PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR:

Father, please grant...

1 HONOUR FOR CHRIST

"Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you" (v 1).

Thank God for all the people in your church family who have honoured Christ by submitting their lives to him. Pray that the message of Jesus would spread rapidly in your community, as more and more people honour Christ as their Lord and Saviour too.

2 PROTECTION

"Pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith" (v 2).

If a church is not facing any opposition from the community, it's sometimes because they're not taking risks with the truth. So ask God to make you bold. Pray for special protection for your church leaders as they minister in risky situations and proclaim unpopular truths.

3 OBEDIENCE

"We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command" (v 4).

Ask God to help your church family to be obedient to all that he commands in his word—at work and at home, in public and in private, in what you say and what you do. Pray that your distinctive lives would be a powerful witness to those around you.

4 LOVE

"May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love..." (v 5).

Thank God for his deep, unfathomable love for you. Pray that this love would overflow in the way your church family treats one another—so that as a lonely world looks on, they see something attractively countercultural. Ask God to make you better at embracing newcomers and outsiders with this love too.

5 PERSEVERANCE

"... and Christ's perseverance" (v 5).

As the years and decades go by, pray that you would not grow weary in seeking to share Christ with your friends and neighbours. Pray for specific people you know who have come into the orbit of the church and heard the gospel, but have remained indifferent or drifted away. Ask God to help you persevere in your witness to them.