

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

in uncertain times

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6. Praying for one group member

This is the 6th in a series of spiritual exercises written to help a group of Christians pray together. This time the focus is on praying for individuals within the group. You will need to prepare the ground for this the week before.

Explain to the group that you would like to spend your next meeting in prayer, focussing on two people who would like to share their needs and receive prayer from the group. Ask for two volunteers. Give each of them a copy of the following questions; ask them, in preparation for the next meeting, to have thought carefully about all of these questions and to decide which of their answers they would like to share with the group when they next meet. Reassure them that what they do share is entirely up to them. Here are the questions:



- Are there any things for which you would like to give particular thanks?
- When did you become a Christian, and how?
- Since you became a Christian, what are the most important things that God has said to you?
- Do you have a vision for the future into which we could pray together?
- Are there any things in your current ministry for which you would value prayer?
- How is your prayer life?
- Are there any particularly painful things that have happened to you during your life which you would like to share with the group?
- Do you have any relationship problems or conflict situations for which you would value prayer?
- Is there anyone you need to forgive, or anyone to whom you need to apologize?
- Do you have any financial problems which you would like to tell the group about?
- Do you have any anxieties about the future for which you would value prayer?
- Do you have any physical or mental health issues for which you would value prayer?
- Are you too busy? If so, why do you think this is?
- Do you find that you are often bored?
- Have you ever done something wrong or foolish that still sits heavily on you?
- Do you have any problems sleeping, or any recurring dreams?

When you meet together, explain that you will ask one person to share and the others to listen and then pray for them; and you will then repeat this with the second person.

Ask the volunteer to share as much or little as they wish, for about ten minutes – make sure they do not feel under any pressure to share things they are not comfortable to share. Then encourage the others to ask questions, but don't allow these to be too intrusive. Questions should be for clarification only, so that you know how best to pray.

Now ask the group, including the person to be prayed for, to spend ten minutes listening to God. If they do not feel God is speaking, that is fine – they should not feel they need to make something up! Explain that when we listen we are simply asking God to put things in our mind. Any of the following may happen:

- We may be given a word, or a sentence, or a picture, which we cannot get out of our mind
- We may be given a question to store away and ask later
- We may be given a scripture to share
- We may be given a promise from God for the person for whom we are praying
- We may be given confidence about what to ask when the time comes to pray
- We may be given a story from the Bible that fits with our friend's situation
- We may simply be given something positive and encouraging to say
- We may be given insight into what Satan is up to in the person's life
- We may realise that the person we are praying for is believing a lie
- We may be given a specific message from God, something that we know God wants to say to our friend

After ten minutes of silence, everyone should share what they have. Those who have nothing should say so, and those who are not sure should say they are not sure. Sometimes we discern what God is saying only as different people make their contribution. This time of sharing may lead to a brief discussion, and it may be that as leader you will suggest another period of listening. When you feel you know how to proceed, then ask various members of the group to lead in prayer. Pray with authority in the name of Jesus, telling mountains to move and ordering Satan to leave.

When you are ready (after about half an hour) repeat the process with the second person. You may wish to continue next week with another two volunteers.