

Praying When You Don't Know How

*"Lord, the one you love is sick."
John 11:3 (NIV)*

One of the simplest, yet most complex spiritual exercises we can engage in is prayer. A child of 3-4 years may compose a wonderful prayer to their Creator while a saint of God in their mature years may be at a loss of words concerning how to pray for a specific issue.

What are we to do when we have no idea what God is doing with us or a loved one but we are so concerned that somehow He intervened in the situation. Occasionally I am asked to pray for a person's situation and I am at a loss about how to ask for something specific for the one in need.

The men who approached Jesus at the beginning of John 11 brought Him a message, or a prayer if you will. In any event Jesus was the One the sisters of the desperately ill man wanted to know about their burden. This message to Jesus was clearly full of faith but lacked a focus. It is not a request for anything and yet it implies everything.

What the sisters did was merely to inform Jesus of their heartache at the extreme illness of their beloved brother Lazarus. This then is how to pray when you do not know what to ask for in prayer. Sim-

ply tell the Lord what is breaking your heart. Advise Him of the seriousness of the issue. All the fearful sisters of Lazarus did was to give Jesus information about the problem. In faith they left it to Him to do as He thought best in the situation. They knew that Jesus healed people at a distance, they heard of Him raising some from the dead, it is also most likely that they had heard of how He spoke and the weather changed. Jesus was the Man for the hour and they knew it.

Sadly for them, Jesus let the situation continue until Lazarus not only died but was buried. Only then did He come to the scene that was now mourning over the dead, not weeping at suffering. Lazarus' heart had stopped beating but their hearts lived to break with sorrow.

Jesus did come to the scene of mourning after a few days which seemed an eternity to the weeping sisters. As Jesus came near the town where they lived Martha ran to meet Him with the words "If you had been here my brother would not have died." (John 11:21 NIV)

It is a word of faith in Jesus because she knew He would have cured Lazarus.

Why Jesus waited to come until after Lazarus died is remarkable. He is only weeks away from His own death and it seems He wished to demonstrate once more that He has authority over our greatest enemy, death. He also wished to prove the worth of the name He gives Himself when He spoke to Martha. He said to her He was the Resurrection and the Life. Raising Lazarus proved that He was well named.

Jesus is indeed all powerful. He may not solve your problem with the speed you wish, however, He will indeed make all of His people victorious in the end. The problems you face will someday disappear and you will celebrate as Martha did when Jesus visited her house of mourning and turned it into a house of joy.

If you walk with Jesus, be assured that the way will soon be easy and the burden of life will be gone when Jesus comes to take you to Himself forever. Remember always that the long term view puts the short term problems into perspective. Jesus is worth the wait. So pray even when you don't know what to say.

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