



# Prayer Resources

## Online Articles

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### Prayer Resources

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## How To Pray For Those Who Are Suffering

*We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us; because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)*

Our hearts are heavy with the great number of suffering saints the Lord has surrounded us with these days. Our prayer life is occupied by a mother who has unexpectedly lost her son, precious friends who are spending their last days with a son smitten by brain tumors, a young widow married for only two weeks, a government employee being tortured for making a stand for righteousness, a valued prayer warrior who has received a discouraging report following cancer treatment, pastors whose congregations are rebelliously attempting to remove them, and our own two year old grandson as he and our entire family live with the daily suffering of his diabetes. As we pray for each of these folks – as well as for ourselves in our own personal suffering – it is a challenge to keep our prayers pure. We are so programmed by our culture and our own selfishness to focus on escape from the suffering no matter its form. Scriptural prayers for those suffering are quite different. In Romans 5, Paul – who knew his own fair share of suffering – set forth a marvelous pattern for us as we pray for those who suffer.

**Pray for comprehension of the principle of suffering.** Suffering is a very important necessity in life itself. We can view it in nature when we watch a struggling butterfly emerge from its cocoon. Should we yield to the temptation to utilize our skilled hands to deliver it from the struggle, we discover a deformed creature incapable of flight! Indeed, suffering is inherent in all of God's Universe. Even Jesus had to suffer for our redemption. Paul tells us to *rejoice in our sufferings, because we know* its necessity and its benefits. As we pray for those who are suffering, we must pray that they will recognize in the midst of their suffering the goodness of God's purpose for suffering. We must pray against belief in the lie that suffering is bad or something to be embarrassed by.

**Pray for commitment to perseverance through suffering.** Since suffering is necessary to accomplish God's good purposes, why should we beg for it to cease? There is comfort for us to realize that even our sinless Savior wanted the cup of suffering to pass from Him, but His resolve was to suffer for our salvation. Isaiah 11:5b describes Jesus on the cross by saying that *faithfulness* (His will) *shall be the girdle* (controller) *of his reins* (His emotions). Paul tells us that *suffering produces perseverance*. As we pray for those who are suffering, we must pray that they will utilize their will to yield emotionally to God's authority in their suffering. Such a commitment unleashes His keeping power that goes beyond our fleshly discipline. We must pray against the desire for escape that would only frustrate God's purposes.

**Pray for co-operation in purification through suffering.** God's overarching purpose in suffering is to purify or make clean. It is only through the suffering of the shedding of Jesus'

blood on the cross that we have the remission of our sins. Paul tells us that *perseverance produces character*. As we pray for those who are suffering, we must pray that as they yield to God's authority in their suffering, their attitudes and actions will be refined to produce godly character. We must pray against resistance and fleshly control that will yield bitterness rather than character.

**Pray for control of passions through suffering.**

Today's technological advances of brain imaging allow a more concrete study of emotions. Scientists who focus on the study of emotions have categorized three primary negative and three primary positive emotions. The three primary negative emotions they have designated are illustrated in the three very different emotional reactions of the first three men who sinned in the book of Genesis: Adam reacted in fear; Cain reacted in anger; and Lamech reacted in hate. The three primary positive emotions they have designated are the same ones used by Paul in I Corinthians 13: faith, hope, and love. As an act of Jesus' will while He was on the cross, He rejected all of the negative emotions and chose rather to focus on the positive emotions. Hebrews 12:2 states that *for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame*. Paul tells us that *character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us*. As we pray for those who are suffering, we must pray that through the refined character of their will they will choose to focus on the positive emotions. We must pray against the entrapment of negative emotions that will only disappoint and defeat.

**Pray for completion of the purpose of suffering.**

God's ultimate goal in suffering is the development of agape love. In his book **Don't Waste Your Sorrows**, Paul Billheimer gives much logic to suffering. He contends that the law of God's Kingdom is love; that it is only love that fulfills the law; since God is love, agape love is not primarily an emotion but aggressive, benevolent, sacrificial outgoing goodwill; God's primary occupation in this age is to teach the Church the lessons of agape love to prepare them for the throne where they are to reign with Christ; in God's kingdom rank is determined, not by talent, success, intellect, personality, nor influence, but only by agape love; agape love is self-giving; there is no self-giving without suffering; only great sufferers can know agape love as they experience the decentralization of self; therefore, the experience of suffering is preparation for God's kingdom. It was this kind of love that kept Jesus on the cross. The Apostle Paul tells us that through our proper response to suffering, *God has poured out His love into our hearts*. As we pray for those who are suffering, we must pray that they will genuinely experience the decentralization of themselves so that God's love will be poured into them. We must pray against any and all selfishness in the midst of their suffering.

When we are called upon to pray for those who are suffering, we are given an awesome task. May we be found faithful, not merely emotional in our prayers!