



Gems from **Pray for Others** by Frank Laubach (written in 1947 for *The Upper Room*)

(Note that this was written at a time when general use of masculine terms applied to men and women. Time-sensitive references to the atomic bomb, to experiments in telepathy, and to resources now out of print have been omitted.)

Page 3 (Foreword). The reader probably believes in the value of prayer for himself. Many wonderful books have proven its value. It is common knowledge that prayer helps those who pray. No new books are needed to prove it.

But millions who employ prayer to help themselves, stop short at using prayer to help others. They have surrendered to a widespread assumption that prayer has only a “subjective value.” In this they are mistaken. It is more than a mistake; it is a tragedy, for thus Christians fail to employ the greatest force for good in the universe—the only power that can remake this age. That is what this booklet is setting out to prove so that the Christian Church can recapture the power of intercessory prayer. ...

Page 5-6 (Atomic Age). ...Nobody has improved on the Bible explanation that the tragedy of man is that he has closed himself to God; broken God’s will. This is the cause of our troubles with one another. Our conflicts with one another will stop when we stop our conflicts with God’s will.

We have only one door for opening our minds to God’s will. That is prayer. There are, it must be admitted, many definitions of prayer which do not mean opening our minds to find God’s will. Most people pray, one fears, in order to change God’s will, not to find it. In all religions men think they can court the favor of their gods through prayer or magic rites. But the prayer discussed in this booklet means *opening the mind to the mind of God* so that God can have His way. We are here discussing the prayer that consents to God’s will, and does not try to plead for His consent to our will. It is our minds that need changing, not His. God is all right; man is very largely wrong.

Yet it is not to be implied that all men’s thoughts are bad. There is much good, but it is being cancelled out by the bad. In recent years, hate, prejudice, greed, vengeance and fear have outweighed good thoughts, and so have dragged the world down into a tailspin toward destruction. The direction in which the world is going at any moment is the sum total of thought forces, good or bad. Only prayer can change the balance, and send our world upward again. ...

Page 11. ...the lie that God does not need our prayers is the lie of a little mind that does not want to assume large responsibility.

Page 11-12 (God needs us). “But,” says someone, “how do I know what to ask of God?” “How do I know what God wants me to do?” One does not know. But one can pray, “Father, help my friend to feel a great need of Thee. Help him to pray. Help him to hear

Thee and to do Thy will.” The Christian knows that God wants all this because he has seen God in Christ.

Someone else will say, “Intercessory prayer does no good because God is trying His best all the time. To ask Him to try harder would be to insult Him. I pray for myself because that opens me to God’s will. I do not pray for others unless they are listening; for it would do them no good.” That, too, can be the excuse of selfishness. It needs to be given an answer so that selfishness will have no legs to stand on.

Page 12-13 (Prayer Reaches Everywhere). In the first place, prayer does help others. All of us who have prayed much for others know this to be true. It is not always easy to find an illustration which nobody dares contradict. Hundreds could be reported, but somebody would always be ready to call it coincidence or misrepresentation. ...

[But] All who have spent much time in intercessory prayer will verify the statement that ... miraculous answers do occur. Why? Not because God waits to do His best until such time as we beg Him to do it. There must, therefore, be another reason. We might call it contrary to reason, and leave it there. But it is not necessary to do that. There is an explanation which fits the facts of our experience which also satisfies reason. This explanation is that *when we pray for people we help God reach them*. He is always doing His best, but He cannot reach some people without us.

We help God reach people when we talk to them about Christ, or when we give them a Bible, or some other splendid book, or when we write them a letter. These are ways in which we help God speak to other men. We become God’s spokesmen. ...

Page 19-22 (Prayer Opens Your Own Mind). ...People often say, “*Prayer alone* is not enough.” Precisely, but prayer that seeks to do God’s will is not alone. It will be accompanied by any other approach that God may suggest. It will be accompanied by service, by considerations, by kindnesses of every kind. These will open hearts to the prayer messages; and on the other hand, prayer opens the minds of the people to every other kind of approach. Prayer and service reinforce each other.

If you pray for a man before you try to see him, you find that the prayer has prepared his mind, and that he is hospitable to your suggestions. Prayer plus service plus witness (through letters or by word of mouth) belong together. All them together are more powerful than is any of them alone.

When we pray and are pressed with an urge to do something for another, we must act at once on that heavenly voice. If it is impossible to carry out the idea then and there, we ought to write it down. One needs pencil and paper within reach all the time. The voice from heaven can come through anytime, yet to us only when we are in perfect tune.

“Oh take the dimness of my soul away!” is the prayer of those who for a few glorious minutes have seen the heavens open and have heard Him speak. After tasting the

sweetness of that divine invasion, no person can again be wholly satisfied with his customary spiritual stupidity and illiteracy. Most people most of the time react only feebly when the still small voice whispers in their souls. When we pray for them, we help make God's voice louder and stimulate more pronounced reactions in those persons. ...Prayer, then, is not a poor substitute which we use as a last resort. It is the most powerful way of persuading other people to do God's will. ...

We all know that when we are praying together, we are cognizant of a sense of tremendous and rising power. This is rarely experienced when one is alone.

Page 22-23 (Harmony in a Prayer Group). This spiritual power is not evident in a group unless there is perfect harmony and mutual confidence. ...It is likely that praying against the sins of people get no better results than scolding with our tongues. ...That is why one should pray for what he hopes another person will become, and not against what one dislikes in him. Helping a person by praying for what one hopes for him is constructive. Praying against things is negative.

All of us ought to stop judging others, and begin praying for others. Judging is looking at the past of a man and putting a label on him for that past. "If he did that," we say, "he is bad." This is a terrible sin against another; it chains him to his past and stops his growth. Every person is constantly changing for better or for worse. I do not wish to be judged today by what I did ten years ago or by what I did even yesterday. "Judge not," said Jesus, "that ye be not judged." Prayer, if it is constructive, looks ahead and sees the man as he will be. Prayer is creative, while judging stops a man in his tracks and starts to kill him. It is the difference between *law* and *grace*. The letter of the law kills; the spirit makes alive.

When our complaint against somebody begins to form itself on our lips, we shall convert that complaint into a prayer for the man as he ought to be. Since every prayer begins to create a better world, we shall be making history by that prayer.

Page 24-25 (Each One Is Important Now). To be Christlike, we must convert every thought into a prayer. We shall then read our newspapers in order to find somebody to pause and pray for. We shall pause as we see the names of men of great responsibility, and pray for them. We shall think about the people who have been victims of disaster, and pray for them. We shall consider criminals, both incarcerated and those who are at large, and pray for them.

We are not helpless! Not one of us is weak. All of us, famous and unknown alike, are creating the future for ourselves and for our children. All of us are making hell or heaven by whether we criticize or pray. We are all immensely powerful for good or for evil. If we knew that only, we would pray without ceasing.

The complete break with our old habits will not be easy. It is always tedious and distasteful to break with a bad habit. It is like a drunkard trying to keep sober. Besides, other people are not doing this, and there is always a drag toward the average person's

ways. So we shall have to persist against our own inclinations for a while until we pass the “critical point.” Then we shall enjoy prayer as something more than passing on criticism or gossip.

We have a false humility about our importance to God. We underestimate the importance of every thought, not knowing that by every thought we are creating history, blessing or damning the whole world. If we saw the importance of the stream of thought which we pour across invisible channels to the whole world every moment, we would all purify that stream of thought. It is a terrifying realization.

The news that we are powerful when we pray is good news for the old people and the invalids who are shut in and who can find little to do that they really consider of any value to the world. They can keep a prayer list, and spend their leisure waking hours working by means of prayer. Every mind is as powerful as every other in the democracy of prayer. What matters is our sincerity and our perseverance. Some of the world’s loveliest benefactors are probably lying helpless; for they are pouring their prayers in endless benediction to help others.

Page 25-28 (Astonishing Unselfishness). The kind of prayer we are urging in this booklet is not asking God for the things we want. The center of gravity is shifted from self to God and to other people. It is helping God achieve the thing He longs to do. It is saying, “Cihu, God.”

The word *Cihu* pronounced *kyhoo*, is becoming part of the English language. It stands for four words: “C-can, I-I, H-help, U-you.” A completely “Can I Help You” attitude toward God and men would be complete Christlikeness; for that was what Christ was doing every moment during His life in the flesh and is doing, in Spirit, now. When we really put our minds to that type of prayer, there is something miraculous about the way it works. A *little* of it does not work because we cancel that little out with the other things we do. We are like the frog, which slid down every time he tried to climb out of the well. But enough “Cihu, God; Cihu man” brings incredible returns.

Ordinary kindness is expected and taken for granted; but astonishing kindness, that exceeds all expectations, is the most irresistible power in the world. The Cihu prayer, accompanied by the Cihu deed, sweeps all before it. Anyone who tries this “all-out, long-range, astonishing unselfishness” is himself astounded at its power. Difficulties melt away before enough love—love in action and in prayer. “Love never faileth,” if it is in gear with prayer and action, and if there is enough of it.

We who are sincerely trying to find out and do God’s will are constantly astonished to find how easy it is. Many of us have given both ways of living a fair trial. We all find the same results. When we try to help God and Man, we find people wonderfully tender. Walls of difficulty melt away. Supposedly impossible things happen. Why is it? This is in part because people know our efforts for them are sincere and unselfish. They seem to realize by their sixth sense when we are really interested in them. They work with us when we are working “all-out” with them; they work against us when they sense that we

are working against them. When we seek their welfare, they take us to their hearts and we live in a sense of loving everybody and being loved by everybody.

That is doubtless part of the reason all we undertake seems easy. But there is another, a larger reason. God helps because He desires what we desire. Our purposes and His are in line, and each helps the other; we help Him and He helps us. If we say all day, “God, I ask for nothing excepting what I can do for You,” we never need to ask for anything for ourselves. We seek first “the Kingdom of God and His right way” and everything is added to us. He opens doors for us. There is real joy in working with God and for God. He will not allow His vital issues to fail.

There are troubles, too. We have sufficient of them to keep us from becoming stupid. As Paul wrote from Ephesus, “a wide door for effective work has opened for me, and there are many adversaries”—enough adversaries to keep Paul’s fervor hot! Paul needed them. There is danger in finding God working so astonishingly on our side. There is peril in this experience. We are likely to imagine that the doors are opening because of our superior ability. Woe to us if we imagine that our ability or wisdom is the reason for our success.

People tickle our vanity when things are succeeding. Then the only thing God can do is to allow us to fall or face some humiliation and so deflate our ego. In order to keep us from becoming conceited is perhaps the best explanation we are at times allowed to suffer. This will not happen if we give God all the credit, and realize that our only merit lies in choosing to walk with God.

And if we became surprised and joyful, as often happens when we try to do God’s will and pray, it is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The joy we feel is part of God’s joy because His desires are being fulfilled. As we see God’s plans materializing far beyond our own little powers, as we often do on mission fields, we feel a deep joy that words cannot express. We exhaust the English language saying, “Wonderful! Halleluah!” This is the echo of God’s own joy. He rejoices over one sinner who has the good sense to come home to Him. The fruition of the travail of the universe is in one man who becomes a son of God. Only when a son is interested in his Father’s business is he truly a son. I think the future life will consist in being fellow workers with God and His Christ, in doing glorious deeds of creative mercy. Perhaps all our tasks in that spiritual work will be accomplished through intercessory prayer!

Page 28-29 (Intercessory Prayer Is Real Work). The greatest obstacle to intercessory prayer is that it is real work, too hard for most lazy minds. Many people would rather do anything in the world than think hard, and prayer demands thought, and thought requires concentration. Genius has been called the capacity for timeless attention. So is effective intercessory prayer. For this reason all of us need help.

Since one ought to send flash prayers for hundreds of people, a prayer list carried about in one’s pocket is good. It should include those who ask to be prayed for and, more particularly, those who do not ask.

Whenever we are alone, we should train ourselves to go at once to prayer. When we fall asleep at night and awaken in the morning, we should be praying for others. The Laymen's Movement for a Christian World asked people to take the list of the leaders of the United Nations with them on retiring, read the list over and pray before going to sleep, put the list under their pillows, read it over and pray the first thing on awakening, and carry it with them all day beside their notebook so that they could send flash prayers every time they touched the list. This we can do with any prayer list, and the results will be miraculous for many on the lists.

No strong spiritual leader tries to get along alone. He seeks prayer groups, and creates them wherever he can. Two people are enough for such a prayer cell. They can carefully choose a third, a fourth, and so on to the end of the cell. Nobody will want to be there who is not spiritually in tune. To be of one mind is a condition, a prerequisite, to make possible the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Page 30-31 (Praying Churches). One person alone whose heart is burning with spiritual passion can set an entire church on fire. It is hard and it takes time. Two can do better than one, and fifty can do better than two.

It is very easy for a prayerful person to mobilize most of, or all, the people in a church for prayer for the pastor while he is speaking. ...It is wise for a minister to request the people to hold him up in prayer. They always defeat him when they merely sit in judgment while he preaches. If they pray while he preaches, they help him so that his soul burns and ideas flow out of heaven. Every spiritual leader has been held up by a large group of friends in constant prayer.

Page 31 (We Can Have a Pentecost Now). All that has been said before shows that we can have a new pentecost as soon as we want it. At the first Pentecost about which we are told in that wonderful second chapter of Acts, the disciples were all together day after day "with one accord in prayer," expecting the coming event; for He had told them to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. That is what we need to do to bring another pentecost—have our minds full of Jesus, be of one mind, pray without ceasing, expect the Holy Spirit to come.

God is not capricious. He is always pressing down for His opportunity to send the Holy Spirit. It is we who are fickle. We have failed Him, and our world has therefore suffered as a result of our failure.

We are now facing the alternative either of opening ourselves to God for an outpouring of His divine Spirit, or of killing one another in unthinkable tragedy. Pray for others or perish—that appears to be our choice. Don't just read about it. Don't just approve it. **DO IT! PRAY FOR OTHERS!**