



Love Your Enemies and Pray for Those Who Persecute You

Reflection

What is your response to terrorism? If our struggle is primarily not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12), then overcoming terror requires a spiritual response.

Terrorism inspires fear. Fear is not material. According to Scripture (1Jn 4:18), the antidote to fear is love.

When we hate, we are reactive victims. When we love we seize the initiative. Love for country helps soldiers to risk their lives. Love for children enables parents to discipline them without being intimidated. Love for us took Jesus to the cross. Love for enemies will give courage to face, overcome, and transform them and the environment that breeds them.

Historically, Stephen was the first fatality from terrorism directed against Jesus' followers (Acts 7). As Stephen was dying, he prayed, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Later, Paul, who had supervised Stephen's stoning, met Jesus in a vision and repented.

Discussion Questions

Can we pray today like Stephen prayed then?

Would Paul have repented if Stephen hadn't prayed?

How does our prayer connect to God's purpose?

(References: Genesis 1:26, Matthew 6:10, John 14:14)

How to Pray

- ▶ **Privately** (not pridefully attracting attention) Matthew 6:5-6
- ▶ **Corporately** (in agreement with others) Matthew 18:19
- ▶ **Specifically** (a grantable request) John. 14:13
- ▶ **Persistently** (faithful regularity) Luke 18:1
- ▶ **Obediently** (regardless of feelings) Matthew 5:44
- ▶ **In Faith** (certain of what God desires) Matthew 17:20
- ▶ **In Hope** (confident of God's goodness) Romans 5:3-5
- ▶ **In Love**, (forgiving as you have been forgiven) Matthew 6:14
- ▶ **In Earnest**, (seriously and passionately) James 5:17
- ▶ **In Righteousness**, (not selfishly) James 4:3
- ▶ **Without Fear**, (courageously) 1 John 4:18
- ▶ **In the Spirit**, (internally prepared) Ephesians 6:18

Ways to Pray

Application

Browse and research the ATFP.org database or other sources. Consult with your church, family, and friends. Ask God for insight and an emotional connection. Choose a terrorist or terrorism sponsor. Register your “adoption” as a countable commitment to pray faithfully at regular intervals for that individual’s salvation. Consider making a financial commitment, because heart often follows treasure.

Practice

- For heart changes - example: “Father, lead ___ to repent for rejecting Jesus and declaring war on your children.”
- For dreams and visions - example: “Jesus, reveal yourself in dreams and visions to ___. May he not sleep in peace until he surrenders to you.”
- For irresistible pursuit by God’s Spirit - example: “Holy Spirit, relentlessly pursue ___ to the depths of his hideout, that he may not escape your grace.”
- For inescapable proclamation of God’s Word - example: “Jesus, may news of your free gift of eternal salvation reach the opened ears of ___.”
- For powerful demonstrations of God’s grace - example: “Lord, expose ___ to the precious testimony of Jesus’ followers.”
- For providential convergence of circumstances - example: “Father, orchestrate events (research and name some) around ___ and his friends to facilitate these prayers.”
- For vulnerability - example: “Dear God, strip from ___ all his defenses that he may turn to Jesus for hope and salvation.”
- For conviction of sin and sense of shame - example: “Jesus, confront and overwhelm ___ with his shameful deeds and sinful nature till he becomes desperate for righteousness from you.”
- For freedom to respond - example: “Father, provide an environment to ___ in which he is free to confess and believe in Jesus as Lord openly.”
- For follow-up resources - example: “Lord, surround ___ with devotional materials, gospel broadcasts, fellowship opportunities, and courageous mentors.”
- For God’s honor - example: “God, may the redemption of ___ clearly display your character and glory.”
- Against spiritual blindness and bondage - example: “Lord, release ___ from Satan’s grip and open him to sense and know your grace in Jesus.”
- Against enabling socio-economic conditions - example: “Father, destroy the economic and social situations (research and name some) that constrain gospel proclamation, limit free response, promote ignorance, and perpetuate rejection of Jesus in the environment of ___.”

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