Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Life in the trenches – Week 33

What are we supposed to do?

Day 224. What works?

Your two-fold approach seems quite artificial.

Really? Why do you say that?

Well, I have a friend who is addicted to cigarettes. I think she'd look at me as if I should be in the loony bin if I said to her, "Smoking addiction, you have no power except what is in the mind and body of those you have attacked." & etc. just as you describe it.

In some ways, it is a different way of approaching things. But tell me, what happens when you go to a doctor?

What do you mean?

When you see a doctor because you have something wrong, what happens?

I describe my situation, they (hopefully) listen, maybe do some tests, come to a diagnosis, and then prescribe a remedy.

Exactly. How is that different?

I don't follow.

Ultimately, the doctor is trying to name what your situation is. Once they have named it, they know what to do and can hopefully rebuke it with medicine or procedures. The doctors aim, when you come in, is to name what is ailing you, and then rebuke it with the authority given to him or her by their training – and by you. You are needed to cooperate with whatever they prescribe, and have faith in their capability to facilitate healing.

Ah! So you are saying that I am a spiritual doctor?

In a manner of speaking. Jesus is your medicine, so you call Him into the situation. Call in all (as appropriate) that leads to health and wholeness, including medical doctors, clergy, etc. But start by bringing it to Jesus.

I see.

And use your own words and thoughts! Use what works for you. Doctors don't usually say, "broken bone, I rebuke you." Likewise, instead of my previous wording, you could say, "<…>, I understand it's really hard to stop smoking. May I pray that God helps you in this?" and if your friend says 'yes', just say a simple prayer like "Jesus, please help <…> to stop smoking. Remove all that is making it hard for her. In your name, make it so." And then, ask your friend if you can help her in any other way.

That's more like how I think and talk. However, what if my friend makes fun of me? What if I am mocked or rejected?

What if you could have helped your friend and didn't? Someone once said, "FAITH is spelled R-I-S-K." Remember, you are in a spiritual war – and there will be spiritual trauma and wounds, which is why it's always critical to go to Jesus, come from Jesus, be with Jesus.

Describe your feeling about praying with someone for their health. What are your thoughts on "Faith is spelled R-i-s-k?" How do you see this in your own life?

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 225: What if we just don't know?

So, approach situations with a two-fold approach: 1st, identify and name what is wrong, then ask Jesus to heal it; and 2nd, persistently pursue what is healthiest for the person or people involved.

Yes.

What if I can't figure out what is wrong?

That's the wonderful thing with having a relationship with the all-knowing God. You can always say, "God, I don't know what's going on here, but you do. Please intervene and bring healing to <…> so they experience health, wholeness, completeness, wellness, according to your will. Please stop whatever is preventing them from attaining that, and let it not influence them ever again. Amen."

A catch-all prayer?

You can think of it as when a doctor can't specifically figure out what is wrong, they may prescribe a powerful broad-spectrum antibiotic to address the situation. This prayer is an example of a spiritual broad-spectrum antibiotic.

Pray for some people or situations that need help. Document what you are praying for, and your assessment of the situation(s).

Share what you feel open to, without betraying any confidences.

Day 226: Are there limits?

Are there things I should definitely not pray for?

Don't take God's Name in vain.

What do you mean?

Don't ask God to betray Himself. Don't pray for your own personal (or anyone's) selfishness to succeed. Don't pray for anything which leads to death in any fashion. Don't try to control God. Don't pray for anything which opposes Jesus' Way or holds it in contempt.

Those are the boundaries.

Yes. It's the same boundary the story of Adam and Eve illustrate – decide what is good or bad (selfishly), and then try to force God to fit that decision – the end result is death in some form or other.

Do you have an example where you tried to get your own way through God (knowing what you were doing or not)? How did that go?

Share your example as is healthy or healing.

Day 227: Are there limits (part 2)?

Is there a limit where there is something healing to pray for, but I shouldn't because I don't have the expertise / knowledge / capability / worthiness?

Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. All things have been given to me by my Father."

Why are you saying?

It doesn't depend on expertise / knowledge / capability / worthiness.

What does it depend on?

The simplicity of trust. Trusting like a little child. Trusting like a simple newborn infant trusts its mother that it will be fed and loved.

Describe times where you've felt not capable or worthy of praying. Pray for the simplicity of trust for even when your emotions are discouraging you.

Share when you didn't pray because you didn't feel worthy.

Day 228: Are there limits (part 3)?

Are there things about which I shouldn't pray for because its too dangerous or I need to bring someone more capable in?

Remember that prayer is NOT "I know the magic words that will resolve this situation." Such usage is not prayer, but a mockery of prayer. Prayer is conversation with God. All you're doing is saying, "God, please help." "Jesus, please heal." You've introduced Jesus into the conversation, and often what happens after that is between the person (or situation) and Jesus. You do not own it – you are not that powerful, nor that wise. Please avoid such prideful presumptions.

So, feel empowered to pray about anything that needs God's help. ALSO invite in those who have expertise and capability to work towards that healing (such as psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, clergy, specialists of some fashion). For example, you can pray that your Aunt gets better plumbing to heal a sewer back-up problem in her house, AND you can call in a good plumber to help address the situation.

Is there anything you would not wish to pray for? Please elaborate.

Share as you feel led.

Day 229: Are there limits (part 4)?

What if I just don't WANT to pray for someone? What if I don't like them?

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and 'hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you … I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other as well, and from the person who takes away your coat, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your possessions back from the person who takes them away… love your enemies, and do good …"

Pray for those who persecute me? Seek what is healthiest for those trying to harm me?

Yes.

But they are pursuing death (in a fashion) for me!

Indeed. a.) in Christ, you have already died – you need not fear death (though yes, there may be pain); b.) our enemy is not people, but powers and principalities. Pray for those who are persecuting you – even more, pray for all who are pursuing death in some fashion.

Picture a person who is persecuting you, or is pursuing death, is an enemy, or who you especially revile because of their obnoxiousness and harmful words / actions. Overlaying that person, picture a spirit of death (however you specifically name it in this instance). Now, picture Jesus standing beside that person, reaching out His hand, and removing that spirit of death from overlaying that person. Picture that person being filled by the love of Christ and brought into a state of shalom – whole, healthy, full of the life and love of God and causing health, not harm. Finally, have a conversation with God (i.e., pray) to make this series of pictures a reality.

Share your experience of praying for someone who persecutes you (literally or metaphorically) with others whom you trust.

Day 230: Life in the Trenches.

The life of a Christian is a life of prayer. We are frequently out of our depth, we frequently come upon people or circumstances which we cannot fathom or which cause harm – and so we constantly revert to talking with God about it: prayer. We are grounded and empowered in our prayer. Even (perhaps especially) when we rest, we pray. Today, reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.