

Please God...

Don't make ME pray for *THEM!*

You might be struggling with bitterness if you move around in the prayer circle until you can find a person you are peace with to hold their hand.

You might be struggling with bitterness if you pray for there to be tongues and interpretation that will expose every hurt that person has put you through.

You might be struggling with bitterness if your roommate invites you to pray and you pretend that you are sleeping in your dorm room even though your eyes are open and you are fully clothed.

You might be struggling with bitterness if you keep going through imaginary scenarios of how that person is going to publicly embarrass themselves by falling, develop turrets syndrome, or forget to clothe themselves before coming to church.

So while these are silly situations- bitterness is a real thing. But praying for the people that hurt us is also a commandment of the Lord.

I remember a time in my life when I was on a leadership team and was going through a trial with someone else on the team. I remember awakening one early morning to have the Lord challenge me to pray for that person. PRAY? Okay- Lord strike them with lightening, Lord cause all of the things that they have been saying about me to appear on their head in sharpie markers, Lord cause them to not be able to find their toothbrush this morning. No that is not what HE had in mind. He specifically told me to pray for them.

I stopped listened to the Lord and really prayed for that person. I asked the Lord to bless them, to open up doors in their ministry, to give them strength, peace, financial blessings, safety for their family, favor with others, I prayed for a harvest to spring forth out of their ministry. That night as I began to pray for them- I felt my hardened chains towards that individual break. I saw them as the LORD saw them.

The Lord taught me a valuable lesson that night. When I yield my pain to Him and pray for those who have hurt me (Matthew 5:44) HIS spirit responds to my small act of obedience and frees my heart from the bitterness and replaces it with a heart that embraces those that have heart me.

Now here is what Matthew 5:43-47 says in The Message

Matthew 5:44 (The Message)

43-47" You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what

God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

Is this an easy process? Absolutely not. Is it mandatory and freeing? Absolutely. That person that I wrote about in the beginning of this devotional is actually a close friend with me until this day. I don't even know if they knew that I was having such a hard time with things that had happened in our relationship. That no longer matters. I had to break beyond my own hurt to get to the next level with the Lord- and in my act of obedience the Lord brought someone into my life that has been strength since that day.

Who are you having a problem with in your life today? Is there someone that is just a thorn in your flesh? Why not stop and pray for them- sincerely seek the Lord on their behalf today. Great things will spring out of your obedience to the Lord!