

Pray for One Another: Colossians 1:9-12 (Ephesians 1:15-19)

How should Christians pray for each other? We pray scripture.

Pray Scripture like Colossians 1:9-12: And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may **be filled** with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as **to walk** in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: **bearing fruit** in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **being strengthened** with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; **giving thanks** to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The main goal of a Christian is to be continually filled with the knowledge of God's will.

Main prayer: **To be filled with the knowledge of God's will.** The main verb "to be filled" is passive. God fills us with the knowledge of his will. So, ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will. The GR verb has nuances of meaning in English, one of which is "to be fully influenced" by knowledge of God's will. There are many ungodly influences in the world because Satan is the god of this world. Commercials are designed to influence us to buy things. The media and BigTech (Google, Facebook, YouTube, and all other social media) have algorithms that track your searches and the videos you watch. Now they censor what you see and hear in order to influence you to accept their worldview. Google is creating algorithms that will influence you to accept false ideologies. The world system, mainstream news and social media, is working hard to influence you to become "woke." (Woke = awareness of social injustice caused by systemic racism.) Even SBC is being influenced to become "woke" in its public policy (Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission). This is a strong influence to accept the world's definition of social injustice and racism using Marxist concepts of the oppressor and the

oppressed, not biblical concepts. For example, there are not multiple races; there is only ONE human race from Adam & Eve (Acts 17:26). There are oppressors and oppressed people, but they are both sinners who fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).

If you are a Christian, then the primary influence in your life that guides your thought and action, your thinking and doing, is God's will revealed in God's word.

How do we know God's will? Read the Bible.

"Spiritual wisdom and understanding" come from the Holy Spirit enlightening the eyes of our heart when reading Scripture. (*GR wisdom = sophia; e.g. philosophy = love of wisdom + GR synesis = understanding or discernment*) Spiritual wisdom and discernment are like two streams coming together to form one. I grew up near Pittsburgh PA. The Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers come together at Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River. Spiritual wisdom and discernment are the work of the Holy Spirit and they come together to form the knowledge of God's will (Ohio River). This happens when reading the Bible and applying its truth to our lives.

This means being convinced of the authority of Scripture. The Bible is the inerrant and infallible word of God. The Bible has didactic statements that clearly state the will of God - the Ten Commandments. The Bible has stories that show how people interacted with God and discerned his will. The best source of spiritual wisdom and understanding (and also practical advice) is the Bible's wisdom literature: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. You cannot please God by knowing and doing his will if you do not read and study the Bible.

I think this "knowledge of God's will" functions in at least three spheres.

First, the "knowledge of God's will" includes personal decisions. It covers seeking guidance. "Which college should I go to?" "Which job offer should I accept?" "Should I stay or should I go?" I once had three job opportunities at the same time. I prayed for the knowledge of God's will. Then I used "spiritual

wisdom and discernment" and other practical considerations to determine God's will.

Second, the "knowledge of God's will" includes any ethical or moral dilemma we may encounter. Here's how the 10 Commandments specify God's will.

→ "Should I buy a Mega Millions lottery ticket?" You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

→ "Should I lie on this application for jobless benefits or financial aid?" You shall not bear false witness.

→ "Should I cheat on my taxes?" You shall not steal.

→ "My marriage is falling apart. Should I meet with that woman I met online?" You shall not commit adultery.

→ "I'm not married and pregnant. Should I get an abortion?" You shall not kill (murder).

→ "My parents are old and struggle to care for themselves. Should I move closer so I can help?" Honor your father and your mother.

→ "Should I be woke and join that social justice protest even though it may turn violent?" You shall not have other gods before the LORD your God and you shall not take His name in vain.

Third, the "knowledge of God's will" is much more than our personal guidance or how God wants us to behave in the world: it is an understanding of God's saving purpose in Jesus Christ. It is not just knowledge of God's will for personal daily or future decisions, but knowledge of the 'Big Picture.' It is knowledge of God's plan from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation. You can think about your life from its beginning to where you are NOW, but you cannot see the end of your life. God reveals the beginning and the end of his plan so we will know his will.

Here are the 4 verbs that specify the purposes for being filled with the knowledge of God's will.

First, to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. “To walk” is the main action (GR walk = *peripateo* = to maintain a certain walk of life and conduct). My life and conduct must be in “a manner worthy of the Lord.” I am a Christian and I represent Christ. *(There were several disgraceful moral failures among some high-profile Christian leaders in 2020.)* If I am president of the USA then I must behave in a manner worthy of the office. If I am a member of the president’s cabinet, then I must behave in a manner worthy of the president. I do not want to bring shame or disgrace to the president or my country. If I am the president’s son then I must behave in a manner worthy of my father. If I use my position as son of the president (or VP) to be sexually immoral and extort money for political favor, then I bring shame and disgrace to the president. The knowledge of God’s will enables us to live lives pleasing to God. A Christian’s number 1 priority is to glorify God.

Second, to bear fruit in every good work. “To bear fruit” is the action verb. The Gospel bears fruit around the world (1:3-6): *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.*

It is the Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit that first bears fruit in us. It is the fruit of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. The Gospel never ceases bearing fruit in us - the fruit of sanctification follows the fruit of salvation. Any time it is shared it bears fruit. The Gospel bears the fruit of a changed person who then bears the fruit of good works as a witness for Christ. The purpose of being filled with the knowledge of God’s will is to bear fruit - the fruit of a changed life and good works as a witness for Christ.

Bearing fruit increases our knowledge of God. How does that work? When we put our faith in action doing good works our knowledge of God, our trust

in God, will increase. The more I ride my motorcycle and repair it by watching *YouTube* videos my knowledge of the motorcycle and how it works increases. If I just let it sit in the garage, then my knowledge of how to ride it and how it works would not increase. *(I could not start the motorcycle, so I took out the spark plugs. They were black with carbon. I changed all the spark plugs and the bike fired up!)* Do not let your faith just sit in the garage. Knowledge of God must result in bearing fruit. Bearing fruit increases my knowledge and trust of God. We see how God responds to prayer. We see how God responds to faith. We see how God is faithful to his promises. We can always grow in our knowledge of God and how he works.

Jesus used the analogy of a vine and branches to show that we must remain in him to bear fruit that glorifies God (John 15).

Third, to be strengthened with all power to be able to endure with patience and joy. This is a passive verb, so the power to endure with patience and joy comes from the Holy Spirit. How do I need God's power to endure with patience and joy? It might be the fear and lockdowns of COVID19 or water damage to your house from the winter storm or the death of a spouse. More likely this refers to persecution for being a Christian. Paul wrote this to the Colossian church suffering under Jewish and Roman persecution. Christians need to be strengthened with God's power to endure with patience and joy an atheistic Communist government, a liberal progressive Western government, or a Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic government. This is power from God to continue to live obedient to God's word despite opposition. *(As a Christian teacher in a public school, if you oppose a transgender girl - a boy who thinks he's a girl - from participating in girls' sports and using the girls' locker room, then you will be fired. If you address him/her with the wrong pronoun you will be fired. This is what's coming with the Equality Act.)* We need God's power to be a witness in this rebellious world and endure opposition with patience and joy, not anger and hatred.

I read stories about Christians suffering persecution from ISIS Islamic terrorists in northern Nigeria. They lost husbands, wives, children, and houses. They lived as refugees with nothing but what they could carry. They live in constant awareness that they could be attacked at any time. They all said the persecution strengthened their faith. God's power enables them to endure with patience and joy.

Fourth, to give thanks to the Father who makes you sufficient or competent to share in the inheritance of the saints. The main verb is "to give thanks." We show gratitude to God who makes us qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints; that is, what is promised to the saints.

What makes you qualified to share in an inheritance? Relationship. You must be a child (by blood or adoption) of the parent giving the inheritance. We are children of Adam & Eve by blood, but we are children of God by adoption. The qualification to share God our Father's inheritance comes from our big brother, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:3-6: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (our inheritance), even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ,** according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

If God is your Father and Jesus Christ is your elder brother then the inheritance belongs to you. Romans 8:16-17: *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

The inheritance is every spiritual blessing in heaven. Ephesians 1:3: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*

We want our lives to glorify God. That will happen when we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bear fruit in every good work, and are strengthened with his power to endure ridicule and persecution with patience and joy. We will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord's holiness and grace, bear fruit of good works, and receive strength to endure with patience and joy when we are filled with knowledge of his will. We will be filled with the knowledge of his will when we read and study his Word enlightened by the Holy Spirit and actively participate in fellowship with other Christians.

The Prayer: I pray that Sandie may **be filled** with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that she will **walk** in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him; and that she will **bear fruit** in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God; and that she will **be strengthened** with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; and that she will **give thanks** to the Father, who has qualified her to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Pray Scripture like Ephesians 1:15-19. Verses 15-23 is one long sentence in the GR. Verses 15-19: *For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may **be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.*

The main passive verb is **enlightened** (GR = *photizo* = to illuminate, reveal, shine upon). Ask God to give you the Spirit of wisdom and of

revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Ask the Spirit to enlighten the eyes of your heart. The Holy Spirit who enlightens the eyes of our heart produces a threefold enlightenment:

1. So that you will KNOW what is the hope of His calling. The “hope of God’s calling” is all the spiritual blessings in Christ. This includes the hope of Jesus’ return and our resurrection bodies.
2. So that you will KNOW what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The same inheritance mentioned in Colossians.
3. So that you will KNOW what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. It’s the same power that raised Jesus Christ from death and will resurrect all who believe in him.

Of course, you can pray about high school graduation and what college you will attend. You can pray about your next step in life. But the spiritual prayers of Colossians and Ephesians are more important. In fact, if you pray these prayers, then every other personal concern will be answered.

The prayer: I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give Sandie a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him; and that the eyes of Sandie’s heart may **be enlightened**, so that she will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.