

For those who are sinned against

How do we pray for people who suffer unjustly? Of course, we should implore our good and righteous God to intervene to confront evil and to help people who suffer, ultimately bringing about justice. But along with such prayers, it's important to pray that people in seemingly unbearable situations will come to meet and follow Christ so that they will live a life filled with meaning and purpose. This session will help you pray for people living in abusive situations who have yet to meet Christ

1. Following Christ's example in His life: to break the cycle of sin (vss 20-23)

Pray for someone who suffers even though they haven't done wrong things deserving of punishment. There are many ways that people are tormented without being physically tortured in criminal ways. Let the Holy Spirit bring someone to your mind such a person who has yet to know Christ.

1 Peter 2:20

20 ... But if when you do what is right and suffer you patiently endure it, this [situation is filled with empowering] grace from God.

- **Pray for God to sustain them in the life-giving power called "grace" (vs 20).**

God does not enjoy or approve of anyone suffering. In His great love He strengthens those who suffer, even before they come to follow Jesus. The Greek word in the original of verses 19 and 20 is the same word usually translated "grace" in many other parts of the Bible. Thank God for grace He's already given. Ask God to impart more of His life-giving power, helping them to do what is right and to know Christ.

1 Peter 2:21-23

*21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,
22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;
23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.*

- **Pray for God's call to be clearly heard and for Christ's footsteps to be seen (vs 21).**

It's one thing to hear the gospel message. It's something else again to hear God Himself issue a call to a life of dignity and purpose. Pray that God's voice of compassion and love breaks into their heart. Pray that the beauty and simplicity of following Christ will be revealed.

- **Pray for those sinned against to respond like Christ (vs 22-23).**

Pray that God exalts the amazing example of Christ as one who was sinned against, and yet did not sin. Pray that God opens ways to speak and respond like Jesus, and thus break the cycles of hatred and revenge. Pray that just like Jesus, they will continually entrust themselves to God's care and ultimate justice.

1 Peter 2:24

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...

2. Experiencing Christ's power in His death: to launch a new life (vs 24)

- **Regarding sins: Forgiveness from the penalty of sins**

Pray that God reveals the awesome reality that past sins are utterly forgiven.

- **Regarding sin: Freedom from the power of sin**

Pray that God opens their heart to the hope that they can live in radical righteousness.

This session helps people pray from a powerful, but rarely used passage of scripture in 1 Peter. The words were initially written to believing slaves who sometimes suffered under very cruel masters. Peter wanted to encourage them to follow the living Lord Jesus, triumphing and being transformed in the midst of difficult suffering.

Peter reminds them of Christ's death (in verse 24), but he is more focused on declaring to them the incredible power of the life that Christ lived (in verses 21-23). The very purpose of the resurrection is so that they can rise above the dreadful power of sin and live in a powerful righteousness for God's highest purpose. Instead of fighting for vindication as victims, Peter's hope was that they would live in the high honor of suffering with Christ. As you lead this prayer session, first help people focus on a particular person and then help them pray in accordance with the scriptures.

Focus on a particular person

As usual, FreshPrayer helps Christians pray for people who have yet to follow Christ. This session helps expand prayer specifically for people who are in difficult and possibly abusive situations. Most people will initially feel that they don't know anyone who is personally suffering. But push them a bit to consider people who may not be suffering in sensational ways. Most people who suffer do so quietly with mounting despair. It can be powerful to focus prayers for people who have been highlighted in local media as suffering injustice. In this case, they may not be personal acquaintances. They are nonetheless prayerworthy.

Round One: Christ's Example in His Life

Peter was not endorsing slavery and does not say that God is happy with slaves living in suffering. Some translations seem to suggest that God is pleased with suffering. This results from translating the Greek word for "grace" (charis) with the English words "favor" or "approval." Grace usually refers to God's operative power, given as a gift. As God exerts grace we are saved, but supernaturally enabled as well to serve Him. See 1 Peter 4:10 and 5:10 for examples of enabling grace. The suggested translation highlights this simple way of interpreting a tricky passage. There are three ways to pray:

- a. **Sustaining, compassionate power.** The first has to do with the phenomenon of grace. Praise God for His compassionate ways. Ask Him to move in sustaining ways.
- b. **Revealing Christ and His purpose.** The second calls upon God to reveal Christ in the huge dignity of high calling and purpose.
- c. **Entrusting themselves to God.** The third has to do with people learning to entrust themselves. We are accustomed to faith as something that saves us or helps prayers be answered. Consider the faith that Christ exhibited toward His Father to patiently endure suffering. This is the faith to ask God to form in the person's life for whom you are praying.

Round Two: Christ's Power in His Death

Briefly discuss the difference between "sins" and "sin." Pray that the death and resurrection of Jesus would become the power that transforms the life of the people for whom you are praying.

Wrapping Up: Praying in Hope for Christ's Purpose

You have been praying in accordance with the Bible. You have not been praying for problems to go away. You have not merely asked for people to be carried away to heaven when they die. You have been praying for Christ Himself to be followed and glorified.