

For those in so deep that they can't get out themselves

1. Who's on God's mind? Consider God's premeditated kindness.

Psalm 40:5 says that God thinks about people all the time. Focus your prayers on behalf of someone (we'll call this person "your friend") who you think may have been especially on God's mind in recent days. Be sure you focus your prayer for someone who has yet to follow Christ. It's best if the person is someone you know or have opportunity to see on a regular basis, such as a neighbor, co-worker or family member.

Psalm 40:5 *Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, and Your thoughts toward us....If I would declare and speak of them, they would be too numerous to count.*

- **Consider the wonderful mind of God:** Try to imagine what goes on in the loving mind of God. What kind of thoughts and emotions did God have toward you before you became a Christian?
- **Begin to count the uncountable:** What kind of thoughts does God have concerning your friend? Make a list of the desires, concerns and intentions in God's mind for them.

2. Pray for Christ to lift them out of whatever "pit" they may be in.

Many wonderful, moral people can still find themselves deeply mired in predicaments from which they have no way of helping themselves. Their own sin, and/or the evil of others, has trapped them. Even now, God yearns to lift them out into a transformed life, as well as into an eternal life. In short, God wants to save them.

- **Consider the grinding frustration of dealing with the consequences of sin (vs 12).** As you remember your own experience, it can help you pray with a sense of compassionate identity for your friend.

Psalm 40:12 *For evils beyond number have surrounded me. My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see. They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed me.*

- **For a Christ intervention (vss 1-2).** Your friend may be trapped in "pits" which can be relational, physical, emotional, financial or spiritual. Describe their predicament. Ask God to free them.
- **For the blessing of faith, and freedom from pride and deception (vs 4).** People often allow themselves to be deceived by pride or false ideas of self-sufficiency, instead of turning to Christ for help. Pray instead for your friend to begin to rely on God.

Psalm 40:1-4

*1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.
3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God....
4 How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.*

3. Pray for a new life and joy under Christ's Lordship.

Envision the day when "Save me!" will be their own prayer. Until then, may salvation be your prayer for them.

- **For Christ to give them practical ways to begin living a new life with genuine joy (vss 2-3).**
- **Pray patiently and persistently (vs 1) praising God for how great his salvation will be (vs 16).**

Psalm 40:16 *Let those who love Your salvation say... "The LORD be magnified!"*

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The following ideas will help you give leadership to a prayer gathering focused on people who have yet to follow Christ. The suggestions can easily be adapted to fit your group. It's possible to use FreshPrayer with large gatherings, but the ideas below are best suited for small groups in home or workplace settings. Keep the session to an hour or less. Provide a copy of the participant's page for each person joining in the prayer gathering. Encourage solid, better prayers by urging participants to pray short prayers in a conversational style.

Background: "Salvation" terminology can seem overly religious and useless for present-hour problems.

Some of the most controversial words in our society today seem to be "salvation" and "saved." Why? Nothing could be further from the truth of God's word that salvation refers exclusively to securing a place in heaven in the age to come. God loves to intervene and lift people now from the predicaments that they face in their everyday affairs, as well as give them eternal salvation. People in our society are sometimes offended at the idea of needing a Savior at all, preferring lifestyles of self-sufficiency. Psalm 40 is a marvelous example of God longing to rescue people from problems that they have brought upon themselves, or from the consequences of evil people upon them. But God rescues people in order to establish them as responsible, trusting servants with genuine joy. Without necessarily bringing this topic up for a prolonged discussion, be ready to infuse this idea into your prayer directions in order to help people pray for the fullest measure of salvation.

1. Who's on God's mind? Consider God's premeditated kindness.

Read. Have someone read Psalm 40 in its entirety, and then refocus attention on verse 5.

Consider God's thoughts toward people who have yet to follow Him. Have each participant name one person known to them who does not yet follow Christ. In small groups of three, have participants describe the kind of thoughts that God has toward them. The point of this exercise is to cultivate confidence that God is eager to hear prayers concerning the issues people face in everyday life.

Select people you know. We refer to the person that they select as "your friend" for convenience, but have participants focus on any of their family members, neighbors or co-workers that they might often see.

Praise God by counting His thoughts. Stimulate short prayers of praise that honor God for His loving intentions and strong desire to rescue beloved ones by asking, "What does God really want for your friend?"

2. Pray for Christ to lift them out of whatever "pit" they may be in.

After considering God's desires of mercy and goodness, turn your prayers to rescue in present-hour problems.

Consider the pit. Have each participant focus on one person and describe how they might be suffering from an influence of evil or by a trap that they have gotten themselves into by their own sin. Ask, "What kind of "pit of destruction" or "miry clay" might your friend be trapped in?"

Pray for freedom: Be sure that the people who are selected for prayer are people who are not Christians.

Pray for the God-granted blessing of trust, liberating them from pride and/or deception (vs 4). This request is the primary issue. God delights to save those who trust Him. Pray that they would be freed from deceptions and pride in order to entrust themselves to a Savior.

3. Pray for a new life and joy under Christ's Lordship.

You might want to compare the first and the last verses. The first says that the Psalmist waits patiently. The last verse contains a plea for God to hurry up. Patience means to keep regularly, eagerly praying with tenacity. Ask how participants might continue the same prayers with persistence.

Pray for genuine joy and a changed life. Pray for clear, bold steps of obedience.

Close with prayer for God to be glorified. As a group of people who have just refreshed your love for the way God saves, you should be able to close with a round of prayer which creatively and prayerfully adds a phrase to the sentence: "The Lord be magnified." [Such as "The Lord be magnified in John's family"]