

Sometimes it seems that things get worse when we pray for people. It can be tough to continue praying with hope if people we are praying for keep choosing pathways far from God. Why are things getting worse? What is God doing? Why is He taking so long? Without fresh awareness of God's steady love and good intentions, you might be tempted to give up. But don't give up. God wants you to keep calling on Him. He wants you to know the bigger picture of His love and purpose.

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

1. Call on God!

Calling out to God is praying with a sense of urgency. Go ahead, stir up your heart's desire. Refuse to believe that your prayer is like a phone call that has gone to voicemail. Get in God's face. Speak as if He is listening to your voice. Tell God why this person matters.

- **Call out loud:** As a way of raising your most sincere and simple prayer, cry out to Him with extra volume. Pray as if it were your last prayer. You can do this by yourself, or with others, by simply crying out this prayer on behalf of a friend or relative who has yet to follow Christ: "God! Help! Show Your love!"
- **Watch for His ways:** God wants you to know the enormous scope of His love and wisdom toward you and your friend. He may not reveal anything special to you while you are praying. But set your heart to watch for God to show you the full scope of His mercy as you pray in the days or weeks to come.

Jeremiah 33:5-6,9

...in My anger and in My wrath, and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness.

Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth...

It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them...

2. Ask God to do a great and mighty thing.

Pray in hope! As Jeremiah recounts the story, God sometimes turns His face from people or families for a time, but this does not mean that He turns from His love. In the wisdom of God's great ways, He often does this in order to bring about a huge family-wide or city-size work of love and mercy. God is always unfolding His purpose to bring great blessing to entire communities. Pray for your friend as one person in the midst of a large work of God throughout an entire family or city. It's really part of what He is doing among all the nations!

- **Pray for healing, peace and truth:** Dare to imagine some of the good which God intends. His good purposes involve healing, as well as peace. Along with the peace, God will reveal His truth.
- **Ask for God's glory:** God will do great and mighty things that will be recognized by many. Pray for God to be glorified. Praise Him for how He has already done things that are as good as they are great. Celebrate the certainty of how His dealings will result in Him becoming famous for bringing people joy in His goodness.

This leader's guide is designed to help you guide a session of prayer with groups of any size using the participant's guide. Copy the participant's guide so that each participant can have a copy as you lead them to pray for people who have yet to follow Christ.

Consider God's ways.

This session invites those praying to consider the larger picture of what God is doing in the lives of their friends. It will help awaken any prayer group to consider the validity of the opening statement: "Sometimes it seems that things get worse as we pray for people." Focus an opening time of discussion on Jeremiah 33:1-9, particularly verse 3 in light of what immediately follows in verses 5 and 6. A helpful question may be to ask just what God means by "great and mighty things, which you know not." The verses which follow seem to suggest that God says that He is doing things in the story of an entire city and people (a much larger scale than just one person). And He says that He is transforming entire communities in such a way that people from all over the world will recognize God's work and honor Him for it. That's a fairly huge scale of operation.

Guide your group through three rounds of prayer.

Begin as one group, regardless of group size. Ask each person to have in mind one person who has yet to faithfully follow Christ, who is a family member, an acquaintance in their workplace or a friend.

Round One: Call out to God. Assure the group that God can receive our prayers even if we pray silently. There is no extra merit to extra volume. But once in a while, it helps to find ways to refresh our desire and hope. For some, it helps to pray boldly and clearly with a full voice. Why not invite the group to pray the printed prayer together, three times, full volume? "God! Help! Show Your love!" Ask everyone to stand up as you do this. After calling out together, invite them to remain standing to voice their prayers in whispers as a group, all at the same time!

Round Two: Asking God for good things. Bring attention to the words in verses six and nine which promise that God intends good. This verse probably gives us grounds to define goodness in three ways: healing, peace and truth. You can break the larger group into three circles, one for healing, one for peace, and one for truth. Or you can break into smaller groups of three or four people, asking that three prayers be prayed in each small group, one for healing, one for peace, and one for truth, with a direct focus on a particular friend or family member.

Round Three: Praising God for great things. Close with a time of praising God for doing something vast and wise which has been unfolding for many centuries and generations. Coach the small groups to focus their remaining time on praising God for doing something large-scale in the lives of those they are praying for. Praise Him for doing a family-wide wonder. Praise Him for dealing with everyone throughout their workplace, school or neighborhood. Worship Him for unfolding His purposes for city-size salvation, redeeming and transforming entire communities. Honor Him for acting on a global scale, but at the same time, with great mercy and love for each individual.

A Word to be Watchful.

At the close, remind everyone to be watching for God to slowly or suddenly reveal part of His great purpose and mercy. Part of the way that He responds to our praying is that He reveals something of His greater purpose and His extravagant goodness. Our understanding of His purpose will always be limited, but He wants us to pray with persistence despite perplexing events and tragedies that defy simplistic explanations. We may not know exactly what He will do or when, but we have every reason to ask Him to do things that are as mighty as His mercy.