How to Pray for your Enemies

I may have mentioned this before, but there is a song called “I will pray for you” that is not what I would consider full of Christ-like prayers. But I sometimes listen to it if I’m feeling particularly frustrated with those that I may consider my “enemies.” Then, I can get back to the business of actually praying better, if not good, prayers.

The song is written by a guy whose heart was broken by a girl. He goes to church and the pastor tells the congregation to pray for those who hurt you. Inspired, he begins praying for the girl. He prays that a potted plant falls from a shelf and hits her on the head. He asks that she get into a car accident. He prays that she is miserable and bad luck follows her everywhere she goes. There are more prayers in the song that are similar. Like I said, this is not what we should be praying.

When Jesus says we ought to pray for our enemies, he means it. How hard it is! Kind of like turning your cheek or walking the extra mile. I have a hard time with this these days with all the suffering I see going on in the world. I struggle to pray for those who have accused me of something I didn’t do or when other people who call themselves Christian say I’m not a “real” pastor. I have a hard time praying for people whom I see as cruel, self-serving and hateful.

For me it is easier to pray for the person who is just like me. I struggle with praying for that other person who votes differently than I do. I struggle with praying for people who claim to be Christian and yet act far from it in my opinion. And some days I realize that my prayers are mainly about all those who are just like me.

How does one start praying outside of one’s comfort zone?

First, pick just one person for whom to pray. If you have a whole list of people you don’t like then you will spend time just thinking about those people you are unhappy with and this will just take time away from praying.

Second, don’t pray negative prayers like the song I mentioned. Keep the prayers positive. You aren’t inflicting evil but good on them.

Third, keep the prayer simple. Maybe start by praying they have good health or for their healing and wholeness. Pray for God’s will in their lives with the realization that this may not mean something negative for them. Stay away from praying them into being Christian like you.

Fourth, pray consistently for that person with the same prayer.

Five, don’t look to see if the other person has changed or if your prayers have made them like you. That isn’t the point. Instead, observe how praying for your enemy has changed you.

I think that is the best part of praying for your enemies or those you dislike. If you pray as I have suggested, it will change your heart and your life.

Keep on praying this week!
Blessings,
Amelia