



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Intercessory Prayer, Part 2" (How to Pray Series)

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There are many reasons I love going to England. I learn a lot about ministry, as they are cutting edge in many things. I also love the history.

I grew up on British movies from World War II to Robin Hood to King Arthur. I also love it because of the words they use. They always say "brilliant" or "lovely." When they ask me what is my name, and I say, "Dan," they say, "Brilliant." And I say, "thank you very much." They ask, "What is your name?" I say, "Dan." And they say, "Lovely."

And they always add the word "Cheers" to their thank-you's. "Thank you. Cheers! Makes me feel so cheery. And at restaurants or taxis, they DON'T normally tip much, if at all, which makes me think of them as so Chinese-sy.

But there are some things I have learned to do in the British way that I learned the hard way. In our last trip to England, Keani Wong, and my wife Pam and I took a train to the town of Stafford for a Christian conference that was paid for by a donor.

We got on with our entire luggage and traveled the hour or so from London to Stafford. I assumed that taking a train with your luggage and carry-ons is like taking a plane ride in America. You know, when they say they are about to arrive at the station, you wait until the train stops when it's safe to walk. Then you get up, walk down these narrow aisles, get your luggage, and then you get off.

Well, the train stopped, and we walked to the area where our luggage was. I led the way, walking down the stairs and carrying my luggage to the train platform. I placed the suitcases on the platform and turned around to help Pam and Keani with their luggage. But suddenly the door closed between us! I hit the button to open the door but the door wouldn't open. Pam and Keani were hitting the inside door button but it wouldn't open either! And slowly the train started to move away.

A conductor then yelled at me to get away from the train as it started to pick up speed. I was stunned, frozen in shock, standing inches away from the moving train. It felt like I was in some old World War II British movie on a train platform seeing my loved ones disappear into the distance. And off went Pam and Keani to who knows where.

The conductor, who yelled at me, ran up to me and said in proper British English, "Sir, were you having some trouble?"

"Yes, my wife and friend were behind me. But the door closed and now they are going off to Neverland!" The conductor said, "What took you all so long? Whenever the train stops, you only have 60 seconds to get off."

Sixty seconds? You gotta be kidding!

"I barely had time to get my luggage and walk down the aisle to get to the door in 60 seconds." He said, "When you heard that the town of Stafford was coming up, you were supposed to get up, get your

luggage, and then walk down to the door and then wait. As soon as the door opens, get out quickly with your luggage." Brilliant.

He said, "You only have 60 seconds, max." Sixty seconds? Lovely.

Meanwhile, Keani and Pam were trying to call and text me, but I am not getting either on my phone. Little did I know that the train crew had allowed them to sit and relax in first class after learning they were stuck on the train. Meanwhile, I am worried.

But they ended up at some unknown town 20 minutes away, and caught another train back. The conductor on that train said to them, "You have one minute to run to the other side of the train tracks to catch the train back."

So Keani picked up Pam's and her own luggage and ran down the platform and up these long tall stairs to get to the other side and made it in time. Keani said her arms hurt for days after that.

Meanwhile, I am in Stafford trying to text my ride that I am in trouble. The person who is picking me up was a young woman named Busy Thomas (BUSY, being a British nickname for Elizabeth), who is in charge of logistics for the conference. So Busy and I were texting back and forth as we were trying to find each other. But we've never met before, which made it harder. And then we realized we were only 15 feet from each other.

I should have said to her, “Didn’t it occur to you that I’m probably the only Asian at the Stafford station right now?”

So the lesson is: be prepared for what you plan to do. I should’ve tried to find out how the Brits got off their trains. What were their practices that made train rides painless and simple?

So here’s my segue: When it comes to praying and being an intercessor for others, it helps to know what the practices are for praying for others in a way that’s painless and simple but effective. For many people, praying for others—especially for physical or emotional healing—is scary. They say, “We don’t know what to do. We don’t know how to pray!”

Well, help is on the way! This sermon is part two of how to pray intercessory prayers – prayers when we intercede for another. May you never be late for the train of these thoughts.

Today I am going to teach you an incredibly easy way to pray for others for physical or emotional healing. It won’t be scary. It won’t be crazy or weird. It will be natural—naturally supernatural. Today is the how-to’s. And since this is a sermon series of How to Pray, it’s good to know how to pray and not just the theory. But before I do that, I want to lay down some guidelines.

1) Pray for others right away.

When someone shares with you a need for a physical healing or an emotional hurt, don’t say “I’ll pray for you,” or “My prayers are with you,” which means you will do it later, IF you remember. Instead, pray for people IMMEDIATELY after you hear of the need. Intercede immediately. Pray right away.

If someone writes you that they have a need, don’t just text them with the message “My prayers are with you,” or hit “like” or “love” on Facebook. No, right then and there pray! Pray immediately, and then send them a message back

saying, “I just prayed for you right now.” And that will be such a lift for them. To read, “I prayed for you tonight” that kind of specific reply is so helpful as opposed to, “you are in my prayers.” It’s a dime a dozen of people who say “I’ll pray for you,” or “my prayers will be with you,” but very few who pray right then. We are busy people, so pray right then.

Whenever I hear a siren, be it an ambulance passing or a fire truck or a police car, I ALWAYS try to pray IMMEDIATELY for that patient the ambulance is carrying or about to see; the victims of that fire that the fire trucks are speeding to or the sick person; or for that scene of the incident the police are going to. I pray right then.

If someone tells you of their illness or need, pray for them right then! If a waitress says, “Man, I have a headache today,” offer to pray right then. When a sales clerk, a bank teller, a classmate, or a neighbor expresses a need, offer to pray right then. It’s the nicest, most gentle way of ministry.

Remember how I said last week that the Bible calls us to: *“Pray in the Spirit AT ALL TIMES and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers FOR ALL BELIEVERS everywhere.”* (Eph. 6:18) (And I would add for all believers and non-believers.)

The prayer of a righteous PERSON is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

And remember this. That when Jesus commissioned His followers part of the deal is that they would pray with confidence.

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:1-2)

Whether it was driving out demons or curing disease or healing the sick – prayer was all part of it.

2. Pray with confidence that God hears your prayers. One of the reasons I know that He hears every prayer is that He told us to talk to Him all the time in prayer. And He said it is the will of God. You want to know the will of God? People ask all the time “What is God’s will for my life?” God’s will is for us to pray. The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.” (1 Thes. 5:18-19)

There it is – the will of God is for us to pray and give thanks. If you don’t – you quench the Holy Spirit in you. May we not be pretty “quenched!”

We have a Healing Service today. And many of our prayer team will be praying for people but you can pray too.

This sermon is going to be a laboratory of prayer. I think it is super important that we learn practically how to pray. Bad on us if we have been at our church for years, and we were never told how to practically pray.

Like what are the steps or principles that will help effective prayer. Maybe we were told to pray but not practically HOW TO PRAY for someone who might need healing right then or emotionally support. So today I thought I would teach the thousand plus of us on a Sunday morning how to practically pray for another in interceding for another person to have health, healing or encouragement.

Here’s an easy way: remember the acronym LEAP BLT TO GO. It’s in your bulletin insert.

- L – Listen
- E – Eyes Open
- A – Ask permission to lay hands
- P – Pray
- B – Bless
- L – Listen
- T – Tell Them options
- TO-GO – Go out and pray for others

Let me get a model here. Ming Chi, please come up. (Ming went on stage.)

Ming is a good friend, with a good sense of humor and helps as a volunteer with our youth ministry. Everyone say “Hi, Ming. We love you, Ming. Nice knowing you, Ming.”

We have seen Mike Pilavachi do this but we all need a review. Ming, please assume the prayer receiving position. You all in the congregation don’t have to be in this posture, but I thought it would be good to show you.

Ming, we are going to cast out the demon of ugliness! Just kidding! How about we cast out the demon of weirdness? Just kidding again.

Now it is relatively simple and easy to pray for someone for healing or encouragement or strengthening or comfort. We may have seen or heard a spectrum of styles, but I am going to teach you a simple way, like Mike Pilavachi has taught us.

You may have seen the stereotypical Pentecostal way of someone speaking in tongues over you. “Ah, Ming, I now pray in tongues. Slamma bama phi slamma jamma, Jamba Juice!” And then they might hit you in the forehead or mess up your hair or do the karate chop version of yelling, “I cast out your demons of weirdness!”

Or the harp version, where I pull out of you your sickness while doing hand motions of playing a harp. Or maybe use the heat wave version. Feel, feel, feel the heat of the Holy Spirit!

Or there is the conservative Evangelical version that uses lofty language: “Oh Great Father in Heaven, I speakest now for poor Ming, who is so sickest and ugliest and weakest and weirdest. May thou, oh Great Lord, grantest your healing on this poor soul who has not any kind of beauty or pulchritude or sanity in him.

Though he’s reprehensible for every kind of sin, please cleanse and purify him!”

No, when we pray to God, we can do it in normal language. So here is one practical way to pray for healing for help for comfort. We always want to strengthen, encourage and comfort others through our prayers. Remember those three things: strengthen, encourage, and comfort.

This one way I’m about to teach you is one of many practical ways of praying for others. This can be a good guideline before we do our own style. So here is a basic “prayer 101” for interceding for someone for physical and emotional healing. Let’s use the acronym **LEAP BLT TO-GO**.

“L” is for LISTEN. Listen to what the situation is. What is the prayer request? Don’t tell them about your own problem or when you had a similar problem. Just listen.

“E” is for EYES. We keep our eyes open. We don’t pray with our eyes closed. Why not? Because we want to see how the person is doing as we pray. We want to see if the Holy Spirit is moving. We want to see if the person is crying. Sometimes they even fall over in the Spirit.

We keep our eyes open as many in the Bible kept their eyes open. This is one of the hardest things to teach. Did you know that Jesus prayed with His eyes open as reported in the Gospel of John in chapter 11 and 17. And in Luke 18 it was noted that it was a normal Jewish custom to pray with eyes open toward heaven.

“A” is for ASK. Ask for permission to lay gently a hand on or near the person. Why do we lay hands on people when we pray? It seems to be a biblical style that assists prayers:

Mark 10:16 And Jesus took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

Luke 4:40 As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on each of them and cured them.

Luke 13:13 When He laid His hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

Acts 6:6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Acts 8:17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:6 When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied

Acts 28:8 It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him.

1Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.

To be clear it is not magic to use hands, but in my experience something happens kinesthetically in the feel of praying. Something happens when we lay hands and pray.

For me, sometimes my hand gets really hot, supernaturally hot, and I feel something is happening, and sometimes people feel a tingle or warmth or a flowing of something.

Not always. It’s not formulaic. People get healed whether my hand gets hot or not, but it’s just that the Spirit arrives in much more intensity – which is why our Healing Service today is important, the Spirit arrives in more intensity.

There’s no cookie-cutter formula for praying for others. Our prayers are as effective even if we don’t touch.

It's fine if you just stretch out your hand near the person and not touch. I'm just telling you that it is normal and biblical to offer to lay hands if a person receiving is open to it.

Not everyone wants to be touched, and there might be something in his or her background that to be touched is not a helpful thing. So always ask. Never lay a hand on someone without permission. Never insist.

"P" stands for Pray. Pray simply and concisely.

Let's not do the lofty, flowery, over-religious prayer of some Christians: "Lord, I pray in Thy grace and magnificent abundance, for Thou to take away Ming's weirdness. And I hit his head right now for more effect. And I speak louder because You may not be able to hear me, God. Out, out, demon of weirdness!"

And let's not get repetitive either as if the Lord is slow in thinking and memory:

"Lord, I just want to You, Lord, to heal Ming. And, Lord, I just want to say, Lord, please help Ming. Lord, I think if I say Lord many times my prayers will be more powerful."

It doesn't work that way any more than if you were to talk to Mayor Kirk Caldwell and say, "Mayor Caldwell, I just want to ask you, Caldwell, that if you please, Caldwell, fix the potholes on my street, Caldwell. And I'm saying your name many time in case you don't remember your name well, Caldwell. I ask this in the name of the City and County of Honolulu." (BTW, I consider Kirk Caldwell a friend so I am not mocking him.)

No! Let's do simple prayers, and that's it! People get healed or get helped with a silent prayer, or a short prayer. You might want to say a longer prayer but make sure it's for the benefit of the recipient, and not for your benefit or to make yourself feel good. When Jesus said prayers for

healing have you noticed how short and concise they are?

Luke 5:24 Jesus said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home."

Luke 8:52 They were all weeping and wailing for her; but Jesus said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping."

Luke 8:53 And they laughed at Him, knowing that she was dead.

Luke 8:54 But Jesus took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!"

Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

Short, crisp prayers, and boom, its done! That's the biblical way.

So what about "BLT TO-GO" in our prayer acronym?

"B" stands for BLESS. End your prayer for the person with a blessing. Always bless them by saying something like, "I bless you in God's grace, mercy, joy, and strength. Amen!"

"L" stands for LISTEN. Listen to the person you're praying for to see how they are doing. Is the pain gone? Did you feel something from the Spirit?

"T" stands for TELL. Tell them the possible scenarios. What I mean is tell them that the healing or joy or peace may not be immediate and may occur later. Sometimes it takes a second prayer, like when Jesus prayed twice for healing for a blind man. (Mark 8:22-25)

Another option is to offer the person church resources like GriefShare, DivorceCare, or counseling. And then encourage the person you prayed for. May love always be your guideline.

"TO-GO" stands for "go out and pray." Don't keep all this teaching to yourself.

Thanks, Ming, for helping me illustrate how to pray for others. (Ming left the stage.)

During the worship service last Sunday, we took time to pray for one another. If a person had a prayer request, we asked them to boldly stand up and then people around then would pray for them. Not the prayer team, not pastors, but just our members, many of them inexperienced in prayer, praying for one another. And so what happened?

One person wrote me and said she had prayer last Sunday morning and on Monday morning had to have a heart catheterization as the doctors previously saw a problem which would most likely require a stent to be inserted. There were two doctors working on each side of her heart. After the procedure the doctor said, "I don't know what happened" because they couldn't find the problems they saw before. This member explained that it was God! She believes she was healed as a result of last Sunday morning prayers.

Another person who stood up for prayer told me that for the last two and a half months she has had heart problems. This resulted in her feeling tired, having low energy, low heart rate, and depressed. She felt down.

Last Sunday she stood up as one in need of prayer. People came around her, laid hands on her, and she felt something happening as they prayed. That afternoon she said she was full of energy and joy. Her spirits had lifted! She wears a device on her wrist that monitors her heart rate, and the device showed that her heart rate increased to a healthier level.

She told me this Wednesday night, three days after the prayers, and she is still full of energy and joy! Her heart rate is up too. She attributed it to the prayers of the people.

Also on Wednesday night a friend asked for prayer for a sore arm and shoulder.

People surrounded him for prayer, and as I was leaving that meeting he yelled to me and said, “Dan, it’s a miracle! I can fully move my arm. My shoulder and arm are healed.”

Friends, prayer works! Have faith. We all need prayers, including the church staff, like Jenny Sung, Marianna Meachen, and Beebe Freitas.

And so in a moment, just like last week, I am going to ask if anyone has a prayer request for something physical, emotional, or spiritual to please stand up now, and we will intercede for you. I know it might not be easy, but just please stand and I am going to ask people to pray for you.

And now those who are nearby please stand and move towards the person who wants prayer. If you see someone standing off alone, please leave your row and go to that person.

In a moment, using LEAP BLT TO GO, please ask permission to lay hands on that person to pray. If you’ve asked for prayer and you don’t want hands on you, just say so. If you don’t want to say what the issue is and would rather say, “Just pray for me,” that is okay. The Holy Spirit will still minister to you knowing what it is.

And those praying, I am giving you the option of EITHER saying a brief prayer or silently praying and saying nothing out loud, just letting the Holy Spirit do the healing for it is the Spirit that does the healing anyway.

And if you are not near someone who is standing, from where you are please extend a hand towards the closest person and pray.

And all of us have the option of just sitting or standing and singing to our beautiful Lord who comes to us in our time of need. He’s beautiful and He wants to heal.

And here are some specific things I am hearing that the Lord wants to heal or express His love to you about: financial issue, medical needs, broken relationships, broken heart, and the loss of a loved one. Tell the Lord what your need is.

Let’s all sing now or pray.