

The Value of Your Presence

Over the years, I've participated in more than a few Bible study groups. The style of these Bible studies may vary from lectures to discussions to master-teacher to watching teaching videos, but they have all share one thing in common.

We pray together.

That's a good thing, but there's a subtle change depending on the demographics of the group. The vast majority of our collective prayers center on health and physical needs, but it seems the older we get, we don't just pray for the physical needs of others; we start praying more for our own! After all, the older we get, the more aches and pains we have!

One friend of mine described the prayer time of his senior adult class as an organ recital. In their prayer requests, they recited all their organs that needed attention!

Prayer is good—but is prayer enough?

Lest my question be misunderstood, let me stress: God is God. There is nothing beyond His ability. He can step into any situation and make things right. He can heal *completely*. In fact, God doesn't need our prayers at all, but He invites us to pray and join Him in His work. Our prayers are a request for God to work, grounded in the trust that He is good, loving, and will act.

But is the act of praying all God wants from us? Or does God desire for us to be a part of His response to the person in need?

We are a channel of God's presence and love to a person in need when we step into their world and be there for them. Sometimes that's easy. For example, the words of comfort from someone with a history of cancer can be a great help to a person currently facing cancer.

"He comforts us in all our affliction, so that **we may be able to comfort those** who are in any kind of affliction, **through the comfort we ourselves receive** from God" (2 Cor. 1:4).

It's a great help when someone walks a difficult road with you, especially if they've already walked that road. You don't have to have the answers to all their questions. Nor do you need to preach or attempt to soothe them by making comparisons. *"You think this is bad. Let me tell you what I went through."* Everyone's situation is different, but there's comfort in walking with someone who has also faced the

same surgery ... also experienced a divorce ... also lost a child to an early death ...

For the rest of us—those of us who have not experienced that same hard road—we can still be a great comfort. *"I can't help. I wouldn't know what to say."* It seems I've heard this most regarding death. A friend has lost a parent, spouse, or child, and people feel awkward in calling on the grieving person because they don't know what to say.

Here's the beauty of how God works: You don't have to say anything. Just show up. Be there. **Your very presence can be an incredible comfort to those hurting.**

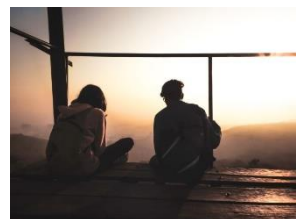
The Book of Job is the account of a man who faced unimaginable grief, pain, and suffering. Those who've read this incredible account know Job had three friends who offered less-than-stellar advice and counsel. The majority of the book centers on the conversation between Job and these three friends. We typically view these three friends as lousy excuses for friend. Job said, "You are all miserable comforters" (Job 16:2).

But I don't see these friends as totally worthless. Before they ever said a word, they did something powerful and positive.

"They met together to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they looked from a distance, they could barely recognize him. **They wept aloud**, and each man tore his robe and threw dust into the air and on his head. **Then they sat on the ground with him seven days and nights, but no one spoke a word to him** because they saw that his suffering was very intense" (Job 2:11-13).

I can't say this for sure, but the totality of their conversation could have happened in one afternoon—yet for seven days, they sat with him *without uttering a word*.

- You don't have to know what God's up to in someone's suffering. Just be there. (In fact, you're better off not trying to answer for God and assume you know what He's up to.)
- You don't have to pretend to understand their pain. Just be there.
- You don't have to fill the seemingly awkward silence with words. Just be there.



Just be there—and let the comfort and love of Christ flow through you.

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