

Let's try praying like this...

{#12 – Prayer through Service}

What's it like?

It's like saying a prayer for others and answering your prayer at the same time. It's serving God by serving others. It's like walking the walk in addition to talking the talk. It's like praying for the well-being of others and then providing for the well-being of others. It's like practicing your prayers, taking the content of your praying so seriously that you try to be part of God's response to them. Sometimes your service is your prayer, without any words being spoken, your intercession enacted.

What's it for?

It's for bridging the gap between communication (prayer) and action (service). It's for making your prayers concrete, especially your prayers that ask God's help for others, for the world. It's also for showing God's love, your prayers of service demonstrating and even advertising what God's love looks and feels like. Martin Luther says that "Amen" means, "Yes, yes, it is going to come about just like this"; prayer through service is for living out *your* "Amen" in-deed.

When could I use it?

You could use it in a spur-of-the-moment way, as a need arises and you help. Or you could plan ahead to do a prayerful act of service or service project.

Where could I use it?

Again, you could use it in an on-the-spot way, as a need arises and you meet it. Or you could plan ahead to prayerfully meet and work where there is a need, or to work on something to later send to someone in need (like a care package for a soldier or a college student).

How it works...

You likely pray to God all the time to help others who are sick or in need. Then you eventually realize that God can use you to help answer those prayers, even in part. So, you either pray while you serve, or just let your service stand as your prayer, a prayer of offering and dedication to God of your time and energy. There are as many ways to serve as there are types of needs. You could make something, or rake something; write something (a letter to a representative or a note to someone who is sick or an editorial), or fight something (like injustice); you could clean up something, nail something, build something, go on a mission trip or stay home, something for the whole earth or your own backyard, a political issue or a family issue, by yourself or – maybe even better – with others.

Try it!

There *are* some service projects that can be done in your home – like assembling personal care kits or school kits for Lutheran World Relief, making crafts or writing letters for nursing home residents and shut-ins, writing emails to politicians, getting together to plan a bigger project somewhere else. I invite you to try those things. To get the ball rolling, let today be a brainstorming day. First, write down as many different ways to serve others or creation as you can. Use a white board or some paper to draw out some categories: home; school; community; nation; world; creation. Once you're out of ideas, it's time for part two: find out some needs and some success stories. Second, reach out to some individuals or organizations in your community or neighborhood to see what needs there are and what avenues of service are available to participate in (or where the gaps are to fill in). Finally, in the intersection

between the means of service that spoke to you and the actual needs around you, find a way serve and show God's love – and then don't hesitate to act, knowing God has your back.

What did you think?

Learning goal: To challenge yourselves to answer this question: How can you help to be an answer to prayers, either your own or others'?