

Weaponizing Prayer: Revenge or Blessing

I had been betrayed by two people, each around the same time in a similar way—and I struggled to know how to pray for them.

Each time I thought of praying for them (which I took to be a sign of the Holy Spirit prompting me), I intended to tell God how to deal with their sin against me. I sought to use prayer as a means of getting revenge, justified because they had hurt me deeply. I was weaponizing prayer.

When I recognized my motivation and had enough spiritual insight to ask the Holy Spirit to help (and forgive) me, I was reminded of a prayer champion in Scripture who weaponized prayer, but with the exact opposite motivation.

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured (Col. 4:12).

I was humbled by Paul's description of this faithful servant of Jesus who was fervently committed to praying for the people God had placed in his life. Rather than pray against, Epaphras prayed for. He prayed forward, from whatever problem the person had, toward a better spiritual future.

This was an important step in my journey to understand prayer as a weapon, not against the people who hurt or deceive me, but for the purposes and promises of God to invade their lives and circumstances. It's a radical shift of focus from relational warfare to spiritual warfare on behalf of the person who has brought me pain or problems.

In the Gospels, Jesus presents us with a challenging, unexpected teaching. But as always, His words are true wisdom

and life-transforming—not only for the recipient of the prayer but also for the person praying. To weaponize prayer with a forward look has a double blessing.

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27–28).

To bless is “to invoke divine care” (God’s response); “to confer prosperity” (my request). To confer a blessing is to intercede from a gracious heart that wants what is truly good for the persons prayed for, even if they have treated us unfairly.

God will bless you, even if others treat you unfairly for being loyal to him (1 Peter 2:19, cev).

Weaponizing for Blessing

Our prayers must be weaponized, but not for retaliation. Every response to a prayer is God being gracious. Almighty God wants to receive and respond to believers’ prayers that echo and emulate the praying heart of our Lord Jesus. We are to mature beyond presenting God with a get-this-for-me demand or a get-them-back-for-me command.

Our prayers must become motivated by what motivates our Lord, modeled after the Father’s gracious generosity. Grace, generosity, and blessing should be in the DNA of every prayer, praise, or petition.

Prayers that release blessings require a sincere spirit of godliness; seeking to present our petition in what we believe would bless our gracious, generous God. A Holy Spirit-bred prayer that supersedes our personal pleas or pain. A prayer we could expect to hear Jesus praying as He intercedes in heaven for those lost or lonely, bruised, or broken.

A prayer beyond our self.

PHIL MIGLIORATTI is curator of The Reimagine Network.