



January 2024

Dear Friends,

It happens after almost every worship service—the crush of people asking me to pray. I am always humbled by the faith-filled concerns people choose to share. Though many speak limited English, the look of genuine concern or anxiety communicates all that I need to know. Some share concerns about family members they wish me to pray for. Others in hushed tones reveal the secret pain of abuse, rejection, or shame related to past poor choices. Many request prayers for healing, a job, or a place to lay their head that night.

Each time I am asked to pray, I feel an indescribable privilege to enter with another person into that thin space between heaven and earth—between things seen and unseen—between the realm of things temporal and the realm of things eternal.

Please don't take offense, but my sense is that prayer seems to matter more in places where there is greater need. I think you know the type of need I'm referring to:

It's the need of the Nigerian immigrant in Bahrain illegally—desperate to find a job to support his family back home. 'Pastor, I'm all out of money and have been kicked out of my accommodations. I've been sleeping on the roof of my building this week. Please pray that no one finds me sleeping there and that God provides a job.'

It's the young husband from Pakistan asking for prayer for his wife immediately following worship. He leads me to the entrance of the sanctuary where his wife is seated having delivered a child only two days before. She is clearly in distress and needs medical attention. I tell him that we need to get her to the hospital. "No pastor, we have no money. Please pray. We know that prayer is powerful and effective.'

It's the day laborer from India who has not been able to return home to see his wife and children for three years. His six-year-old son is very sick, and his wife believes he may die. The man has no means to comfort his son and wife from such a distance and so asks if I would pray for God's comfort for him and his wife and healing for their son.

These are but a sampling of the prayer requests that come to me and the elders of the National Evangelical Church English Language Congregation immediately following worship each week. While many who request

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prayer come with tremendous burdens related to sickness, loss, or other pressing needs, there are also those occasions when prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude are requested.

Such was the case following our Sunday evening service last week. A Nepali man approached me with a four-year-old child in tow. To my knowledge, I had not met this man before (he attends our Nepalese church plant). He had come to worship at ELC that evening as part of our United Voices ministry to offer a ministry of music with other believers in Nepalese.

“I just want to ask you to offer a prayer of gratitude to God for this congregation pastor. I don’t believe you know the story of our son (the four-year-old boy in his arms). Four years ago, no one thought this little guy would make it. He was born with a hole in his heart and has had to endure two very complicated surgeries. He still has one to go, but the doctors are very positive about his future.”

As he let the lad down to run around with his friends, I couldn’t help noticing that the boy was smiling and seemed to have lots of energy. “Pastor Keith, the ELC, and the American Mission Hospital made it happen, pastor. This is the most loving and generous congregation we have ever known. We were devastated as parents as we did not have the resources to undertake all that was required to give our son the needed medical intervention. It’s only because of God’s grace and the generosity of others that our son is alive today. Would you be so kind as to offer a prayer of thanksgiving on our behalf?”

As I put my arm around his shoulder and began to pray, I was simply overwhelmed by the opportunity to intercede on behalf of this grateful father. The silence preceding my prayer was far longer than I would have wanted, but that was only because my stammering tongue was laden with words too heavy and important. So, in the silence, I simply allowed the Holy Spirit to intercede on my behalf. When words did finally come, I expressed profound gratitude for grace, for healing, and for the opportunity to celebrate the seed of faith planted and watered by others that produced such a beautiful outcome in God’s perfect time.

Kathy and I wish to thank you for the many ways you contribute to these types of outcomes. Your prayers and support are a source of great encouragement for us as they enable God’s goodness and grace to flow more often in the Kingdom of Bahrain and throughout the Middle East.

We bless and praise God for your partnership in the work of the gospel.

With sincere appreciation,

Blaine and Kathy Newhouse
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English Language Congregation
Kingdom of Bahrain