

## Theological Perspectives on Responses to Prayer Requests in WhatsApp Groups

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**ABSTRACT:** The problem of this article speaks to the importance of the essence of prayer in the Christian life. Praying is a privilege for believers. Humans can ask God for help with all their life problems. Praying can be seen as a special place for believers to build close relationships with God. They can also utilize modern communication applications to connect and pray for each other such as through calling, sending letters, and WhatsApp Groups. Through praying for each other, people are interconnected and dependent on God. The method used in this study is descriptive. Researchers investigate Biblical texts related to the importance of praying for others. This approach lays a Christian theological basis for prayer. The results show that praying for others is a reflection of Christian character because Christians are commanded by Christ to pray for each other. Praying for others reflects an aspect of Christian character that is essential for believers. Believers who offer prayer support demonstrate that the prayer request is something important and offers a show of solidarity with the one being prayed for. In today's context, WhatsApp Groups facilitate an effective means of communication to convey prayer requests to and from others.

Keywords: relationship; people believe; prayer requests; WhatsApp groups, theological prayer.

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### INTRODUCTION

Praying for the needs of others is the obligation of believers. Jesus himself prayed for His people. Therefore, praying for others is an essential aspect of the Christian life. Followers of Christ must obey the commandments of God's Word to pray for each other, as stated by the Apostle James (James 5:16a). The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (James 5:16b). When the Apostle Peter was in prison, the congregation prayed for him (Acts 12:5). The Corinthians prayed for the ministry of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 1:11). James also emphasized that if someone is sick, the congregation can pray for him (James 5:14). From just these few texts, it is very clear that Christians have the privilege to pray for each other. Related to that, Laia (2020, pp. 5–20) says people who suffer from an illness must be prayed for with a serious attitude of

faith in God. Likewise, Gea (2020, pp. 25–32) stressed the importance of Christians praying with faith in God. They should pray because it is a commandment for followers of Jesus. According to Nainggolan and Zega's (2021) view that the Christian faith requires followers of Jesus to pray and surrender to God. God's will for believers is that they support others in intercessory prayer. Prayer is the essence of the Christian faith. Praying in faith is one's duty. In addition, the purpose of praying for believers is for them to experience the power of God in their lives. Suyatno (2022, pp. 116–128) said believers must pray for God's will to be revealed in their lives. That means that through prayer the opportunity for a believer to experience the power of God in his life becomes a greater possibility.

The privilege of believers asking for God's help requires on their part that they must pray in

faith to Him. Jesus said where two people are gathered in his name, he is in their midst (Matthew 18:20). Jesus promised that he would be present with His people in prayer. Simarmata (2022, pp. 15–24) emphasizes that praying is God's mandate for believers because Christ is pleased to be with believers (Matthew 28:19-20). Praying is a privilege for each individual believer (Nggebu, 2021b, pp. 27–50). When believers pray, Christ's presence may become even more real in their lives. No other founder of any other religion claimed that they would accompany their followers besides Jesus. He promises that His presence becomes more tangible through the Holy Spirit.

With the advancement of today's communication technology, sharing personal prayer points via WhatsApp has become a common habit. Rahayu et al. (2022, pp. 69–80) said that WhatsApp Groups have become a medium for rapid dissemination of information. Likewise, A. Wulandari and Salma (2022, pp. 242–246) emphasized that WhatsApp Group communications have become a mainstay in spreading information quickly. Important information can be spread immediately to many friends. Sahroni and Irawaty (2022, pp. 130–141) argued that WhatsApp Groups could be a medium for spreading hoaxes, but could also convey correct information. Firmanto (2021, pp. 480–490) says that prayer through WhatsApp Groups can be seen as a means of strengthening one another's faith within a faith community. One helpful way of using WhatsApp is to send prayer points to other believers who are in the WhatsApp Group, regardless of territorial boundaries. This information can then be quickly disseminated and reach the community so that they will immediately support them in prayer. The difference between this research and previous ones is that this research investigates the theological aspects of prayer requests in Whatsapp Groups.

In early January 2023, the author submitted a prayer request to five WhatsApp Groups. The goal was to ask for prayer support for fellow believers being treated at the Bandung Central Santosa

Hospital. The responses from the members in the five WhatsApp Groups became an entry point to assess how important the essence of praying for others is in Christian theology.

So, the question posed in this research is what is the theological perspective on prayer requests in WhatsApp Group communities? The purpose of this study is to explain the theological perspectives on prayer requests in the WhatsApp Group community that reflect Christian character.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this study is descriptive (Nasir, 2014). Zaluchu (2021) understands that the meaning of the data collected through this method is such that it can be used to research the problems raised in the article. First, the author collected data that was then analyzed related to the cause and effect following the object of research. Researchers examined the relationship between the prayer requester and the response of the members listed in the WhatsApp Group. The petitioner conveyed the same prayer points to five WhatsApp Groups and then data was collected from those who responded. The period of this research was from the time the applicant posted the prayer points on the WhatsApp Group on January 7, 2023, until January 13, 2023. From the five WhatsApp groups, the researcher obtained data from informants through the chatrooms, which included text, and emoticons. Reactions, and stickers about supporting the prayer request. The number of responders was recorded, then analyzed, compiled, then ended with some conclusions. Meanwhile, to evaluate prayer requests from a theological point of view, the approach taken was to investigate the biblical foundations of the importance of praying for others as a clear command of Scripture. This data was used to assess the theological basis for praying for others.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research is based on the following hypothesis: if a believer in the Christian community submits a request for prayer support from a fellow

believer, then fellow members in the body of Christ have the theological responsibility to support him in prayer. This research produces a theological perspective related to prayer requests in the WhatsApp Group. This research also produces a formulation of the importance of praying for one another from a theological perspective in Whatsapp Groups as a means of a modern communication app in submitting prayer requests, and having believers pray for one another. This research also implies that it is important for Christians to provide the image of a person of action quickly acting to pray for prayer requests submitted in the group since these requests might be urgent. In spite of this sense of urgency and how easy it is to be overwhelmed with prayer requests through many different groups, Christians must not grow weary in praying for others.

### **The Importance of Praying for One Another from a Theological Perspective**

Theologically, prayer is one of the key signs and actions a follower of Jesus does. Jesus demanded that His disciples pray in holiness of life, in a state of pure conscience, and should have already experienced God's forgiveness (Mark 11:25). Praying for others in the community of believers was an example given in the early church, like the congregation praying for Peter in prison (Acts 12:5). The Corinthian congregation supported the apostle Paul in prayer (1 Cor 1:11). Believers always pray in faith to Christ. The Apostle James emphasized the characteristics of believers seen from their response in praying for each other (Jas 5:16). Praying for others is the responsibility of Christians. Carson and Moo (2009, p. 634) say that James expects believers to have the mature character that Christ wants. They earnestly live in firm faith. The characteristics of Christians who truly believe can be seen in their prayer life. They must pray in faith by expecting the help of the Creator Lord. Astuti et.al. say that prayer is a powerful expression of faith. Christians' beliefs are strengthened by the Holy Spirit so that they have the courage to witness Christ, are rooted in Him, and

continue to hope for His help (Astuti et al., 2022, pp. 1–14). Theologically, Christians cannot live individually; they need each other; they need a community of other believers; in praying, they draw strength from heaven through praying for one another. The phrase "pray for one another" in James 5:16 describes the characteristics of all believers. In James' understanding, praying for one another has power and has an impact on a faithful life lived by God's people.

Ward (2010, p. 839) says the word "sure" comes from the Greek word *energumen* which means something that is potentially powerful. Literally, it can be understood that Christians who pray have great power (energy) for their faith. Friberg (2006) explains *ἐνεργουμένη* (*energumen*) from the singular feminine nominative middle participle verb from *ἐνεργέω* (*energeo*) which means power, activity, and effect. This means that believers with the confidence to pray will have an impact on their faith insofar as God works through believers' prayers as the means. Likewise, Gingrich (2000) explains that people who pray will have an effect on their community such as experiencing God's power in the church (1 Cor 12:6); experiencing God's promises fulfilled (Eph 1:11), or God will at work in the lives of His people (Phil 2:23a).

Tong (2001) says Christians are commanded to pray, but they must pray in faith. This means they must pray with faith in Christ. Prayer must be accompanied by a belief in God. They pray with all their might which reflects the sincerity of their hearts as believers in Christ. Believers and Christians who pray for one another have great power. Believers may live in the tension of persecution so they need the power of prayer against their enemies to keep standing upright in their faith. So, the significance of James' encouragement for the people to pray has a big impact on their passion for prayer. Believers who were widespread in Asia Minor really needed prayer support from others so that they could continue to develop and grow in their witness to the Gospel of

Jesus Christ. The hallmark of believers is to pray for one another. In the Old Testament, an interesting example emerges in Job's life. This religious and pious figure from the land of Uz was given an assignment from God to pray for his three friends. Even though he was suffering and needed prayer support, Job was also obliged to pray for others, too (Nggebu, 2021a, pp. 11–28). Kim et al. (2023) said praying for others means supporting them so that they remain strong in their faith in Christ.

Praying for others has proven to have a great impact on one's spiritual life. Domingo et al. (2017), reads the text of James 5:16 through the lens of people who were in the Harapan Kasih Nursing Home in Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan. This text turned out to be very significant because it had an effect on reducing the anxiety of those who were presumably believers. Through prayer, they felt emotional relief (Domingo et al., 2017, pp. 1–13). That means that people who pray for one another can reduce the level of anxiety in the lives of their fellow believers as well as themselves. Baskoro (2022) explains that people who love God have a passion for praying. A growing Christian means a Christian who grows in love for Christ; he also loves others in the body of Christ. One way to love others is to pray for them. Nurwindayani (2022, pp. 16–28) also emphasizes that believers who are active in fellowship activities have the spirit to pray for each other. In this fellowship, they not only hear the sharing of God's word but understand the importance of praying for one another. Widodo (2023, p. 1) in his reflection said he believed that the prayers offered to God gave Christian workers the ability to serve the King. Praying for one another not only strengthens fellow believers but also unites believers with the strength to hope for God's help in their lives. Thus every believer is required to have passion or enthusiasm in praying, especially praying for the interests of others, besides himself. This basic selflessness has existed since the time of the early. The legacy of this style of life for the believer should become a model for today's believers to be diligent in their prayer lives. A style of life that

unites all of one's energies to pray for others as a practical theological heritage for the church regarding the prayer life of believers should be maintained at all times.

### **WhatsApp Group as an Effective Media in Communication**

In the last several decades, there has been a marked development in communication technologies and applications. One of those popular apps today is WhatsApp, which boasts millions of active users. It's also interesting that someone can join several WhatsApp groups, both those who are close among family members and those who are general in nature, open to people from many different backgrounds. Many communities at home and abroad are using WhatsApp Groups to keep in touch. Tsitsi Chirombe et al. (2020, p. 33) confirmed that WhatsApp was very effective in facilitating religious activities among students in Zimbabwe. They are very active in communicating through this social media (Chirombe et al., 2020, p. 33). Not only did they communicate but they also shared spiritual needs. H. R. Scott et al. (2019), said that prayer is the essence of maintaining harmony in the Christian faith. In the context of South African prayer life, it can unite the multi-ethnicity of South Africa. Praying, as a practical theological activity, is very effective in uniting people to live together (H. R. Scott et al., 2019, pp. 1964–1968). Scott also explained that praying together can heal others. This is the case because through prayer there is mutual reconciliation to forgive others and restore relationships. So prayer is an important part of humanity's lived experience that is inherent in the life of every Christian (H. Scott, 2021, pp. 60–72). Butler says that prayer is a spiritual practice in the Christian life (Butler, 2020, pp. 241–257). Christian prayer is an expression of one's spirituality. Once one is bound in a relationship with God, such a person is enabled to build harmonious relationships of which prayer is an important dimension of a believer's expression of faith.

The WhatsApp Group that is the subject of this article's research is related to Christian service activities. Researchers are also active in participating in several WhatsApp Groups both internally because of the similarity of vision in Christian ministry. In the WhatsApp Group which is related to internal Christian concerns, the group usually conveys news about the family, prayer requests, sharing the word of God, notifications concerning the schedule of certain events, or other announcements. Submitting a prayer request to be prayed for by friends in the WhatsApp Group has become a normal and reasonable request. Tatang and Deak (2022, pp. 1185–1196) say that Christians, based on Scripture's teaching, need one another. They can support one another such as by praying for one another (Jas 5:16), caring for one another (1 Cor 12:25; Heb 10:12), encouraging one another (Heb 12:10), forgiving one another (Eph 4:32), loving one another (John 13:34,35; Romans 12:10), taking precedence in giving respect (Romans 12:10), confessing one another's sins (Jas 5:16), building one another up (Romans 14:19) and so on. Nurwindayani (2022) emphasized that the role of the Holy Spirit enables every believer to depend on others in living his spiritual life. Nurdayana and Suharnomo (2022, pp. 710–719) say social media is an effective means of communication in today's era. This is the case because social media can be used as a means of communication that is fast, cheap, and without lots of technological or financial barriers. So it is also very true that, as Mudani and Ariantini (2021, pp. 51–60) put it, social media can be a persuasive tool for communicating with many people. Everyone can communicate with others in spreading the news, both private and public.

### **WhatsApp Group as a Means of Requesting Prayer Support**

On several occasions, researchers have conveyed prayer requests to friends in their WhatsApp Groups. They responded and supported with prayer. In monitoring activity in the WhatsApp Groups, the researchers saw that the prayers of other

people were also prayed for by fellow friends in the group. Upon hearing the news about any particular prayer request, WhatsApp group members immediately prayed for them. This can be seen from the chat that appears on the WhatsApp Group. All data is presented clearly. From these data, it is clear that Christians need each other. Tataming (2022, pp. 68–81) explains that believers who live in obedience will show concern for others. They need to be prayed for; they also need emotional support, namely sharing in the difficulties or suffering faced by their friends. That means Christians cannot live without each other. They need a caring community. It is almost certain that Christians who own smartphones are likely to join one or more WhatsApp Groups, which would allow them to share prayer requests. Because praying for others is a commandment of the Lord Jesus, Mudak (2017, pp. 99–111) explained that Christians should not give up praying as it says in God's word Luke 18:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Christians must pray without losing heart. Whenever and wherever believers are, they can freely pray. Marunduri (2017) quoted Martin Luther's view that praying is like breath, necessary for life; in this case, praying is necessary for believing. Luther himself was a man who dedicated himself to prayer and depended fully upon God (Marunduri, 2017, pp. 15–40). Marunduri (2017) claims that Luther understood prayer as a mainstay for believers and he himself always depended upon God with prayer. Marunduri (2017) concluded that the founder of the Reformation was someone close to God in his personal prayer life. God Himself wants His people to pray. Christians who pray to God show that they have faith and rely on Him. The true Christian always prays as a way of relying on God's power over his life. Simartama (2022) said that Christians can meet God through their faith and prayers. Praying must be accompanied by a full trust that God hears the prayers of His people. Stephen Tong (2022) expressed his view that believers must pray in faith, because there are evil spiritual forces that hinder the prayer of the righteous. The heavenly powers try to fight the

prayers of believers. That is why believers must pray in faith in Christ (Tong, 2022, p. 1 repost on YouTube). It is also not wrong to say that prayer is a one of a believer's main weapons because he relies on God's power over his life.

In January 2023, researchers obtained data from informants who submitted prayer requests to friends on the WhatsApp Group because they were being hospitalized. The prayer request was conveyed to friends in five WhatsApp Groups with the same subject matter, except that the initial edit of the sentence was changed according to the intended WhatsApp Group profile. After knowing that the applicant would be treated, the source also realized that he needed prayer support from his fellow believers. He could not face this problem alone. Prayer support was needed from fellow members of the body of Christ. The main points of prayer on January 7, 2023, are as follows (the text of the prayer request has been redacted so as not to cause misunderstandings with other parties):

Guys, please pray for me. The results of the examination show there is a mild infection in my lungs. I will undergo treatment at Bandung Central Santosa Hospital. Please pray that I will get the right medical treatment. Regards.

After that, more detailed information about the follow-up examination was sent on January 8, 2023, at 11:30 PM:

My friends, please pray for me after spending the past two nights for treatment at Bandung Central Santosa Hospital, due to a mild infection, which left me short of breath, tired, and experiencing dizziness. A pulmonologist has me doing drug therapy that is taken orally, injected, and inhaled (nebo therapy through the nose). Hoping for improvement and a full recovery. Treated in the intermediate isolation room (covid negative). Regards.

Based on this request, friends in the WhatsApp Group community prayed for their friend. Just like other believers, resource persons also need spiritual help: they are prayed for by partners in Christ. Information on the subject of prayer through the WhatsApp Group spread quickly and many colleagues immediately prayed for it. The prayers in

the WhatsApp Group community also show concern and take part in praying for it. This reflects a mature attitude of faith in supporting others who need prayer support.

### **Responses to Prayer Requests in the WhatsApp Group**

From the two prayer request chats above, the researcher found data from members who responded to the prayer points submitted by the applicant in WhatsApp. The following are the findings from the five WhatsApp groups:

#### ***Discipleship WhatsApp Group***

This group consists of workers in discipleship ministry. Some of them are also full-time workers. But many of them also have the status of professionals according to their profession and also take part in serving. This group has members throughout all Indonesia, as well as some members living abroad.

The activities that stand out in this group are providing information about ministry, the need to be supported in prayer as well as sharing about what is happening in each member's life. Occasionally an online meeting is held to discuss a topic related to the Bible or another theme. Participants might be divided into breakout rooms to discuss in smaller groups. The aim is to sharpen the discussion but also to strengthen relationships with one another. After that, everyone gathers in the main Zoom room so that each group can share the important lessons learned in the discussion. In general, this group is very active in discussions and willing to share the new things they learn.

When it was confirmed that one of the group members was being treated, the researcher submitted a prayer request from friends in the Discipleship WhatsApp Group. The following are excerpts from chat replies from members of the WhatsApp Group (only a few representative chats were selected, and the names were shortened for the privacy of the participants in the WhatsApp Group;

likewise, they were not included in screenshots for their confidentiality):

- 1) AP: Join in praying for Mr. SN, may healing power pour out from the Lord Jesus, and the medics be given wisdom for the right actions. Hopefully, get well soon and be healthy again. Amen
- 2) HD: Please pray for Mr. SN. May God give restoration and healing. Amen.
- 3) RM: We sincerely ask for healing for Mr. SN. May Your mighty hand touch him. In the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 4) TF: Ask for the grace and help of God the heavenly Father for Mr. SN. Heal him from the sickness he is suffering from in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.
- 5) D: May the mighty hand of the Lord Jesus...the Miraculous Healer touch, repair the damaged cells and heal them so that Mr. SN is healthy and fully recovered. Amen.

In monitoring the activity of the WhatsApp Group, it was shown that 101 of the 176 members, or as many as 57.38% who responded to the prayer request said they also prayed for the applicant's struggles. They responded by writing a chat that they prayed for the applicant as cited in the several chats above. Some gave a reaction emoticon indicating that they had read the requester's chat and joined in the prayer, and some gave stickers showing that they joined in praying for the applicant.

In this group, a senior called the applicant while he was still in the monitoring room at the Emergency Room (ER). He said he was sorry and promised to pray for the applicant while he was being treated. The applicant feels grateful for the attention of colleagues in the service. This concern shows an attitude of true Christian faith that pays attention to the suffering of others and supports them in prayer. This concern also shows a close relationship as a unit in the body of Christ (cf. Romans 12:5), that each member can care for the other.

### **WhatsApp Group Couples**

This group of married couples has been formed since 2005. Members of this group often

meet in Bible Study, several times do Christmas events together, have recreation together, and visit each other's homes. This group is very active in communicating and asking for prayer support or giving each other important information in the family or ministry.

When they heard that the researcher was being treated at the hospital, this member of the WhatsApp Group immediately responded with a prayer. The following are prayer quotes from two group members:

- 1) BT: May the power of the blood and stripes of the Lord Jesus heal *Bung SN* from infection in the lungs perfectly, amen.
- 2) NT: God, give healing to our brother Mr. SN who is currently undergoing treatment at Santosa Hospital. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Of the 12 members in the group, 10 people responded in the chat, 83.33%. The hallmark of the group is always meeting once every two months to fellowship together and study God's word. In terms of intimacy, this group met intensely and mutually strengthened relations among themselves. They know each other's families including their children. And often also pray for each other's children. Thus, when they heard the need for prayer, they immediately respond by praying. The Apostle James explained that a sick person should be prayed for by his brother, especially believers in the body of Christ (cf. James 5:14). Praying for one another can bring healing (James 5:16). Theologically it shows that praying with faith has great power. Members of the group who know each other have shown a mature attitude of Christian faith and care for each other as stated by James.

### **Alumni WhatsApp Groups**

The alumni WhatsApp Group consists of various generations, both old and recent alumni. This group mostly communicates online. Alumni often submit prayer requests or information about their ministry. It can be said that the characteristics of this group are more dominant in communication through chat only. Occasionally seminars are held

via Zoom meetings. There have also been several online prayer meetings.

Some excerpts of prayer include (name abbreviated):

- 1) AM: In the name of the Lord Jesus, with the power of the blood and stripes of the Lord Jesus, Pak SN is healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).
- 2) JWA: The Lord Jesus bless and help care for you, Mr. SN. GOD heal you.
- 3) AH: May the Lord Jesus touch and restore Pak SN's health.

When the applicant submitted a prayer request to fellow alumni in the WhatsApp Group, 53 of the 230 people or around 23.04% who responded to support in prayer said they were praying for the applicant. From those who responded, on average, they had studied together in certain classes during the study period, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Some did not go to college together but met and know each other. That is, they pray for the applicant as a form of concern for fellow members of the group. It is also interesting that some people are new alumni who are not known by the applicant, but they respond by supporting them in prayer. It shows they see the importance of others in the community. They have applied James' assertion that believers should pray for one another (cf. James 5:16).

In this group, two people called the applicant while he was being treated at the hospital and prayed briefly. The two brothers are close friends with the applicant. Spontaneity to support others in prayer is a living example in the Christian community, just like the attitude of Jesus who immediately healed the servant of a Roman centurion in Capernaum when He was invited to come to the centurion's house (Luke 7:1-10).

### ***WhatsApp Student Services Group***

This community is a ministry group. Those enrolled in this group are key workers in a Christian student ministry at a public high school in Bandung. They regularly meet face-to-face and online for Bible study and pray together. Emotional connection is very prominent in this group. Of the nine people

registered in this WhatsApp Group, eight people responded that they prayed for the applicant who was being treated in the hospital, or around 88.88%. Here are two chats about prayer support (abbreviated names):

- 1) MS: I hope Mr. SN gets well soon.
- 2) BS: Wow Mr. SN, I'm sorry. prayed.

As part of God's people, they believe that God has encouraged them to pray for one another. Intimate relationships can occur in small communities that have the same need in learning God's word. Just like the apostle Paul, when he asked for prayer support, he contacted a congregation he knew to pray for him. So, in practice, believers can submit prayer requests to their community.

### ***WhatsApp Group Lecturers and Educators***

This WhatsApp Group includes lecturers and teaching staff at an STT in Bandung. During the pandemic, this group often met in monthly meetings, including planning the beginning of the semester and evaluating the end of the semester. This community also often meets in student proposal exams or student thesis sessions. Of the 19 people registered, 12 people responded by expressing prayer support, or as much as 63.19%. This group can be categorized as a group that is active in communicating. The following is a prayer support chat excerpt from the education group:

- 1) PJ: We support Pak SN in prayer. May God heal and restore totally. Get well soon.
- 2) RF: I hope the doctors will give the right medicine & treatment, I'm Mr. SN.

From the data findings, it is clear that the prayer requests received a response from friends and partners in ministry. Theologically, the principle of praying for one another has become part of the life of the Christian faith. When the Apostle Peter was detained in prison, the congregation prayed for him (Acts 12:5). Likewise, the Apostle Paul was prayed for by the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:11). So, it is clear that praying is very urgent in Christian life to this day. This passage concerns a serious prayer attitude to pray for others.



## **Praying for One Another as a Reflection of Christian Character**

In his letters, Paul often requests prayers from the church through the news that was conveyed to the congregations he had visited or had founded. The Corinthian congregation responded and prayed for him. It can be said that conveying prayer requests through letters is one of the technologies that developed at that time. Paul's epistles were made of parchment which were relatively expensive, too. Barclay (2008, p. 78) said at that time there were no printed books. Letters were written by hand. The material came from parchment and ink. Usually, letters were written on expensive parchment. The Brotherhood researched the manufacture of parchment from leather (vellum) which required cost, precision, and technology (Ikhwan, 2022). The letter from the apostle written on parchment is certainly seen as valuable and important for the spiritual benefit of the people. The contents of the letter can be in the form of teachings, encouragement, advice, reprimands, and also regarding prayer requests. The church leader or bishop read it to the congregation. The letters were copied and sent to other congregations. Thus, information and communication technologies were at that time used for theological purposes for the benefit of the congregation. Prayer is also Paul's rather firm advice in Ephesians 6:18-20. Budha (2022) said the importance of prayer to fight evil forces or against spiritual warfare. The Apostle Paul advised the congregation to rely on Christ in facing all powers in the world. For the apostle, God can work mightily through prayer. Likewise, through prayer, God is initiated by His people. The prayer must be of a Christian character. Prayer must also be a believer's lifestyle. Masters et al. (2022, pp. 251–259) say devout Christians' prayer can significantly influence their lives. Living in prayer can reduce stress levels in their lives.

Prominent apostles like Paul needed prayer support from the congregations they started or supported. Barclay (2008) said Paul was physically weak and his health was never very good. He

realized he was not able to face the challenges of ministry. So, dependence on Christ took on a stronger precedent. Lembang (2022, pp. 80–91) also views Paul as having physical weaknesses. And even he always asked to be supported in prayer by the congregation. Hearing that need, believers prayed. The congregation knew Paul and the apostle also knew them. The closeness of emotion moved them to pray as well. Handayani (2018, pp. 1–19) said that a strong emotional connection between people will affect the response or openness between them. Wulandari and Rahmi (2018, pp. 56–73) also said that the more there is a relationship that is deliberately built on intimacy, the more positive responses will be elicited by each other. The congregation felt the same burden to pray for the apostle Paul. Believers need one another and thus need to pray for one another. Theologically, believers are effective in prayer in the body of Christ.

Over the last few years, the technology that has developed into a frequently and popularly used instant communication tool is WhatsApp. This technology is practical enough to convey information that quickly spreads to many people in various places. The response of members in the WhatsApp Group also responded quickly to pray for the applicant, either via chat, emoticons about prayer, or calling. That means that the prayer request message immediately elicited a response from others to pray for the petitioner. Putra (2022, pp. 1–14) says that the prayers of believers are heard by God. Jesus demonstrated His power to receive the prayers of His people.

Conveying prayer points through letters, newsletters, and WhatsApp Groups is a medium that is provided because of today's technological advances. It is not a problem because it is in accordance with the context and the era. The most important thing is that the essence of the prayer can be fulfilled. WhatsApp Group community members pray for each other. They can support the applicant in their personal prayers. On average, they respond the fastest after a few moments after sending prayer requests. This data shows that praying is an

important activity in the Christian faith as suggested by Alferdi and Rindi (2022, pp. 123–136). Praying in the Christian faith must be done with faithfulness. Christians must always pray, including praying for others. Lase et.al. (2022, pp. 148–163) said persistence in prayer is a characteristic of believers who are faithful and who have fellowship with God.

In today's context, prayer requests through the Whatsapp Group have become a phenomenon in conveying messages/news to others, including submitting requests for prayer support. This is a technology that is developing today. Moreover, within the WhatsApp Group, a Christian fellowship consisting of many believers has great potential to pray for one another, as stated by James. That the prayer of the righteous has great power (James 5:16) because it can heal or restore. They are required to live a life of faith. Carson & Moo (2009) understands the aforementioned as believers who live according to the character of Christ. So, people who join a WhatsApp Group should use this great potential to pray for each other.

From the data findings above, a picture of the Christian life takes the form, that through prayer, Christians can gain victory over sickness or weakness within themselves. Many difficult problems, especially health problems, can be healed through the support of prayer. God is truly present and hears the prayers of believers. A believer's prayer has great power because of the power of God's Spirit at work. Martin Luther himself prayed hard because, through prayer, he was close to God. Marunduri (2017) said Luther's theology of prayer emphasized the believer's relationship with God. George Muller is also known as a hero of prayer. He emphasized praying in faith so that God would answer the request of the believer. The orphanage he founded in Bristol, England, has been cared for by God as a result of his prayers. Jabini (2018, pp. 151–164) said George Muller always prayed in

faith. He expected great things to happen for the orphanage he led. The power of prayer still manifests itself today. Christians can submit prayer requests so that the prayers of others will bring answers from God. Praying in faith as a reflection of Christian character must be preserved and maintained in the lives of God's people. Today's Christians can communicate effectively with fellow members in WhatsApp groups to ask for prayer support. The more actively one communicates prayer requests, the more members in the body of Christ will support that person in prayer. Christians do not walk alone. They need each other to pray for one another. The Gospel writer Matthew writes that whatever one asks in prayer with faith, he/she will receive it (Matthew 21:22). That's God's promise. So Christians must not grow weary of praying in faith. They must believe that God hears their prayers, and believe that the Lord Jesus Christ hears the prayers of believers which brings Him glory.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the researcher concludes that praying for others is the heart of the Christian life. Christians exist for the benefit of others. They are required to show concern and not give up on praying for their brothers and sisters in the faith. Praying for the prayer requests of fellow believers is an urgent need. Praying is a privilege for Christians because God wants them to pray for one another. Theologically, Christians are privileged to come to God to pray for the burdens of others. Jesus' longing is so that believers live in dependence on Him. Jesus Himself set an example in praying for His people. So, Christians who know each other closely with members in the WhatsApp Group will encourage them to respond to prayer requests from fellow petitioners. This attitude reflects a true expression of the Christian life that must be kept alive in a believer's everyday life.

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