

SOPHIA!

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This edition of Sophia! is dedicated to the memories of NAB Past Presidents Pauline Maloof and Elinor Bourjaily, as well as NAB Past Vice President Lillian Khouri (and mother of current NAB VP Violet Robbat), and all those Antiochian Women who have touched our lives. May their souls rest with the saints, and may their Memory be Eternal!

TOPIC OF THE MONTH . . . PRAYER & ILLNESS

All of us have suffered from an illness at some point in our lives. Even if we have been blessed by God with perfect health, there is not a one among us who has not known someone who has suffered from a serious or debilitating condition. It may be difficult to find the words to pray during these periods of time. Emotions may run the gamut from anger to hopelessness. However, only a word, even a simple cry, is enough for God, who sees into our hearts before we form the words.

Discussion Topics:

1. ***Why Me? Why My Friend?*** This is a common reaction, and is typically the first one – among many – that is expressed. Shock can turn to denial and then to anger. Even Christ cried out on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” We have two choices – either despair, or a connection with Our Savior Jesus Christ to become one with God.
2. ***How Do I Become One With God?*** The Acts of the Apostles states that “Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God.” We were never told that life would be “easy” or “fair.” Remember St. Paul’s description of Christ in his epistles to the Colossians: “He is before all things. In Him all things consist.” To connect and become One with God takes patience and faith, but God is in US. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within YOU.” He is in your body, in your soul, in your heart. Submit yourself to His will. **PRAY!**
3. ***I’m Afraid I’ll Say the “Wrong Thing.”*** This is a problem for all of us – a friend is diagnosed with a chronic illness, and we sometimes “distance” ourselves because we’re afraid of saying “the wrong thing.” The most important thing is HONESTY. You should begin by telling them that you wish you knew the right things to say, but you care and you are there for them. Let the person know you are thinking about them – a card or a phone call at first, and then a prearranged visit.
4. ***What should I NOT say?*** If the patient has a chronic illness, don’t tell them that you’re sure they’ll be better soon. This may be the exact opposite of what they have been told, and may lead to false hope. Don’t use other friends or family members as examples – for instance, “Oh, my mom had the same thing, but she recovered.” If the patient has cancer, don’t ask them if they were a smoker or if they were under stress! This is a “blame the victim” response, and is not helpful to anyone.
5. ***How Can I Help?*** Visit or call them at home and ask how to help. You might mention that you are going to the grocery or to the pharmacy and offer to pick up things they would like you to get. You might want to give them a little personal gift when you come to visit – a new book, a funny movie, a vase of flowers or potpourri. Find out what they are eating – fresh fruits and vegetables are digested better than heavy meals.

Prayers in Time of Illness. The “Pocket Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians” (published by the Antiochian Archdiocese) is a lovely little book that contains prayers for the sick, as well as prayers of thanksgiving. Also, pull out your Orthodox Study Bible and read the following passages: Book of Job, Isaiah 40:28-31, Mark 6:13, Luke 8:40-56, John 14:14, James 5:12-15, Psalms 23, 27 and 121.

