

When You Feel Helpless to Help

Standing at a nearby clothing rack, I wanted to intervene. But I knew I shouldn't. I sensed the Lord telling me this wasn't my time to step in.

This was the first time I felt distinctly powerless in the face of a need. As a young, single woman—no spouse, no children, few responsibilities—I had enough money to care for myself and to share with others. On this day, I'd gone shopping at a local thrift store that sometimes offers unique finds. After all, I had cash to spare.

As I browsed, I noticed a man and pre-teen boy looking at shirts. The son held out a plain-looking pullover, pleading with his father to buy it.

"I just don't know what your mama would say if we spent the money on it," the father answered sadly.

How much could it be? I wondered. The thrift store marked their wares at rock-bottom prices.

The boy quietly asked a few more times; the dad held the shirt in front of him, clearly wondering whether he should shell out money for it. Finally, they hung the shirt on its rack and walked away.

I'd wanted to buy the shirt for that boy, who might have begun to care about how he looked to his peers at school. But I understood that in this instance, my intervention would instead be interference.

What to do instead? *Pray*. In response to circumstances in our own communities or those happening around the globe, sometimes prayer is the only—and best—means of intervening.

How do we pray in the face of situations where we feel powerless to make a difference?

1. Pray for God's good and perfect will to be done (Rom. 12:2).
2. Pray for the people involved to come to know Jesus (1 Tim. 2:4).
3. Pray for justice for those experiencing injustice due to war, wage theft, abuse, wrongful imprisonment, or other ordeals (Isa. 1:17).
4. Pray for God to meet needs (Phil. 4:19).
5. Pray for God to make us compassionate (Col. 3:12).
6. Pray for God to lead those in authority to pursue peace (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

God is at work around the world, in places both near and far. He desires us to be involved with Him in this work, too. And one significant means of doing that is through our prayers to the God who moves and acts according to His good purpose.

ALLISON WILSON LEE served with an interdenominational ministry and now homeschools her two teen sons and writes from central Florida.