

## Intercessory Prayer

<b>Desire</b>	to turn my concerns and worries into prayer; to enter God's heart for the world and then pray from there
<b>Definition</b>	Intercessory prayer invites us into God's care and concern for us, our families and friends, and the entire world. No concern is too trivial for God to receive with loving attention. However, intercession is not a means of manipulating heaven into doing our will. Rather it is a way we become aware of God's prayer for a person and join in that intercession.
<b>Scripture</b>	<p>"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Romans 8:27)</p> <p>"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns." (Philippians 4:6 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out." (Ephesians 6:18 <i>The Message</i>)</p>
<b>Practice Includes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• going to prayer meetings: concerts of prayer, small group prayer</li> <li>• contributing to prayer lists, prayer chains</li> <li>• going on prayer walks</li> <li>• participating in healing prayer</li> <li>• doing spiritual warfare</li> <li>• praying for the world, for peace, for God's kingdom to come</li> <li>• praying for personal concerns, tasks, transactions and relationships</li> </ul>
<b>God-Given Fruit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responding to Jesus' invitation to pray with him and for others</li> <li>• converting all anxieties, fears, sorrows and concerns into dialogue, not monologue, with God</li> <li>• replacing a tendency to control with prayerful trust</li> <li>• partnering with God in his concern for the world</li> <li>• training your heart in expectancy</li> <li>• learning to find God in every answer: yes, no and wait</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a regular rhythm of turning to God with requests and petitions</li> <li>• gaining discernment in how the Spirit intercedes—and to intercede as the Spirit leads</li> <li>• supporting others in need of healing, care, courage and patience</li> </ul>

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**In *The Divine Conspiracy*** Dallas Willard writes, “Asking is indeed the great law of the spiritual world through which things are accomplished in cooperation with God and yet in harmony with the freedom and worth of every individual.” Requests anticipate responses. Willard suggests that even the dog begging at your feet puts you “up against a fundamental force of the universe.” Requests have power to move us. Some of us have a propensity to say yes to requests because we like to please. Others immediately say no because we don’t like feeling obligated.

God tells us to ask him for what we need, regardless of our own intuitive responses to requests. He wants us to know that he’s invested in us and concerned about our lives and world. The almighty One wants our prayers. In fact, God will change this world through them. But it is important to realize that we don’t always know what we or others need most. So listening in our spirit to God’s desires for us and this world is an important part of intercession. God’s Spirit is always concerned with his glory and his kingdom. And his Spirit can lead us to pray in a different manner than we would pray on our own.

Intercession is one of the ways God invites us into the heart of the Trinity. As we keep company with Jesus through intercession, we begin to see the world and the people in it from his perspective and heart. Increasingly we long for the same things he longs for. The Holy Spirit guides our intercessions so they sound more and more like Jesus’ own intercessions for this world: “Your kingdom come; your will be done.”

When we intercede, it is important to humbly trust that the King of all creation can bring in the kingdom no matter what our circumstances look like.

Intercession is not always an easy thing to do. It can engage us deeply in the spiritual battle. Prayer warriors know that the point of intercessory prayer is to remain faithful and trusting. Being involved in intercessory prayer does not necessarily mean you’ll feel great strength, power or joy. The point is to pray, persist and commit the battle to the Lord.

At times our trust wavers and we don’t know how to pray, can’t find words to pray and are too distressed to pray. At those moments we have the assurance that God prays. The Holy Spirit, who inhabits our being, personally tutors us in praying and even interprets for us when we are unable to articulate our hearts to God. The Spirit intercedes with “groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26). Furthermore, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us as well (Romans 8:34). We are never left alone. God is with us and praying for us.

## Reflection Questions

1. What do your requests to God reveal about your priorities, goals, desires and heart?

Talk to God about this.

2. If God asked you to pray for something, what do you think he would ask you to pray for?
3. Has intercession led you into something surprising or new? What?
4. What is it like for you to intercede with others?

What is it like for you to intercede alone?

5. What helps you remember to pray for others?



## Spiritual Exercises

### 1. Use the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for intercession:

- "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Spend some time thanking God for his fatherly love and attention. Ponder who he is and adore his majesty, holiness, sovereignty, goodness and beauty.
- "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Turn your intercession to God's purposes in the world. Where are you trying to bring in *your* kingdom rather than putting your efforts toward *God's* kingdom agenda? Confess where God's priorities have been replaced with your own. Consider what God's kingdom agenda might be in your relationships and in the world. Pray for these things. What might partnering with God around his will look like?
- "Give us today our daily bread." Pray for your needs and those whose lives are closely linked with your own. Pray for those who are in danger, suffering and in places of decision making or costly love.
- "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Confess your grudges, bitterness and oversensitivity; dwell at the foot of the cross. Thank God for what it is like to be forgiven.
- "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." As you look ahead into your day, notice the tasks and transactions ahead of you. Where might you get off track? Become aware of the ways you may be tempted to spin the truth, manage your image, live out of your false self, lose your patience or envy another. Pray for the Spirit to work in you to change you. Ask for protection and courage for the day.
- "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." End your time of intercession with prayers of trust in God's goodness and his redemptive plan.

2. Pay attention to the moments when people come to mind. Sometimes they come to you out of the blue. As a person comes to mind, offer him or her up to the Lord. • If you have the leisure, turn to God and ask him, "What is your prayer for this person?" Listen and pray.

3. Place yourself in the presence of God, bringing your concern with you. Ask God to show you if there is anything you need to surrender in order to better join him in your concern. If something comes to mind, offer it to God. Ask God if there is anything he wants you to do about this concern or if you are to leave him to do the praying.

4. Intentionally come into the presence of God. Become quiet and attentive. As people or places come to mind, picture bringing them to Jesus. Does Jesus say anything to you about these people? • When you have brought everyone to Jesus, leave them with him. Tell Jesus your intent is to leave these people in his care rather than look after them on your own. • Throughout the day, return in your mind to the comfort that these people are with Jesus.

5. As you begin a task or transaction, commit your efforts to the Lord. Dedicate this time to the Lord. Ask the Lord to use your efforts for his glory and the good of the world.

6. Intercede with a newspaper in hand. As you read, what do you feel called to pray about? Gently bring the fears and concerns of the news to the Lord.

7. Create an intercession journal with pictures of people, places and concerns for which you wish to pray. Record answers to prayer beside the photos in your journal.

8. Create a weekly prayer list. Vary the topics of prayer for each day. • Spend some of the time you would normally speak to God in listening for his guidance as to how to pray. When you don't know how to pray for others, offer them up to the Holy Spirit, who perfectly intercedes for us all.

9. Go in your mind's eye to a place where you felt especially close to God, to a time when the veil between you and the Lord was lifted and you were very aware of his presence. Wait quietly before God. Does he prompt you to pray for something or someone? Attend and pray.

## Resources on Intercessory Prayer

*Discovering Our Spiritual Identity: Practices for God's Beloved* by Trevor Husdon, chapter 11

*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard J. Foster

*Spiritual Rhythms in Community: Being Together in the Presence of God* by Keith Meyer

*Soul Feast* by Marjorie Thompson