

# Intercessory Prayer

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THE STORY

# INTERCESSORY PRAYER

"For the weapons of our  
warfare are not carnal . . .  
*2 Corinthians 10:4-5*



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## Introduction to Intercessory Prayer

A family member faces a deadly disease. Your neighbor desperately needs Jesus but turns away every time you try to share Christ. A nation begins to crumble because its people follow their own evil ways. But what can you do?

Often, the problems we face seem too big for us. No matter how much we try, we cannot solve them on our own. It's times like these when we need to turn to the Lord in intercessory prayer.



You cannot truly intercede through prayer if you do not believe in the reality of redemption. Instead, you will simply be turning intercession into useless sympathy for others, which will serve only to increase the contentment they have for remaining out of touch with God. True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance.

There are those who will describe intercession by saying, “It is putting yourself in someone else’s place.” That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God’s place; it is having His mind and His perspective.



As an intercessor, be careful not to seek too much information from God regarding the situation you are praying about, because you may be overwhelmed. If you know too much, more than God has ordained for you to know, you can't pray; the circumstances of the people become so overpowering that you are no longer able to get to the underlying truth.



## WHAT IS INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intercessory prayer is prayer that pleads with God for your needs and the needs of others. But it is also much more than that. Intercession involves taking hold of God's will and refusing to let go until His will comes to pass.

Intercession is warfare -- the key to God's battle plan for our lives. But the battleground is not of this earth. The Bible says, "We are not fighting against flesh and blood. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and spiritual powers in the heavens above" (Eph. 6:12\*).

Intercessory prayer takes place in this spiritual world where the battles for our own lives, our families, our friends, communities and our nation are won or lost.



Intercessory [prayer is not](#) the same as prayers for yourself, or for 'enlightenment', or for [spiritual gifts](#), or for guidance, or any personal matter, or any glittering generality. Intercession is not just praying for someone else's needs. Intercession is praying with the real [hope](#) and real intent that God would step in and act for the positive advancement of some specific other person(s) or other entity.

It is trusting God to act, even if it's not in the manner or timing we seek. God wants us to ask, even **urgently**. It is casting our weakness before God's strength, and (at its best) having a bit of God's passion burn in us.



There are times in our prayer life that, someone is led to be an intercessor for a specific person or mission or task. Such people are valuable even beyond donors. Such intercessors sometimes get a strong sense of coming danger about whom they're praying for. They often report they're driven to their knees to pray about something they can't otherwise have known was happening. Sounds weird, but it's true.

Some people claim we can ask God to do things on behalf of people, and know it will be done. It's understandable to think that, for Jesus promised that our prayers would cause things to happen, especially when we keep at it. But look again at the intercessors in the Bible. Their success was very real, but far from complete.



- Abraham stuck his neck out with a rightly-angry God, but could only save his relatives.
- Moses' people were spared immediate destruction, but his generation would not get the land God had promised -- the next generation did.
- All of David's deep and totally sincere weeping and begging could not save his baby son, though it did set up for the birth of his successor.
- Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers, and the apostles prayed for the unity of the church. They gained much unity, but still had serious divisions.
- The apostles prayed for each of their poor, but had more poor members by the day.
- The apostles had hundreds of people constantly praying for their safety, but they died martyr's deaths



In such cases, God's mercy does not override God's purpose nor God's justice, not to mention our own wills. Intercessors sometimes must accept even the most bitter of losses, with the awareness that their prayers did not, and sometimes must not, avail. This is a hard mystery of intercession.

Our place is to follow the example of Jesus, who prayed on Thursday that He not have to go through what He was to go through that Friday. But He also prayed, "**Not my will, but Thine**". In this garden prayer, He was not praying Himself into death. He was praying with the confidence that whatever was needed to happen would and should and must happen, and though that apparently meant death, so be it.



## A PLAN FOR BATTLE

If you are born again, you are God's son or daughter (**John 1:12**). As His child, you have a direct "hotline" to God. At any time, you can boldly come into His presence (**Heb. 4:16**) This incredible access to God is the basis for intercession.

Once you are in God's presence, you can now discover His battle plan for the situation you are facing. Because prayer alone is not enough -- you need a target for your prayers!

To discover God's plan, all you have to do is ask. The Bible says that "if any of you need wisdom, you should ask God, and it will be given to you" (**James 1:5**). When we ask God for wisdom, His desires will become the focus of our prayers. "Let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to Him" (**Romans 12:2**).



## ARMED FOR BATTLE

Intercessory prayer is a serious matter. And just like soldiers who are preparing for battle, we cannot take on the enemy if we leave our weapons behind. That's why we must go into "battle" armed for spiritual conflict (**2 Cor. 10:3,4**).

**First**, recognize that Jesus is in control of the situation. Jesus "rules over forces, authorities, powers, and rulers ... over all beings in this world and will rule in the future world as well" (**Eph. 1:21**). He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then, put on "the full armor God gives" (**Eph. 6**) so that you will be ready to fight with God's weapons. These are the "weapons of our warfare" that can pull down strongholds in the spirit world. They will also protect you from the attacks that are sure to come once you begin the spiritual battle.



**Next**, bind the work of Satan, knowing that Jesus has given you authority "to defeat the power of your enemy" (**Luke 10:19**). If God shows you the identity of specific spiritual strongholds that are at work, take authority over these strongholds in the name of Jesus. And always remember that "God's Spirit is in you and is more powerful than the one that is in the world" (**1 John 4:4**).

**Finally**, as you begin the spiritual battle, take comfort knowing that you are not alone: Jesus also is interceding on your behalf! The Bible says that Jesus "is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (**Heb. 7:25, Romans 8:26,27,34**).



## PERSISTING IN BATTLE

Intercessory prayer is also prayer that doesn't give up. It's the kind of prayer that endures all setbacks and overcomes every obstacle. It's prayer that "presses on" until we "apprehend" God's will in whatever situation we are facing (**Phil. 3:12, KJV**).

This kind of prayer is the key to seeing breakthroughs in your life and in the lives of those around you. (**Luke 11:8**)

Then Jesus said, "Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks" (**Luke 11:10**). Those words mean keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. In God's time, your persistence in intercessory prayer will reap a spiritual harvest in your life and the lives of those around you!



## Ask about prayer itself If you pray:

- ❖ How do you pray?
- ❖ In what settings do you pray?
- ❖ What do you pray for?
- ❖ Do you receive it? Do you receive something else? What do you feel when you do not receive it?
- ❖ What do you expect from prayer? Did the Divine response surprise you?
- ❖ When you pray, what thoughts most often break in?
- ❖ Do they spring from the prayer, or do they pull you away from the prayer?
- ❖ When you pray for someone, do you picture their healing, or being helped in some other way?
- ❖ Have you ever been so concerned about someone that you felt driven to pray for them?



Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to pray in union with the mind of God. Take to heart St. Paul's words, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes... for the saints according to the will of God" (**Romans 8:26-27**).

And above all, ask God to give you confidence that he hears your prayers and longs to answer the deep needs of those around you.



## Seven Steps for Intercessory Prayer

1. Since it is the prayer of the righteous that is powerful and effective (**James 5:16**), examine your conscience before you pray, and repent of any sin or harsh feelings you may have against other people.
2. Spend a few minutes in silence, to quiet your mind and come into God's presence.
3. During this time, ask the Lord to give you a sense of the things God wants you to pray for. Put aside your own agenda, concerns, and desires and unite yourself to Jesus' heart. You may want to write down the things that God places on your hearts.



4. Briefly reflect on what you wrote down. What do you think God is leading you to pray for?
5. Pray for the things on God's heart for those who have no faith; for those who have fallen away from Jesus; for renewal and unity in all the Christian churches; for respect for all life; for all the lost, abandoned, or forgotten children of the world; for those under the power of addictions or bound by depression, anxiety, or bitterness; and for prisoners and service men and women. And, of course, pray for your own intentions and those of your loved ones.
6. As you pray, take confidence in God's power to overcome any obstacle. Stand firm in faith, and wait to see God work in power.
7. In your prayer journal, keep a record of what you prayed for, and of the ways God answered those prayers. Thank him and praise for all the ways he has worked through your prayer.



## Study Questions on Intercession

1. When you were ill or in serious trouble, did you ever feel the prayers of others? What was that like? What were you getting from those prayers?
2. Have you ever been so concerned about someone that you felt driven to pray for them?
3. If you take part in a liturgical service : take note of the Prayer Of the Church, which usually happen somewhere between the Sermon and Holy Communion. Is it an intercessory prayer? What is it that you are praying for in it? What can a prayer like that do for those praying it?
4. Can you think of any gifted intercessors in your worship community? What is special about their intercessions? Do you ever pray for them? Do you ever pray with them?
5. Is there someone who comes to mind right now? Take time right now and pray for that person.



## Some resources on prayer in the congregation:

Bjorn Pedersen, \*Face To Face With God In Your Church: **Establishing A Prayer Ministry\*** (Augsburg, 1995)

Alvin VanderGriend w. Edith Bajema, \***The Praying Church Sourcebook\*** (Church Development Resources, 1997)

Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, \***Prayerwalking\*** (Creation House, 1993)

Douglas Kamstra, \***The Praying Church Idea Book\*** (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001)



