

Bite Size Bible Study

Intercessory Prayer #178

By Pastor Lee

One of the many ways we can worship God is to pray for His other children. We are sometimes asked to pray for someone who is going through a trial of some sort. Maybe it is someone we know or maybe a church member or neighbor. This kind of prayer is sometimes called intercessory prayer because we are praying on someone's behalf.

God already knows what the other person needs and our asking for this other person doesn't change His mind. He is always going to do what is best for the person. That is why when praying in this fashion it is always best to be in the mindset of God's desires to be done and not our own. We never see the total picture and what may seem good to us now may or may not be good in the long run.

The purpose of this type of prayer is to increase our love and concern for others. If we care deeply for someone else, then what happens to them is important to us. In some ways it brings us closer to the feeling God has for everyone. What others are doing or going through affects us spiritually. God is affected by what people do. Not that it changes Him but it can please or grieve Him.

Being genuinely willing to intercede for someone else means to put ourselves in the position of the other person and do for them what we would do for ourselves, that is to pray for God's support. The answer may come in the form of strengthening of them or by God intervening in their situation with whatever is best for them at the time. That is His choice but by praying for them we create a bond between us and them and God.

Jesus set us an excellent example of praying for others when He prayed for His disciples just before He was to be crucified. He prayed for their well-being and for protection. It is interesting that He didn't pray for their tests and trials to be removed from them but that they would not be overcome by them.

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have

given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.
John 17:9-15 (NIV)

As you can see, real intercessory prayer is more than just one quick prayer. It is a deep committed concern for others. The same concern as if you were experiencing the same issue. It goes back to "do for others as you would have them do for you". You may find that going back to God several times is helpful. How many times would you take your problem to God? Do the same for others.

To help us relate to the person we are praying for it is often helpful to remember how much we are alike. Here are some ways in which most people are alike.

- We want to be loved for ourselves
- We have an inward desire to love others
- We are unsure and afraid at times
- We want peace and a place to call home
- We feel the same range of emotions
- We feel lonely at times
- We have many influences on the way we act
- We have struggles
- We believe in a higher power
- We feel like a failure at times

Sometimes the answer to our prayer for them may come back telling us 'to be the answer to the issue that they are going through'. Remember we are often God's hands and feet (metaphorically speaking). Therefore He may ask us to physically intervene in the situation and not only help this other person but give us the opportunity to learn to love this person as we love ourselves.

Intercessory Prayer is not something that comes naturally to most of us. It is a learned behavior and as such takes time and practice. It is often easiest to start with people close to you – your family or close friends. These are people we see often and we know more about them. We can understand the issues that they are facing better because we are more familiar with who they are and how they react to situations. This makes interceding on their behalf much easier. Later as we mature in this kind of prayer we will find that it may extend to coworkers, church members, neighbors, acquaintances and for some of us, even to people we don't even know personally. Jesus teaches to pray for our leaders; our president, congressmen, leaders of foreign countries even our enemies. God is personally involved with each and every one, may we be also – in our intercessory prayers.

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