

The Gift of Intercessory Prayer

Topics we will cover today:

- Your personal experiences with intercessory prayer
- The Prayer of Simple Regard
- How the Bible presents intercessory prayer: what it is, what it accomplishes, and how we do it
- Various expressions of intercessory prayer.

A Personal Gift

On the line below, plot out and label 3-4 highlights in your prayer experiences:

Write the words and feelings that come to mind when you think about how you feel about your current prayer experiences:

The Prayer of Simple Regard (St. Teresa of Avila):

God, we notice that You are noticing us.

You are looking on us with love.

You accept us as we are.

You delight to be in our presence.

We receive Your delight and return our love to You.

Amen.

A Storied Gift - *What is Intercessory Prayer?*

Talk about it: What examples of intercessory prayer come to mind from the Old and New Testament?

| Old Testament | New Testament |
|---------------|---------------|
| | |

{Consider}

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father...I pray for them...My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:1a, 9a, 20-21).

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we out to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died –more than that, was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to us help us in our time of need...Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:25).

{Pause} Take a quiet moment to reflect...

Talk about it: With these scriptures in mind, define intercessory prayer:

Intercessory Prayer:



*“The essence of prayer is letting Jesus pray in you and take you into the very heart of God the Father. When we pray we are doing a priestly thing: bringing the pains and needs of earth into the heart of God.”
(Rowan Williams¹)*

Talk about it: Considering the scriptures we’ve discussed, what can we expect intercessory prayer to accomplish?

Using the Gift - *What Good Does it Do? How do I go about it?*

{Consider}

{A Practice}

1. Presence (John 15:5-11)

| Names | Dates | Community | Local | Global | The Forgotten |
|-------|-------|-----------|-------|--------|---------------|
| | | | | | |

*Get used to saying “Father...” The oldest and most implacable enemy in the practice of prayer is depersonalization, turning prayer into a technique, using prayer as a device”
(Eugene Peterson.²)*

¹ Rowan Williams, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, and Prayer*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2014. 67.

² Eugene Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in his Stories and Prayers*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008. 169.

2. Faith (Romans 5:1-5)

*“Salvation means to be whole again, to be delivered in the midst of peril...the challenge is to stay alert to the magnificence of salvation”
(Eugene Peterson³)*

3. Hope (Romans 15:4)

Borrowed Prayers

Guided Prayers

Imaginative Prayers

4. Love (I John 4:16-19)

*Nothing spurs compassion like prayer.
(Philip Yancey⁴)*

5. Silence/Stillness/Surrender (Ps. 46:10)

*Prayer is not an occasion just for pious little children on their way to bed. Prayer is not simply for neurotic people who are excessively and sadly too religious. It is rather the core gesture by which we stay in faith, by which we hope for the world, by which we keep justice as the issue before God and ourselves. To “pray always” [as Paul exhorts] means to hope always for justice, to nag always the judge, to trust always in the power of God.
(Walter Brueggemann⁵)*

³ Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980. 29.

⁴ Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does it Make Any Difference?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. 304.

⁵ Walter Brueggeman, *The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann: Volume I*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. 99.

Close Out

{Pause} What will you do with what we have explored today? Did a word/phrase, scripture, or a practice resonate with, inspire, or challenge you?

{A Prayer}

*O Great Love,
Thank you for living and loving in us and through us.
May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings.
Help us become a community that
vulnerably shares each other's burdens
and the weight of glory.
Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of the world.
...
Knowing You are hearing us better than we are speaking,
we offer these prayers in
all the holy names of God.
Amen.
(Richard Rohr)*