

Prayer Guide – Week 4

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” – Philippians 4:6

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 on earth as it is in heaven.”

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.

Prayer Invitations

Here are a few invitations that may be helpful. Remember to write out your prayers and place them in your prayer box.

- 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. Dear Jesus...
- Place yourself in the presence of God, bring 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. Write your prayer and place it in your prayer box. Dear Jesus...

- Intentionally come in to 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. Tell Jesus about your experience. Dear Jesus...
- 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. Dear Jesus...
- 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? Dear Jesus...

Prayer Advice

If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to pray. Intercession is a way of loving others.

A word of caution: none of us is to shoulder the burden of prayer for everyone and everything. We are finite human beings, and it is an act of humility to recognize our limitations. Often people will come to us with a glib "pray for me," and they have no idea what they are asking of us. In such cases, we are to take the matter under advisement and wait until there are promptings from a higher source. God will make it clear who and what are to be our prayer concerns and the other situations we are to leave with Him.

"Prayer is to intercede for the well-being of others before God."

– Augustine

Resources:

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

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life by Marjorie J. Thompson

Spirit Windows: A Handbook of Spiritual Growth Resources for Leaders by Ann Z. Kulp

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard