

Intercessory Prayer

What is Intercessory prayer?

Quite simply, intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of others, more than just praying “for” others. God calls all Christians to be intercessors. It is God’s desire that every believer be active in intercessory prayer. What a wonderful and exalted privilege we have in being able to come boldly before the throne of Almighty God with our prayers and requests!

I Timothy 2:1 – “*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, **intercession** and thanksgiving be made for all people—*”

However, you cannot truly intercede through prayer if you do not believe in the reality of God’s willingness to listen and respond. Instead, you will simply be turning intercession into nothing more than just sympathy for others.

James 5:13-16 – “*Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other...*”

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. People 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 seeking His mind and His perspective.

To act or not to act – intervention vs. intercession

Our goal in intercession is to be in such close contact with God that we desire to have His mind about everything, but sometimes we feel like we have to “do something” - substituting doing for interceding. And yet intercession is the only thing that has no drawbacks, because it keeps our relationship completely open with God as we come before Him on behalf of someone else.

What we must avoid in intercession is praying for someone or some circumstance to be simply “patched up” or “fixed”. We must pray that person or situation *completely through* into contact with the very will of God. Think of the number of people God has brought across our path or laid upon our hearts, only to see us drop them or forget to pray for them! When we truly intercede on someone else’s behalf, God creates something He can create in no other way than through intercessory prayer.

However, don't be surprised if the Spirit starts tugging on your heart to take some sort of action about a matter you're praying about. You may be the very answer God sends into their lives. That's not a license to meddle into everyone's private lives like some sort of conquering hero. But the Spirit might be calling you to be more than a bystander. Be ready for it. When you intercede, bring your knowledge, gifts, abilities, attention and energies before God and say, 'use these, if that's what it takes to set this right'.

All because of Christ

The role of mediator in prayer was prevalent in the Old Testament, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

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Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the ultimate intercessor (His substitutionary death), and because of this, all Christian prayer becomes intercession since it is offered to God through and by Christ. Jesus closed the gap between us and God when He died on the cross. Because of Jesus' mediation, we can now intercede in prayer on behalf of other Christians or for the lost, ***asking God to grant their requests according to His will.*** *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5).

For whom are we to pray?

Fellow believers – Ephesians 6:18 – *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*

Our enemies – Matthew 5:44 - *"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."*

Those in authority, government leaders – 1 Timothy 2:2 – *"...pray...for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."*

Pastors for their churches – Philippians 1:4 – *"I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,"*

People for their pastors – 2 Corinthians 1:11 – *"On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."*

Those who are sick – James 5:14 – *"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."*

The lost/unbelievers – Luke 19:10 – *"for the Son of Man came to seek and to save, those who are lost."* Matthew 9:38 – *Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out laborers into His harvest."*

Examples – Daniel 9:1-19 and John 17

A wonderful model of intercessory prayer is found in Daniel 9. It has all the elements of true intercessory prayer. It is in response to the Word (v. 2); characterized by fervency (v. 3) and self-denial (v. 4); identified unselfishly with God's people (v. 5); strengthened by confession (v. 5-15); dependent on God's character (vv. 4, 7, 9, 15); and has as its goal God's glory (vv. 16-19).

Like Daniel, Christians are to come to God on behalf of others in a heartbroken and repentant attitude, recognizing their own unworthiness and with a sense of self-denial. True intercessory prayer seeks not only to know God's will and see it fulfilled, but to see it fulfilled whether or not it benefits us and regardless of what it costs us. True intercessory prayer seeks God's glory, not our own.

Excerpts taken from: <http://utmost.org/intercessory-prayer/>, <http://www.spirithome.com/intercessory-prayer.html>