

## INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Do you know what intercessory prayer is? It is when you pray for other people, not just for yourself and your own needs. Many of you write, e-mail, or call me and tell me that you are praying for this ministry. I really appreciate that. I cannot do it without prayer. We cannot do it without prayer. Nothing happens without prayer, lots of prayer. When I go on the trips to Africa, I have a team that I call my prayer support and they pray for those trips. They pray for when I do these television shows. That means they pray for you. Did you know there are people in Amarillo, Texas, that you will never meet, who are interceding for you right now because you are watching this show. They pray for the people that are watching the show. That is intercessory prayer. Please keep it up. I need it, you need it. God thought of the most wonderful thing when He came up with communication by prayer.

There are all kinds of prayers. Intercessory prayer is praying for others. Have you ever prayed out loud? A lot of people struggle with that. They think, "I just want to keep it to myself, keep it quiet. Maybe I'll pray in my head." That is okay, there is nothing wrong with that. It is wonderful. When you pray with a group of people, out loud, something very special happens. You inspire others by your prayers and others inspire you by their prayers. Once I was in a group, and I had never prayed out loud. I was scared to do it. I just thought, "I can't do that. I don't even know what to say. Not me." Then I began to watch them and listen when they prayed out loud for the needs of others. I thought, "Well, I could probably do that." Very hesitantly I did it. I am so glad because once you start praying out loud, once you start praying with a group of people out loud, once you start praying over the telephone with someone, once you pray over the internet with someone, your prayer life really deepens. It is a great thing. One person's prayers can affect you in a profound way, just hearing what they actually pray. There was a married couple in the group, named Jim and Vicky. When it got to him, he said, "Lord I want to pray for Vicky. Help me to meet her needs the way she needs them to be met." That shocked and stunned me. I thought, "I wonder if I am meeting my husband's needs the way he needs them to be met. I am probably not. I am probably doing for him what I think I need. But what does he need?" That is a wonderful example. Vicky got prayed for and that was a great thing, but I got changed. My prayer life got changed from hearing someone else pray.

We have a man in our church named Kiley. He is in charge of the prayer ministry at our church. When you have a prayer need or when you hear about somebody that has a prayer need, you send it in by e-mail to him, and then he sends the prayer out that we are all to pray together. He gives us an example by praying. You should read the prayers this man writes. They are incredible. They are insightful and deep. They think of things I would never think of and they say it in a way I would never think of it. I just love to read them. In fact, they are so good that when he prays for other people, I save those prayers, like "Prayer for a couple going through the death of a child," "Prayer for an illness of a spouse", "Prayer for a job change", prayer for a move to a new city. They are really beautiful prayers. I e-mailed him and said, "Kiley, you should write a book and put these prayers in it. People would be so blessed by it. Have you ever thought about doing that?" He e-mailed me back and said, "Yes, I have. I just haven't gotten around to it." I wrote him back and told him, "I have saved a lot of your prayers and if you ever need them, I have them saved on my computer and you can have them." He is doing intercessory prayer. You could have your own prayer group. You could have three or four of you and you could meet together or you could do it through the internet. I have a friend named Marie, who has sung on GLC. She has told me that she and her sisters, who live in different states in the U.S., do a conference call every morning at 4:30. They set their alarm, they get and get on the phone with each other and they pray for each other and about what is going on in their lives that day. Most of them go back to bed when they are through and wake up at the normal hour. They are interceding for one another.

Another word for interceding is holding their hands up. In other words, helping them go through something. A man that goes to my church has made a statement that I thought was the best example of how and you and I, who do not know each other, can intercede for the same situation, and it is intercessory corporate prayer. Here is what he said. "We may not all pray at the same time, but because we lift up the same people in needs, we are in unison. We are praying together and this adds to the power of our prayers. My prayer is blended with yours, your prayer is blended with Joe's, and Joe's prayer is blended with Sally's." You get the point. They all come together in a sweet powerful time of powerful unity for the one we are lifting up. God takes pleasure in our corporate prayer time. That is a way, in today's modern world, you can have corporate prayer with people.

When you are watching CNN, Fox News or MSN; if they tell some story and your heart goes out to the people and you want to pray for them, do you ever pray for a situation? If you do, that is intercessory prayer. Do you ever see some important person on television and think "That person doesn't know the Lord. They need to know the Lord and I am going to pray for them,"? Do you ever see a famous person that is an actor or politician, or anything, and you think, "They need prayer. They are doing a very hard and difficult job and they need God's wisdom and help. I am going to pray for them." When you get to heaven, you will meet the people you have prayed for. There may be people in heaven who never knew you existed and when you get to heaven they might say, "You prayed for me. God showed me that you prayed for me." When I was first learning how to really pray, I had just gotten filled with the Holy Spirit. I was so excited because I had the power of God flowing through me. It was an exciting time in my life and 37 years later, it still is. It has not ever let up. One afternoon I felt very impressed to get on my knees in the living room and pray. I said, "Lord what do You want me to pray for?" In the quiet of my heart, I heard, "Pray for a woman in Oklahoma." I said, "Lord, I want to pray for this woman in Oklahoma. I don't know what she is going through, but I lift her up to you. I lift her needs up to you. I ask you to watch over what is going on, to protect her and give her wisdom." I just prayed my heart out. Anything that came to mind, I prayed for her. I have no idea who that person was. I will not know until I get to heaven. She will come to me and say, "I was the woman you prayed for. I needed it and I would not have made it without you." I have had times that I was going through something so incredibly difficult that I could not talk to anyone about it. It was private. My heart was broken and I was struggling. People would come up to me that I barely knew, and say, "Betty, is everything okay in your life? I keep thinking about you. I keep feeling the need to pray for you." I would look at them and say, "Yes, and I can't talk about it. Just pray. I need it." You can trust God to put your needs on the heart of someone, maybe in another country or another part of the world. We all can do that. We all can intercede for people.

Jesus is our intercessor. He prays for us. (Look at this picture of Jesus praying for us.) The Bible says, "He is our high intercessor. He ever liveth to make intercession for us." That is His hot button. He wants to pray. If you want a hot button, a good one to have is to pray for people. Some people have the gift of intercession and they are different from you and me. I do not have it. When I see it in other people, I am amazed. I have a friend named Sissy that has it. When she prays, she can pray and pray and pray, and everything is a different sentence, and goes on forever. It is interesting, and you can tell she is touching the heart of God, praying the heart of God. That is the gift of intercession. Those people will tell me, "Betty, I could pray for three hours and it feels like I just started to pray. I could pray all night." Jesus could do that. He prayed all night. In Luke 6:12 it says, "One of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and He spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and he chose 12 of them whom He also designated as apostles." Have you ever prayed all night? When Jesus was in the garden in Gethsemane, He prayed all night and sweat blood. Have you ever cared so much about something or someone that you could pray all night? If you think about it, Jesus was going to have to trust His ministry and message, what God wanted to accomplish on earth, through 12 people.

Don't you know that Jesus prayed for Peter and John, prayed for Matthew. He prayed for all of them, for every need He could think of, everything He thought they would need to be equipped with to do the work of the Lord. He had a lot of disciples. At one point, we know for sure he had 72, and He had to pick 12. "God, show me which 12 You have called to do Your work." He prayed, and prayed and prayed. In doing this, He heard the heart of God. He heard who to pick, those whom God had chosen. I never knew where the name "apostles" came from until I read this verse in studying for all of these lessons lately. Jesus is the one that called them not only disciples but also these 12 He called apostles. That means "sent out ones," ones sent out to establish the work of God.

Before Jesus did anything, He interceded for the situation. He had all the power of the world at His hands. He had the power of God, but He still prayed all night. After Jesus finished ministering to people, He got alone again with God and prayed. I believe He prayed for what He saw God do. I believe He prayed for the response He saw in certain individuals. I believe He saw how they responded, what they said and what they did, and He interceded. I believe that He prayed that the Word would not be stolen out of their heart that He had preached to them. Satan comes to steal the Word. Some people have such shallow roots that it does not last long. Maybe He prayed for their roots to grow deeper. There was a lady named Rachel Titus in my life at one time, and I really admired her. She was a mighty woman of God and preached until she was 80 years old. She was really powerful. She was training all of us that were wanting to go into the ministry, and she said, "After you get all of the compliments for what you are doing for God, after you get all of the praise, after people tell you all of the good things, after you see what

God did in the lives of the people that you were trying to reach, then get by yourself, get alone and say 'Up to You God. All of it goes up to You God. All of the praise, all of the good things that were said, all that happened. Lord I lift the people up to You that I worked with today. God, protect them, let this take hold in their life. Let it change their lives. Let it increase in them. Let them teach it to others. Up to You God.'" It takes all the pressure off of you for handling a big head, getting arrogant, anything. You just passed it all up to God. I even pass the bad stuff up. "Oh, Lord, I messed up. You get that, too." It all goes up to God.

Now what did Jesus actually do during this time of intercession? The disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." Why did they say that? They said it because they heard Him pray. They heard Him pray for others. They heard Him fellowship with His Father and they wanted to know how to do that. "Lord, teach us how to pray." We have what we call The Lord's Prayer. It is a wonderful prayer and you can pray that prayer. Many people know it by heart. It really was just an example of how to pray. What did He do when he interceded? The first thing He did was worship God. "God, You are so wonderful. You are so good. Lord, there is no one like You. You are over everything. I worship You and I love You and I praise You for who You are." That is worshiping God. You can do that. Then He probably sang. I know he ministered to the Father. "Lord, I love You, I honor You. I love this close feeling I have. I love the way You listen to me." Ministering to God. Then He prayed about what he was getting ready to do or what He had just done. He prayed for wisdom and discernment. Here is a prayer I pray before I do these lessons. "Tell me what to say. Put the words in my mouth that these people need to hear." I never know what I am going to say. I do not plan all of this out. I guess you can tell. I have a few notes, but I really trust the Holy Spirit. One time, somebody came to me and said, "The Holy Spirit has a word for you about those TV shows." I said, "Okay what is it?" "I am not a tame spirit. Follow me and I will take you on adventures you never dreamed you would go on." I said, "Okay, I will get basic notes and get basic verses. I will find pictures on the internet to kind of show what I am trying to say. Holy Spirit, You put the words in my mouth for these people." Even today, I interceded for you before I started this particular lesson.

There are all kinds of intercession. I want to talk about a few types. One that is very serious is called travailing prayer. Have you ever travailed about a situation? It is almost like giving birth. It is with tears, groans and deep feeling. It is when people understand the importance of the situation, the importance of the prayer. They are going to pray until the answer comes. They are not going to give up. They are going to bear down and bear into the situation. They are going to listen for new ways to pray and it is going to be with great fervency. That is a travailing prayer. It is a very strong prayer. That is what Daniel did. (See the picture of the man interceding at church. He is serious isn't he?) That is probably travailing prayer. He is probably travailing for what needs to happen in that church or for the needs of Christians around the world. Daniel did that. He prayed for the people. In Daniel 10:12, an archangel, Michael, came to him and said, "Don't be afraid Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them." He was praying for great things, big things. That angel told Daniel that there was a lot of opposition in the heavenlies. The minute he started to pray, God heard. But it took 21 days, a specific amount of time, to get past the princes of darkness in the heavenlies that we cannot see. Sometimes when you are interceding for someone, you might get a little bit discouraged. You think, "I have prayed and prayed and prayed, and nothing has happened." I had a family member that really did not want to walk with God, and would do things that really hurt people. I would pray for him. I prayed my heart out, honestly. I would cry, travail, and then I would get discouraged. I would think, "Well, he hasn't changed. It isn't working. I give up." The Holy Spirit would come to me and say, "Pray for this person." "Okay, here I go again." I would pray my heart out again, but nothing would happen. I was so discouraged. I would think, "Lord, why don't you answer my prayers. Why don't they change. They would be so much happier if they would change," and I would want to give up again. The Holy Spirit would say again, "Pray, pray." That went on for 20 years. Would you be willing to pray for someone for 20 years in order to see a change? I saw that person try to change. They had a lot of trouble and I do not know that they really ever did change. I do know one thing, though. I was faithful in interceding for them. It might not ever have happened if I had not been.

Two or more people praying together is a very powerful prayer. If you see that your prayers for someone else are not getting answered, get a friend. Be very honest with them and be very open with them. Just say, "Would you pray with me for this person? Would you pray in faith with me?" Elijah was a man just like us, the Bible says,. Yet it did not rain when he prayed for it not to rain in a whole country. In Matthew 18:19, one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible, "I tell you this, if two of you agree, down here on earth, concerning anything you ask, My Father in heaven will do it for you." That is a pretty strong thing

for God to say when you think about some of the things you could pray. However, when you are praying with someone else, if you are praying amiss, they are going to say, "You know I don't feel right about that. Something does not feel right about that. Let's change it a little bit." In the body of believers, there is power. I could not do it without my prayer support team. You can pray with your friends, too. It is possible to do it.

(See this picture of this group of girls praying. They are praying for someone else, all three of them are praying for something else.) Maybe you do fasting. Maybe you go without food or water, whatever. You pray and you fast, and God honors that. Maybe you speak the word of God. You find a word of God that applies to what you are praying for and you speak that. God honors His word. Many times it is the only thing He honors because it is what He really wants to have happen.

Another thing you can do in the gift of intercession is listening. God may have you pray for nations. One time, I prayed for the nation of Argentina. I just said, "God give me a nation to pray for." I heard Argentina, so I prayed for Argentina. I prayed everything I could think of, and I did it over and over and over. Let God give you issues to pray for that He needs someone to pray for. Maybe you are in ill health, you are in a wheelchair or a sick bed, maybe you are paralyzed and you think, "My life does not count. I am not doing anything for Jesus, I can't get out and do anything." You can always pray. Prayer plows up the ground in somebody's heart, in a nation. You might pray about the problems that are going on in Venezuela right now. You might pray down what is going on in Cuba. God might be listening to your prayer, joining it up with the prayers of others and pulling down strongholds. It is a wonderful thing. The Bible says in Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray and not lose heart." It is a powerful ministry to pray for others.

Have you ever prayed for yourself and asked Jesus to come into your life? Do you know that Jesus is the only way. There is no other way to God. He said it. He is not a man that He should lie. He came as God and He said, "No one goes to the Father but by Me." You have to ask Jesus into your heart. You have to ask Him to forgive your sins. You have to ask Him to be your Lord, that means boss. Turn your life over to Him. Yield your life to Jesus. Ask Him to save you, to change your life. You will never regret it. Why am I asking you to do that? Because I have prayed for you. I have prayed, "Lord would You have people watch this show that do not know You. Maybe they are just flipping the channels, they are a channel turner, and yet God they need You. There is that deep place in their life that they are not able to fill with anything else and You are the only answer for them, God. I pray for people who do not know You to watch this show and realize 'I don't know the Lord like that lady is talking about. I want to know Him.' " He is the only way, there is no other way. Your life will be changed forever. You will never be the same. You will have a joy and a peace, a concern for others that maybe you do not have right now. You will begin to say, "Lord give me people to pray for. Give me things to pray for." Our job is to be in such close contact with God that we can know his will. We can know what he wants. You can do it.

#### Quiet Time Question

1. What is intercessory prayer?
2. Why is it important to pray out loud?
3. How can you do intercessory prayer when you are miles away from those you are praying with or for?
4. Explain how "holding your hands up" means the same thing as intercessory prayer. Refer to Exodus 17:10-14?
5. Jesus is our intercessor in prayer. What did he say about praying with others in Matthew 18:19?
6. How can listening to God help you with intercessory prayer?
7. Have you ever prayed for yourself and asked Jesus to come into your life? This is the first step before praying for others.

To watch the video on INTERCESSORY PRAYER, Pillar THREE, Prayer go to: [www.bettyswann.com](http://www.bettyswann.com)

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