

QUIET TIME

Theme: Wrestle in intercessory prayer

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understand.

Day 1^{BS} Luke 11:1-13

“Lord, teach us to pray”

Day 2 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Pray for the rapid spreading of God’s kingdom

Day 3 Colossians 1:9-12

Pray for the growth of other Christians

Day 4 Matthew 9:35-38

Pray for the workers in God’s kingdom

Day 5 Colossians 4:2-4

Pray for open doors to proclaim God’s Word

Day 6 Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray that the workers may declare God’s Word fearlessly

Day 7 1 Timothy 2:1-6

Pray for rulers and leaders

Day 8 James 5:14-18

Pray for the sick

Day 9 Luke 6:27-33

Pray for the enemies of Christians

Day 10 Ephesians 3:14-21

Pray for the strengthening of Christians

- Think about 1 Samuel 12:23. Sometimes not praying is a sin.
- Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: Wrestling in intercessory prayer

Read study 41 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: The parable of the unwilling friend

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Luke 11:1-13**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

INTERCESSION

Colossians 4:12b

He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

Colossians 4:12b (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

41. Wrestling in intercessory prayer

Intercessory prayer is praying to God for other people. Why should Christians intercede? For whom should Christians intercede? For what should Christians intercede? How should Christians intercede?

A. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS INTERCEDE?

1. Motivation: The parable of the persistent widow

In Luke 17:20-37 Jesus tells about the difficult times that are coming just before his second coming. Instead of becoming discouraged, he teaches a parable in Luke 18:1-8 about “the necessity to always pray and not give up”.

The story

‘The unrighteous judge’ did not fear God and did not care about people. He only thought of himself and had no compassion for the rights of the oppressed. ‘The widow’ represents a helpless oppressed person. Someone had done her a great injustice. Maybe he had stolen something from her or he had been withholding money which he owed her. She brought the case before the unrighteous judge, hoping to receive justice, but for a long time the judge did nothing!

The widow did not give up and kept coming to the judge to grant her justice against her adversary. Finally the unrighteous judge was tired of her nagging. He probably knew that she was in the right, but did nothing because he also knew that she was poor and could not give him a bribe. He knew that she could not exercise any political influence on him in the city. What persuaded him finally was her perseverance and persistence. He said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming.”

The application

If an *unrighteous* judge can be persuaded to do what is right by the incessant pleading of a powerless widow, how much more will God, the *Righteous* Judge, bring about justice for Christians who cry out to him day and night? Will God keep putting them off? Jesus teaches that God will see that they get justice and quickly!

The question

Jesus ends the application of the parable with a question to Christians: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” This question begs self-examination. He is not speaking about the faith that saves, but about the faith that believes that persistent prayer will surely be answered!

2. The trouble and the privilege of intercession

Also the parable of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-8) teaches that intercession is not easy. There are reasons why intercession (praying for others) is so troublesome and difficult. We must expect difficulties in our intercession for others that can only be overcome by perseverance and persistence.

The cause of the trouble or difficulty we experience in intercession may lie on the side of the person we pray for.

Jesus said, “Simon (Peter), Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31). Jesus interceded for Peter, because Peter’s faith in Jesus Christ was failing. Peter first had to turn away from his evil before Jesus’ prayer for him would become a reality. Peter’s evil was that his sinful self was standing between him and Jesus Christ (he desired to be the greatest and first) and his faith in Jesus Christ was failing because his sinful self feared people (he denied Jesus) (cf. Matthew 10:33).

The cause of the trouble or difficulty we experience in intercession may lie on the side of the evil powers in the air.

There are evil spirits in the air and evil human rulers around us in the world who all too eagerly try to hinder the prayers and intercessions of Christians. Our spiritual battle is directed against them (Ephesians 6:12) and they must first be conquered.

The cause of the trouble or difficulty we experience in intercession may lie on the side of us on earth.

Jesus did not know any example of a complete righteous judge or any example of a complete unselfish friend. That is why he uses ‘the unrighteous judge’ and ‘the unwilling friend’ as illustrations. In the parables the judge is unrighteous and the friend is unwilling.

In our intercessions the trouble we experience in our intercession usually lies on our side. The obstacle may be our sins that separate us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Nevertheless God is perfectly righteous and very willing. He will give every good thing we need on earth much quicker than any earthly father. Persistent prayer is not needed to make God willing, but to exercise us Christians in faith and perseverance! These examples in the parables intend to spur us on to believe that every hindrance between us and God can be overcome!

The cause of the trouble or difficulty we experience in intercession may lie on the side of God in heaven.

But our trouble in intercession becomes at the same time God’s trouble to answer, because his wisdom, love and righteousness will not give us anything that could harm us if we received the answer to our prayers too soon and too easily. The sins in our own life and the sins in the lives of

those we pray for keeps God from giving immediately what we ask. Our sinful nature turns prayer and intercession into a real spiritual battle.

The trouble and difficulty in our intercession is conquered when God conquers us!

Our surrender (submission) and obedience to God will give us faith and experience that God answers prayer and acts. We will more clearly see that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

One thing is absolutely sure: his perfect will shall finally be done (Isaiah 14:24,27; Revelation 21:6a). Our intercessions cling to this conviction (Luke 22:42)!

B. FOR WHOM SHOULD CHRISTIANS INTERCEDE?

The Bible teaches that Christians should pray for the extension of God's kingdom – that is, pray for the lost that God may become their Saviour and King (Matthew 6:10). Christians should pray for Christians (Colossians 1:9-12), for workers in God's kingdom (Colossians 4:2-4), for the elders in the church and the leaders in the country (1 Timothy 2:1-2), for the sick (James 5:14-18), for people whom we see are doing sin (1 John 5:16) and for the enemies of Christ and Christians (Luke 6:27-33).

C. FOR WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS INTERCEDE?

1. Pray for the extension of God's kingdom and the doing of God's will

In Matthew 6:9-10 Jesus teaches: "This is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'" Pray that unbelievers may come to know the God of the Bible as he revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Pray that he will reign in the hearts and lives of believers and also in all the events in the history of the world. Pray that people will learn to do God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. Pray also that Christians will submit to God's unrevealed, yet perfect will (cf. Deuteronomy 29:28; Luke 22:42; Romans 8:28).

2. Pray for protection and sanctification of Christians

In John 17:15-21 *Jesus prays*: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. 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. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Pray that God will protect his people against the devil and the sinful world. Pray that God will sanctify people, that is, will separate them from evil and dedicate them to good – thus, that God will change people in accordance with the truth of his Word. And pray that Christians all over the world will live and minister harmoniously together.

3. Pray for knowledge, behaviour, fruit, growth and power of Christians

In Colossians 1:9-12 Paul prays and asks. 'Praying' is the general name for all kinds of prayers: asking, interceding, thanksgiving and praising. 'Asking' is making specific requests as the following:

Knowledge, wisdom and insight

Ask that God may fill someone with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 'Knowledge' is the truth about God, which one has learned from a personal and intimate fellowship with God. 'Wisdom' is the ability to utilize the best means in order to attain the highest goals. It is knowledge gained through practical experience. It is knowing to speak and act at the right time and in the right way. 'Understanding or insight' is the ability to quickly fathom people and issues. It is the ability to thoroughly weigh the different sides of an issue before making a decision or taking action.

Behaviour

Ask God that the person may live a life worthy of the Lord, i.e., that he will behave as God expects him to behave.

Motivation

Ask God that the person will strive to please God in everything he thinks, says and does.

Fruit

Ask God that the person may bear fruit in every good work; that he may have lasting influence in his family circle, at his working place, in his church and in his neighbourhood.

Growth

Ask that the person may get to know God personally and then grow in knowing God better and better.

Power

Ask that the person may be strengthened with all power, so that he may have endurance and patience. 'Endurance' is to continue ceaselessly with the task God has entrusted to him no matter the difficult circumstances. 'Patience' is to refuse to give in to irritation or anger against people who oppose or oppress you.

4. Pray for Christian workers

In Colossians 4:2-4 Paul writes: “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.”

Paul spurs Christians on to persevere in prayer, to see the needs of people and to thank God for what he is doing. Christians should pray the following for Christian workers:

That God will give the Christian workers opportunities to proclaim and teach his Word, even in difficult circumstances (as sitting in prison).

That God will give the Christian workers courage, grace and wisdom to present the Christian message clearly.

5. Pray for kings, leaders and people from different cultures

In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul teaches: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Paul spurs Christians on to pray and thank God for the answers to their prayers.

Pray for ‘all people’.

Christians are not expected to pray for everyone living on earth, but rather for people without making distinction with respect to their descent, nationality, or social status.

Pray for leaders.

Pray for people in the government and people who are in leadership positions. Pray that they will not hinder the progress of the gospel. The purpose of such prayers is that Christians may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

‘Quiet’ means living undisturbed without war and oppression, and without inner confusion and conflicts.

‘Godliness’ is reverence and devotion towards God.

‘Holiness’ is earnestness in intention and behaviour.

Pray for unbelievers.

Pray for people who do not yet believe in Jesus Christ that they may be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

D. USE A PRAYER LIST

1. Prayer letters

Make use of prayer letters of people who work in God’s kingdom. Every day pray for one person in an oppressed and persecuted church in the world.

2. Prayer lists

Make your own prayer list. Divide a page into two columns. Write the date and a specific prayer request in the first column. Record the date and the answer to that prayer in the second column.

3. Prayer requests

Prayer requests include people, events, activities, circumstances, problems, etc. The reason why you record names and events is not to forget to pray for them. A prayer list helps you to pray for specific people and events, with greater purpose and concentration. It also helps you to remember when and how God answered your prayers. Answers to your prayers become great encouragements!

4. God listens to all the prayers of his children!

God always listens to the upright prayers of all his children! But God has the sovereign right and power to answer prayers in the way he sees fit. God answers some prayers as requested. In other prayers God does immeasurably more than you asked or imagined (Ephesians 3:20)! Some prayers are only answered after a long time. Other prayers are answered in a way you did not expect. Some prayers are never answered, because God has a much better plan, even when you do not understand immediately.

The purpose of recording answers to prayers is to thank God, to remember his faithfulness and to share your joy with others. It proves God’s involvement in your life. This causes your faith in God to grow!

5. Keep your prayer list in a practical place

For example, in the back of your Bible or in a place where you see it every day.

6. A number of prayer lists

Some Christians have a ministry of prayer. They have several prayer lists: one for their own needs and requests; one for their family; one for their friends and colleagues; one for the members of their church; one for their ministry; one for missionaries; and one for their country and government.

E. HOW DO YOU LEARN TO PRAY PRACTICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY?

1. Live a righteous life

James 5:16 says: “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” The apostles did what was right: they dedicated themselves to prayer and teaching the Word. As a result “the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:4,7).

The deacon Stephen was a man full of grace and power. God used him to perform great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. And when opposition arose against him, his opponents could not stand up against his wisdom or the spirit by whom he spoke (Acts 6:8-10). Christians should maintain the same priority as the apostles and be righteous as Stephen.

2. Wrestle in prayer

The parable of the unwilling friend (Luke 11:1-13) teaches that intercession takes time and effort!

3. Practical tips

Pray at fixed times: early in the morning after your quiet time or while you walk or travel.

Pray together with a prayer partner once a week at an agreed time, because you stimulate one another to pray faithfully and regularly!