

GROWING DISCIPLES –Pray In Faith (PG)

Week 6: Intercession

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful."—James 5:16

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 6

Day 1: Asking for Others

Day 2: Examples of Intercession

Day 3: Following Your Master's Leading

Day 4: Praying for Others

Day 5: Praying Together in God's Work

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful" (James 5:16).

DISCIPLESHIP HELPS FOR WEEK 6

"Prayers of Intercession" (Discipleship Helps pp. 13-14)

PREVIEW OF WEEK 6

Intercession is asking for others that is led by your Master. This week you will—

- understand your relationship as a servant to God, your Master;
- learn how to join God's work by seeking and praying for His desires;
- understand why intercession is the greater kind of asking and why a call to intercession is one of God's highest callings for a person's life;
- follow biblical models of intercession to pray more effectively for others;
- understand how God works through united prayer to reveal His will and purposes to a church or a group;
- discuss what your group will do after this study has ended.

Day 1: Asking for Others

Today's Prayer Promise

"The Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mindset, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

Petition is asking for yourself, your family, your church, or your group. Petition is led by your Heavenly Father. A second kind of asking prayer is intercession. Intercession is asking for others that is led by your Master.

① What is the second kind of asking prayer?

1. Petition
2. _____

God is your Master. You are His servant. God is working to reconcile a lost world to Himself through Christ. He is carrying out His kingdom purposes and has chosen you to be His servant to labor with Him in the kingdom. One way to work with God is through prayers of intercession—praying for others and praying for kingdom purposes to be completed in their lives. God, as your Master, will lead your prayers according to His purposes.

② Who leads prayers of intercession? My _____

AN EXAMPLE OF JESUS' INTERCESSION

Intercessory prayer reaches its highest potential when it is intended to further the kingdom of God and to accomplish His will.

Jesus prayed for His disciples. At the Last Supper Jesus told Simon Peter that Satan had asked permission to sift him like wheat. Jesus then told Simon, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, this prayer made possible Peter's great courage before the Sanhedrin: "When they [the Sanhedrin] observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and knew that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13; also see vv. 8-12). Intercessory prayer reaches its highest potential when it is intended to further the kingdom of God and to accomplish His will.

THE GREATER KIND OF ASKING

Years ago T. W. Hunt began to study all of the prayers of the Bible, especially the asking prayers that were answered with a yes. He discovered that eighty of the answered asking prayers in the Bible were personal petition. One hundred thirty-one were intercession. Intercession is the more important kind of asking.

All of God's servants are called to be intercessors.

All of God's servants are called to be intercessors. Some seem to receive a more specific calling to intense intercession. We often call these persons *prayer warriors* —persons who wage spiritual battles in intercessory prayer. The calling to be an intercessor is a high calling.

③ **Have you ever sensed God's calling to a deeper-than-usual role of intercessory prayer?**

- Yes
 No

If you answered yes, briefly describe your sense of calling and how you have responded.

④ **Read today's prayer promise, Romans 8:26-27, as well as Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 below. Which two persons of the Trinity intercede for you?**

"Christ Jesus ... is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us."—Romans 8:34

"He [Jesus] is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them."—Hebrews 7:25

_____ and _____

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are intercessors for you. When God calls you to be an intercessor, you join Jesus and the Holy Spirit in their work. That is a high calling indeed!

⑤ **How would you rate the importance of being an intercessor?**

- a. Not very important. Other work is far more important.
 b. It may be important but only in a crisis.
 c. Very important—it is also the job of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Intercession is God's basic method for accomplishing His will among people.

The biblical pattern is that God often did His work through the prayers of great intercessors. When God wanted to deliver the children of Israel from bondage, He raised up Moses to pray for them. When He wanted to deliver them from the murderous plot of Haman, He raised up Esther to fast for them. To rebuild the Jerusalem wall and to renew the covenant, God used the prayers of Nehemiah and Ezra. He started the missionary movement through the prayers of the church in Antioch. The biblical pattern tells us that God does not usually work by Himself. He prefers to work through the prayers of His saints. Intercession is God's basic method for accomplishing His will among people.

↕ **Ask God to train you to be an intercessor. Offer your life to Him for any job of intercession to which He may call you.**

Day 2: Examples of Intercession

Today's Prayer Promise

"[If] My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Intercessory prayer is so important that it can make the difference between life and death. During the early days of the church, King Herod put James to death. Because this pleased the Jews, Herod arrested Peter with the plan to kill him also. "Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was being made earnestly to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5). In the night an angel of the Lord delivered Peter from prison. Peter immediately went to the house of Mary and John Mark, "where many had assembled and were praying" (Acts 12:12). God worked through the prayers of the early church to spare Peter's life for further service. Your prayers and the prayers of your group could have similar importance in God's kingdom.

① **Turn to Discipleship helps pp. 13-14 and read other examples of intercession.**

- a. Who prayed all night? _____
- b. Who wrestled in prayer for God's people? _____
- c. Who prayed for God to forgive those who were killing him? _____
- d. What are some of the things Paul prayed for churches? _____

Paul's Prayers for Churches

- Knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom, and understanding
- Worthy living that would please the Lord
- Spiritual fruit bearing
- Growth in the knowledge of God
- Strength and power
- Endurance, patience, and joy
- Faith, love, and spiritual fullness

Jesus, Epaphras, and Stephen were intercessors. Paul was also a great intercessor who earnestly prayed for churches. Some of the things for which He prayed are listed above.

↕ **Stop and pray some of the following requests for your church or for another church with which you are familiar. Include some of Paul's prayers for the churches. Which request is your greatest burden for God to grant? Circle it.**

- Knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom, and understanding
- Worthy living that would please the Lord
- Spiritual fruit bearing
- Growth in the knowledge of God
- Strength and power
- Endurance, patience, and joy
- Faith, love, and spiritual fullness

The Bible has many examples of intercessory prayer. You can learn from these examples. Let's examine Jesus' great intercessory prayer in John 17. Concerned about His followers, Jesus prayed for His disciples' spiritual needs. He prayed for them because these would be the leaders in promoting the kingdom of God. For His disciples Jesus requested unity, protection and deliverance, and sanctification or holiness.

② Read the verses from John 17 below. On the lines write the verse numbers that relate to each prayer request.

¹¹ "Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one. ¹² While I was with them, I was protecting them by Your name that You have given Me. ¹⁵ I am not praying that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ I sanctify Myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth. ²⁰ I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. ²¹ May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. ²² I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. ²³ I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me."—John 17:11-12, 15-23

Unity: _____

Protection and deliverance: _____

Sanctification or holiness: _____

Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one. The great unity He wanted had been disturbed by a quarrel among the disciples about who would be the greatest (see Luke 22:24-27). Jesus asked for that unity four times from four perspectives. He and the disciples had the same power (v. 11), relationship to the Father (v. 21), witness to the world (v. 23), and name (vv. 11-12). Because unity was so significant to Jesus, it ought to be part of your prayers too. Pray for unity not just for one local congregation or one denomination but for all who belong to God through faith in His Son, Jesus.

Jesus also prayed for the disciples' protection, deliverance (vv. 11, 15), and sanctification (v. 17). *Sanctified* means *made holy*, and *holy* means *set apart*. No impurity from the world should be allowed into the hearts of God's people, who have been set apart for His work.

↕ Pray these prayers for your church: for unity, protection, deliverance, and sanctification (being set apart, holy, pure).

Day 3: Following Your Master's Leading

Scripture-Memory Verse

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful" (James 5:16).

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He preached this message: "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" (Matthew 4:17). Jesus is the King of this kingdom. The kingdom Jesus spoke of is His rule in the hearts of His people. He is the King, and we are His subjects. He is the Master, and we are His servants (see 1 Corinthians 7:22-23 below). When you trusted Christ as your Savior, He also became Lord (Master) of your life. As a servant of God, you have tasks to complete that represent His work.

"He who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men."—1 Corinthians 7:22-23

① Beside each word indicate whether the role belongs to Christ or to you. Write either a *C* for *Christ* or an *M* for *me*.

servant master subject king lord

Jesus is King, Master, and Lord. You are a servant and a subject. A servant never tells the Master what to do. The Master decides what is important. As God's servant, you join Him in the work He is doing. This was Jesus' approach in knowing and doing His Father's will (see [John 5:17, 19-20](#) below). When you pray as a servant, the emphasis is on God's work. Your objects in prayer are to know the mind and heart of your Master and to pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done.

"My Father is still working, and I am working also. I assure you: The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these things in the same way. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing."—[John 5:17, 19-20](#)

② Where should your prayer requests originate as you pray for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done?

- a. I do my best thinking and decide what to ask God to do.
- b. I seek God's direction for my prayer requests.

Intercession begins and ends in God.

As your Master, God will lead your intercession. As you pray for others or for Kingdom purposes, seek God's direction for your prayer requests. This may seem strange to you if you have not experienced God's directing your prayers. God is able to give you direction if you are willing to seek it and to wait on Him for an answer.

Servanthood secures God's interest in your prayers for His work. Through the power and authority of the prayers He leads you to pray, God accomplishes His work. Intercession begins and ends in God.

When you pray, you may call Jesus your Master. This will help you keep in mind that He is the One who directs the work of intercession. On the Lord's behalf, pray for the spread of His kingdom and for right relationships with other servants. Pray that His blessings and works will demonstrate His lordship and righteousness.

Your Master will guide your praying according to His will. He has revealed in His Word some of the topics for which He wants you to pray.

③ Read the verses below. Below each Scripture write the name of someone for whom you can pray.

"Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

"With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit, and stay alert in this, with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

"I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful" (James 5:16).

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

The Bible also describes your Master's concerns. As you read and study the Scriptures, you will learn subjects about which to pray. When you read, "The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), you can pray for God's continued patience and for the salvation of the lost. Micah 6:8 says, "He has told you men what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: Only to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God." Thus, you can pray for justice, faithfulness, and humility. In Isaiah 58:6-7 God reveals actions that please Him:

Isn't the fast I choose:

To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and to not ignore your own flesh and blood?

↕ Approach your Master in prayer. Ask Him to reveal His purposes and to guide your intercession for others. Pray for the persons and concerns you identified above. Work together with Him as you pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Day 4: Praying for Others

Today's Prayer Promise

"Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think—according to the power that works in you—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Instead of learning more about prayer today, you will spend time praying for others. In our previous study Growing Disciples Witness to the World we learned to pray for the Concentric Circles of Concern and in week 4 of our current study we learned to pray using list, you can use prayer lists to help you remember to pray for specific persons and concerns.

① Prepare lists of persons for whom you need to pray, using the following categories to stimulate your thinking. Ask God to bring to mind persons for whom He wants you to intercede.

Your family members:

Members of your church family:

Your pastor and other church leaders:

Your coworkers:

Relatives, friends, and acquaintances:

Other churches and denominations:

Missionaries (domestic and international):

Ministry leaders:

Civil authorities (local, regional, and national):

Your city, state, province, and nation:

Needy or poor persons:

Oppressed, abused, or victimized persons:

Hungry and homeless persons:

Widows, orphans, and prisoners:

Sick and homebound persons:

Your enemies—those who persecute you:

↕ **Take time to pray for some or all persons on your lists. Emphasize spiritual concerns in your prayers. You will find items you may want to request of the Lord. Try to be specific in your prayers. Take as much time in prayer as possible.**

Possible Requests

- assurance
- bold witnessing
- calling of Christian workers
- Christian fruit
- Christian unity
- conviction of sin
- deliverance
- endurance
- faith
- faithfulness
- filling of the Holy Spirit
- forgiveness
- generosity
- guidance, God's will
- healing—spiritual, emotional, physical
- holiness
- hope
- humility
- integrity
- joy
- judgment
- justice
- knowledge
- love
- loyalty
- mercy
- obedience
- patience
- peace
- preservation
- provision of needs
- purity
- reconciliation of broken relationships
- repentance and revival among God's people
- right conduct
- right motives
- spirit of servanthood
- spiritual awakening and conversion of the lost
- spiritual cleansing
- spiritual growth
- stewardship
- surrender and submission to Christ
- understanding
- wisdom

Day 5: Praying Together in God's Work

Today's Prayer Promise

"I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Our church is the body of Christ. Christ is its Head, and every believer is a member of the body. Each member has a function in the body. Think about your physical body for a moment. What would you miss if you had no sight, hearing, smell, touch, or taste? Missing any one of your senses would prevent your body from knowing all it can of the physical world.

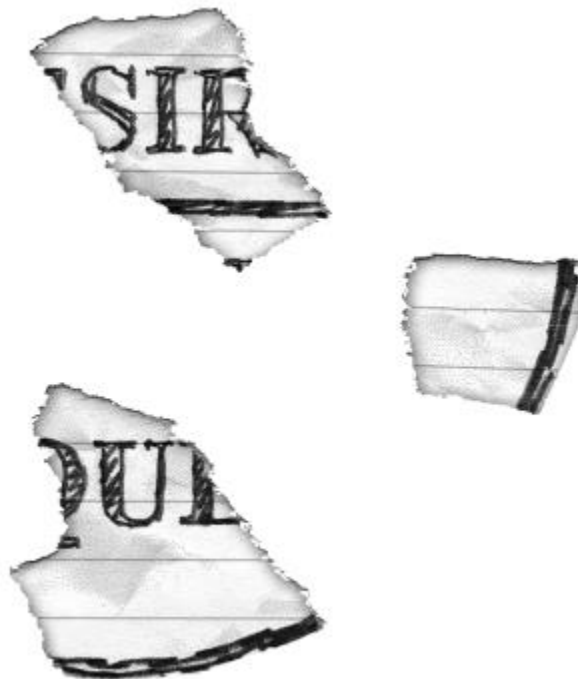
In a similar way, all of the members of the body are needed to function where God put them in your church body. If some members are not functioning, your church body is limited in knowing all it can of the spiritual world. As you pray about God's will and purposes, you cannot know

God's will for the body without the participation of the other members of your spiritual body. Every contribution adds to your understanding of God's will and of how to pray accordingly.

① Look back at diagram 6 in last week's lesson day 5 pages 16-17. Study the circle in the center. When you pray together with others, you are seeking to understand God's desires. Then you pray in agreement with His will.

Think of God's will for your church as a puzzle. God gives each member one or more pieces. By themselves your pieces may not make sense. But as each piece is shared with the body and put into its place, a beautiful picture begins to become clear. This is why our church needs times to share together and pray together. This would apply as well to ministries, committees and the church staff as we seek the Lord's directions for their work.

② Think about your pieces of a puzzle which represent God's work for our church. List things you sense God may want to do in or through our church below. Before you start writing, be cautious: this is not a brainstorming session for you to list your/our ideas. Rather, you need to identify what God has been saying to you/us. If something comes to mind as you pray through this activity, write it down. As you share these ideas with others, God will either confirm them or not confirm them. Trust that He can and will. Thank Him either way and don't feel offended if an item is not confirmed. All you want is to know your Master's will. Now pray; then consider the following questions as you make your list.



My Understanding of God's Will/Purposes



My Prayer Group's Understanding of God's Will/Purposes



My Church's Understanding of God's Will/Purposes

- What burdens has God given you as you have prayed about His will and about your place in His will for our church?
- What needs in your community have you felt a God-given burden to meet?
- What activity in and around your church may indicate an invitation for you to join God's work?
- What scriptural command has God used to convict you about an area our church needs to address (for example, ministry to the poor, needy, oppressed, widows, and orphans or ministries of tithing, loving, witnessing, teaching, and disciple making)?
- Might the kinds of members God has been adding to your body indicate God's preparation for an assignment (for example, medical personnel for medical-missions work, ethnic persons for starting a new church, or construction personnel for building churches in missions areas)?

Have you listed things that you sense God may want to do through our church or prayer group? This may be your part of the message God wants to reveal to our church or group about His will. In your prayer session this week you will have an opportunity to share items on your list. Others will share their lists. Then together you will seek God's perspective on areas He may want you to pray about more completely. This may be a very exciting time as you pray together about God's work in and through your church or group. You may find that God will speak clearly during the prayer time about something special of which He is calling you to be a part.

The early church in the New Testament prayed together about many concerns related to God's will and purposes. They prayed for boldness in witnessing, Christian fruit, the filling of the Spirit, conduct worthy of the Lord, spiritual enlightenment and understanding, deliverance from evil or preservation, the sick, church leaders, missionaries, and persons in authority.

↕ Begin praying now for your group prayer time. Ask God to guide your praying according to His will and purposes. Ask Him to speak clearly to your prayer group and to your church about His will and purposes. Don't forget to pray for the larger body of Christ—other churches, denominations, missionaries, and believers in other states, provinces, or countries—that God's kingdom will come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The lines below are for taking notes during your prayer time with your group.

Session 6: Intercession (Participants Guide)

Opening Prayer

Volunteer to pray for your group and for this closing session.

(Review Week 6 and Share Your Responses)

1. What is a prayer warrior? Do you know anyone like that? Whom? (Day 1 p. 3)

2. What are some of your greatest prayer burdens for our church? (Day 2 p. 4)

3. As you have prayed for others, has God given you a special burden for one person or group? If so, whom? (Day 4 p. 9-10)

This Week's Prayer Focus: Intercession

(See *Discipleship Helps* "Prayers of Intercession" for examples and topics.)

Focus on praying for others who are not part of your group. Consider some of these:

- Broken, hurting persons in the news
- Single parents
- Persons in nursing homes
- Sick and homebound persons
- Missionaries at home or overseas
- Missionaries at home
- People in war-torn areas of the world
- Refugees
- Christian ministries
- Prisoners (lost and Christian)
- Other churches
- The homeless, poor, and oppressed
- Orphans and widows
- Persons who are grieving
- Government leaders, military personnel

Interacting with the Scriptures

1. Volunteer to quote James 5:16. (*Write it out below*)

2. What verse, prayer promise, or other Scripture has been most meaningful or challenging to you this week and why?

3. What truth about prayer has been most meaningful or practical this week?

Praying Together

Share from day 5 pp. 11-14 what you sense to be God's will and purposes for our church. This is a part of praying together as a life group. As members we need to hear from one another and from the Lord together in our life group and as a congregation. Listen to learn whether other members mention similar or identical concerns. These may indicate directions in which we need to focus our praying. Pray for God's purposes as He leads your praying. Join the group in praying for one subject at a time.

What's Next?

What do you sense that God wants your life group to do next so that our church continues becoming a house of prayer? Consider these / wrote and share prayerfully:

1. Continue meeting in our life groups monthly, weekly, or daily for concentrated periods of praying.

2.

3.

Closing Prayer

Volunteer to pray prayers of thanksgiving for what God has taught you and your life group, what He has done in your group, and the ways He's answered prayers over the past six weeks.