

Prayer Course: Week 2

Praying for people and events: Intercessory prayer

Introduction:

Intercessory prayer is praying for something, someone, or a situation. It is the act of standing between God and what you are praying for, commending that subject of your prayer to God.

Background:

The early church practised this sort of prayer, as did Jesus himself on many occasions in the gospels, and the Church has always practised this intercessory, praying for, form of prayer both in private and public worship, often to the extent that many people have only encountered this form of prayer. In intercessory prayer there is always a tension between spontaneous prayers for others and a more structured approach to praying for others, and we see both of these in the New Testament writings. In this exercise we will try to hold those together by offering structure in which you can be spontaneous or not as you wish. The structure is designed so that we pray for a range of scale and for positive as well as negative issues. So we will pray for nine categories:

- Ourselves: Something negative in our lives
- Ourselves: Something positive in our lives
- Ourselves: Something neutral in our lives
- Our Communities: Something negative
- Our Communities: Something positive
- Our Communities: Something neutral
- The Wider world: Something negative
- The Wider world: Something positive
- The Wider world: Something neutral

You can write down a list in advance if that suits you or spontaneously pray for something in each of the categories. Do play around with the order, although this is the one I have found works best for me. Try not to drop the neutral

thing; God is active every where and all things are worth bringing to him in prayer, but we tend to focus on the very good or very bad, God holds everything in-between in his hand as well, so the neutral category is important.

Purpose:

The purposes of Intercessory prayer are threefold:

- To ask God's aid and blessing for that which we are praying for;
- To help us to recognise that we and all situations always need God's help;
- To help us to recognise that God is already at work in the situation or person we are praying for, and to start to see how we can co-operate with God's work.

Process:

- Get comfortable.
- Write a list of the 9 categories and write an intention in for each if you like.
- Pray for God's help with your prayers.
- Pray your ways slowly through the list, bringing each thing on the list to mind and being honest with God about what you think and feel about it.
- Then give each thing in turn over to God, praying 'thy will be done', try to let it go - God is dealing with it.
- At the end sit in silence and listen.
- Thank God for the time of prayer and anything you have realised.
- Slowly say the Lord's Prayer.

Further reading and resources:

Chaplaincy prayer list
Diocese in Europe Prayer lists
ICS Prayer lists
The News