

SESSION 3

PREVAILING IN PRAYER: INTERCESSION

KEY VERSE:

‘WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE OUGHT TO PRAY FOR, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US THROUGH WORDLESS GROANS’ (ROMANS 8:26)

REMEMBER:

- Computer with speakers
- Copy of newspaper
- Print out three intercession stories (below)

(5 MINS) WELCOME

AIM: TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

- Last week: Petition
- How did people do with their prayer lists? Did anyone get prayer dice?
- Open in prayer

(15 MINS) VIDEO

AIM: TO EXPLAIN INTERCESSORY PRAYER AND PROVOKE DISCUSSION

- **This week:** Intercession – asking God on behalf of other people, places or situations
- God has chosen to work in partnership with us, principally through prayer
- ‘Let my heart be broken with the things that break yours.’ – Bob Pierce, World Vision

(20 MINS) DISCUSS

AIM: TO DISCOVER HOW INTERCESSORY PRAYER WORKS AND HOW WE CAN DO IT

- What did you find most helpful in the video?
- What questions did it raise for you?
- Why is it necessary to 'stand in the gap' between God and a situation?
- Sometimes it can be hard to believe that our prayers make any difference. Has anyone experienced the power of intercessory prayer? If so, what were the circumstances?
- What people, places or situations might God be asking us to intercede for?

(15 MINS) DO IT

AIM: TO DO SOME INTERCESSION

- **Share a little information about a current crisis in the news by:**
 1. Giving 2-3 facts (win minds)
 2. Giving a human-interest story (win hearts)
- **Stand and pray:**
Invite everyone to stand to raise their voices to God all at once ... What are the promises of God you might claim for this situation?
- **Raising Voices in Prayer:**
For many Western Christians it can be embarrassing or uncomfortable to raise voices and cry out to God together. Yet the Bible says that Jesus sometimes prayed in a loud voice, and that the early church often 'raised their voices together' in prayer. We also know that this is a model of prayer used extensively in the parts of the world where the church is growing most dramatically, from China and South Korea to Nigeria and Argentina. It is also a great way of praying because it is passionate and efficient – we don't have to wait for others to finish speaking, and God can hear us all at once!
- **Keys to Mobilising This Kind of Prayer:**
 1. Explain what you are asking them to do clearly and why – using the points above.
 2. Give internal processors a moment to think what they want to say.
 3. Put on background music to help people be less self-conscious.
 4. Don't attempt in groups of less than six.

5. Lead by example.
6. The moment that the prayers begin to die off, give the next prayer item.

- **Kneel and pray:**

Finish by inviting people to kneel and pray the 'break my heart ...' prayer, but warn people only to say amen if they really mean it. You could sing/listen to the Hillsong worship track 'Hosanna', which includes these lines:

*I see a near revival
Stirring as we pray and seek
We're on our knees
We're on our knees*

*Heal my heart and make it clean
Open up my eyes to the things unseen
Show me how to love like you have loved me*

*Break my heart for what breaks yours
Everything I am for your kingdom's cause
As I walk from earth into eternity'¹*

(5 MINS) DEVELOP IT

AIM: TO HELP EACH OTHER TO INTERCEDE DURING THE COMING WEEK

- **Pray the Papers:** Take a moment to pray into a news headline each day, asking God what he wants in the situation
- **Prayer Walk:** around your workplace or neighbourhood, first asking God to reveal his heart to you for the place, and then praying quietly for what you see
- **Prayer Meeting:** Is there a church prayer meeting you can attend this week?

GOING DEEPER: OPTIONAL EXTRA MATERIAL

(20 MINS) DEEPEN IT

AIM: TO PROVOKE FURTHER DISCUSSION FROM THE BIBLE

- **Group A:** Genesis 18:16–19:38 – Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah
- **Group B:** Exodus 17:8–13 – Moses intercedes, while Joshua fights
- **Discuss:** What do these stories tell us about how to intercede effectively?

- Ask three people to read out these three powerful stories of intercession in action at the end.

EXTRA RESOURCES

USEFUL QUOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- 'I preach with the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.' – Attributed to Karl Barth, theologian
- 'Speak to God about your friends, as well as your friends about God.' – Pete Greig
- 'Marriages are being shattered. Children are being abused. Individuals are living lives of quiet desperation, without purpose or future. We can make a difference ... if we learn to pray on their behalf.' – Richard Foster²

FURTHER RESOURCES

- **VIDEO:** Watch *Prayer as Justice* video from 24-7Prayer: 24-7prayer.com/video/prayer-as-justice
- **READ:** Norman Grubb, *Rhys Howells, Intercessor*
- **READ:** Eileen Crossman, *Mountain Rain*
- **RESEARCH:** Order *Operation World*, the ultimate guide to praying for every nation on earth³

INTERCESSION IN ACTION

1. Interceding to Save a Life

Dr Raymond Edmond, a medical missionary to Uruguay, had become so ill that his wife and friends gathered around his bed to say their goodbyes, having already dug his grave outside. But suddenly, much to everyone's surprise, Dr Raymond sat bolt upright, requested his clothes and sprung out of bed completely healed.

Many years later Dr Edmond was preaching in Boston and he recounted this story of the day he was miraculously rescued from death's door. At the end of the meeting an elderly lady approached him clutching a dog-eared old notebook. 'What day did you say you were dying in Uruguay?' she asked. Dr Raymond told her. She leafed through her notebook and eventually located the day, whereupon her wrinkled face suddenly lit up. 'There it is!' she exclaimed, pointing at a scribbled note. 'At 2am God said to me, "Get up and pray – the devil's trying to kill Raymond Edmond in Uruguay!"'⁴

² Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home* (Harper San Francisco), p. 191

³ operationworld.org

⁴ Larry Briney, cited *Christian Growth Study Bible* (Zondervan Grand Rapids, 1997), p. 475.

2. Interceding to Rescue an Orphaned Child

‘My parents longed to adopt a baby called George from Mexico, but after four years of trying, the Mexican government introduced new legislation and rejected our application completely. We had sent George teddy bears, we had photos and videos of him, and my five-year-old brother often prayed for his new brother. We were all devastated. I’m sure my parents must have felt bad for raising our hopes, but as they prayed and fasted they continued to sense that it was still God’s will for George to join our family, even though we’d been told that this was now utterly impossible.

Around that time someone gave us a prophetic word, saying that God would use kings and queens to move mountains for us. Several months later, a Mexican friend who had been acting on our behalf in the adoption process, happened to meet the wife of the Mexican President. He gathered the courage to tell her about George and she was so moved by the story that she agreed to use her influence to ‘move mountains’.

George is now my brother. He even has a teddy bear signed by the wife of the former president. Looking back, I don’t think it was a matter of begging. I think we received a miracle because, having seen what the Lord wanted to do, we simply kept believing and praying, against all the odds.’⁵

3. Interceding for a Nation

By May 1940, Hitler’s forces had cornered 380,000 Allied soldiers in north west France, trapped with their backs to the sea. No more than 30,000 were expected to be evacuated to safety. Facing calamity, King George VI called his British subjects to a national day of prayer.

On 26 May 1940 the beleaguered people of Britain filled churches up and down the land, interceding for the lives of those 380,000 soldiers, crying out to God for the kind of national deliverance described in the Bible. Winston Churchill described the results of that prayer meeting as ‘a miracle of deliverance’.

The first answer to prayer was the weather: the sea was the calmest it had been for 30 years, enabling an armada of private vessels to cross the English Channel to rescue troops from Dunkirk. Meanwhile a storm blew up in France to ground sections of the Luftwaffe. What’s more, Adolf Hitler inexplicably made one of the worst decisions of the war; holding back his forces to enable one of the greatest escapes in history which enabled more than a third of a million men to fight another day and thereby undoubtedly determining the outcome of World War Two.

That ‘miracle of deliverance’ is well known. Fewer people realise that it was an answer to the intercessory prayers that spanned the British Isles on 26 May 1940.

⁵ Joe Row, 2009.