

Lesson 7: Supplication and Intercession

Introduction

The Bible describes God as someone who answers the prayers of His followers. As we have seen in the previous lessons, prayer includes worship, thanksgiving, confession of sin, supplication, and intercession. In this lesson we want to look more closely at requests and intercession.

God invites us to bring our concerns to Him. He is pleased when we stop trying to manage our lives ourselves and start asking Him for the things we need. Prayer effects God, not that we have to persuade Him. On the contrary, He gives us things that we ask for, that He otherwise would not give us if we hadn't asked. James wrote: "Yet you do not have because you do not ask." (James 4:2)

Quote #1



"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 525)

Jesus invites us to frequently bring our requests to God. Read the following texts and make notes!

Matthew 7:7-11: _____

Matthew 21:22: _____

Luke 18:1-8: _____

John 14:13-14: _____

John 16:23-24: _____

Quote #2 “Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children, and yet there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants to God. What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God’s heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith?” (*Steps to Christ, p. 94*)

What may we Pray for? How wonderful it is to know that God opens His ears and heart to us and invites us to present our requests. But what can we ask for? In order to answer this question it is important to understand that God is not a vending machine. We can’t throw a prayer in and expect an answer to come popping out. God invites us to ask for things which are good – good for me, for other people and for God. John wrote: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14) So, what can we pray for?

1. Personal Requests

It isn’t at all selfish to pray for ourselves. Our Father in heaven invites us to do this. When we present our personal requests to God, we can talk with God about everything that concerns us. This pertains, among other things, to the following areas:

a) Our own personal spiritual life

We can talk to God about our personal spiritual life. We can ask Him where we are in our Christian walk and how He wants us to change. Of course we can ask God to help us make the necessary changes.

b) Temptations, Problems, Challenges

Each of us has temptations, problems, and challenges that influence every area of our lives. With God we don’t have to put on a fair weather face and pretend that everything is okay. We can talk openly about every temptation, problem, and challenge. We can ask Him for help.

c) Request for God’s Leading

Sometimes we think we have everything under control. But ultimately we are all in the dark. God alone can see how each path ends. That is why it is so important to ask God to lead us. We can ask God to reveal His will and to help us live according to His will.

d) Plans and Goals

It’s important that we plan and set goals for ourselves. A person, who doesn’t have any goals and makes no plans, experiences chaos and vicious cycles of discontent. God calls on us to actively shape our lives. But it is important that we include God and honestly submit every plan and goal to Him. When we have the assurance that God stands behind our goals and plans, then we may ask God daily to help us stick to our plans even when the going gets tough.

e) Every Day Requests

In addition to those already mentioned, there are many ordinary requests and needs, which we may be brought to God. That's why Jesus told us in the Lord's prayer to ask for our daily bread. Nothing is too small for God. He rejoices when we include Him in everything, even the small things in our lives.

Quote #3

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ." (*Steps to Christ, p. 70*)

Quote #4

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son." (*Steps to Christ, p. 100*)

2. Intercession for other People



It is good when we present *our* requests to God and ask Him for an answer. But God wants us to also pray intensively for other people and their needs. There are many verses in the Bible which show us that believers should pray for each other. Jesus himself gave the best examples of intercessory prayer, because He is praying for us in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). People like Moses, Daniel, Job, Peter, and Paul are described as people who agonized for other people in prayer.

One aspect of intercessory prayer is praying for your brothers and sisters in Christ. But let's not forget those who don't believe and don't even think about the power of prayer. We can step into this gap and pray for them because intercessory prayer can have an effect on their lives too. Intercessory prayer gives God more room to work in their lives in the controversy between good and evil. When you pray for someone, then God does something for this person, which He otherwise wouldn't have done. This is why intercessory prayer is so powerful. When we try to win someone for Jesus, we must spend a lot of time praying for him/her. It will make a huge difference!



There are many biblical examples of intercessory prayer. Please read the following Bible texts carefully and take notes!

Genesis 18:16-33: _____

Exodus 32:11,14: _____

1 Samuel 12:23: _____

Jeremiah 29:7: _____

Ephesians 6:18-19: _____

2 Thessalonians 3:1: _____

1 Timothy 2,1-4: _____



When we pray for other people, it isn't enough to pray: "Lord, please bless..." Effective intercessory prayer has to go beyond general expressions and involve specific requests for other people. Read the following statements from Paul in which he describes intercessory prayer. Note what he prayed for.

Philippians 1:9-11: _____

Colossians 1:9-11: _____

Quote #5 "If we have the interest that Knox had when he pleaded before God for Scotland, we shall have success. He cried, "Give me Scotland, Lord, or I die." And when we take hold of the work and wrestle with God, saying, "I must have souls; I will never give up the struggle," we will find that God will look upon our efforts with favor." (*Evangelism, p. 295*)

Quote #6 "Learn to exercise faith in presenting your neighbors before the throne of grace and pleading with God to touch their hearts. In this way effectual missionary work may be done." (*Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 8, p. 245*)

Quote #7 "Let the workers grasp the promises of God, saying, "Thou hast promised, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' I must have this soul converted to Jesus Christ." Solicit prayer for the souls for whom you labor; present them before the church as objects for the supplication. It will be just what the church needs, to have their minds called from their little, petty difficulties, to feel a great burden, a personal interest, for a soul that is ready to perish. Select another and still another soul, daily seeking guidance from God, laying everything before Him in earnest prayer, and working in divine wisdom. As you do this, you will see that God will give the Holy Spirit to convict, and

the power of the truth to convert, the soul. (*Medical Ministry*, pp. 244-245)

**Ellen White's
Intercessory
Prayer**

Ellen White herself spent a lot of time praying for others. "Alma McKibben, a personal friend once overheard one of Ellen White's early morning prayers. "I have never heard such a prayer anywhere," she reported, "from anyone at any time. She was pleading with God for you and for me, for the people of God that we might not fail to do the word that had been given us to do. Then she talked with God about our weakness, and where we were failing and pleading with God that His Spirit might speak to every heart and that we might reform and hasten to do the work that should be done in the world for lost souls. I learned that night what the burden of Sister White was for this people. Ellen White's prayer, Alma observed, was "the most impassioned prayer that I'd ever heard in my life." (*George Knight, Walking with Ellen White: The Human Interest Story*, p. 111)

**Prayer and
Fellowship**

Up till now we have spoken about personal prayer. But there is a special promise for those who pray together. What promise does Jesus give us in the gospel of Matthew?

Matthew 18:19-20: _____

Quote #8

"The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of the church are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another." (*Manuscript Releases IX*, p. 303)

Quote #9

"Our Saviour follows His lessons of instruction with a promise that if two or three should be united in asking anything of God it should be given them. Christ here shows that there must be union with others, even in our desires for a given object. Great importance is attached to the united prayer, the union of purpose. God hears the prayers of individuals, but on this occasion Jesus was giving especial and important lessons that were to have a special bearing upon His newly organized church on the earth. There must be an agreement in the things which they desire and for which they pray. It was not merely the thoughts and exercises of one mind, liable to deception; but the petition was to be the earnest desire of several minds centered on the same point." (*Testimonies, Vol. 3*, p. 429)

Quote #10

"It is in the order of God that those who bear responsibilities should often meet together to counsel with one another, and to pray earnestly for that wisdom which He alone can impart. Unitedly make known your troubles to God. Talk less; much precious time is lost in talk that brings no light. Let brethren unite in fasting and prayer for the wisdom that God has promised to supply liberally." (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 499aa)

Quote #11

"Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation

of some special one, and then for still another?" (*Testimonies, Vol. 7, p. 21*)

**United Prayer
in the early
Christian
Church**

In the New Testament book of Acts, we see a beautiful picture of the early Christian church, which was united in prayer and experienced the amazing works of God. The unity of the 120 in the upper room prepared the way for Pentecost (Acts 1:13 and onward). When Peter and John were threatened, the believers united together in prayer asking for courage and the place where they were gathered was shaken (Acts 4:24-37). After Herod killed James, and just shortly before he was going to execute Peter, the believers gathered to pray. An angel came, the chains fell from Peter, the prison doors opened, and he returned as a victor to the praying church (Acts 12:3-19). This example and many others show us that united prayer played a central role in the early Christian church. (See Acts 1:24; 2:42-47; 6:6; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13,25; 20:36; 21:5).

Prayer Groups

There are several different forms of joint prayer. We pray together at church, in Sabbath school, in care groups, in discipleship groups, in prayer meetings, at family worships, etc. A well-proven method for intercessory prayer is in prayer groups, where 2 or 3 church members regularly come together and perseveringly pray for each other, the salvation of souls, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the church, and other concerns. When they meet they don't spend much time chatting. Instead, after a short exchange of concerns, they spend their time in prayer. Each person jots down the prayer requests and continues to pray for these concerns during the week.

**Tips for
Effective
(Intercessory)
Prayer**

The Bible is very clear. Supplication and intercession are important and make a difference! In summary, you will now find some tips that will help you as you pray for specific things and intercede for other people.

1. Examine yourself!

The Bible says: "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16) God hears the prayers of a person, who has completely surrendered his life to Jesus, because this alone makes a person righteous. Examine your conscience and repent and confess any known sins.

2. Pray in faith that God will answer your prayer!

God delights in answering the prayers of His children. We can pray with this assurance. John knew this hope: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

3. Pray according to God's will!

Prayer isn't a way to force our will on God. It is a way to bring ourselves, and others, into agreement with God's will. Prayer doesn't adapt God's will to ours, it adapts our will to His. That is why we should pray for things according to God's will. When we are unsure of God's will, we can pray, "Not my will, but your will be done."

4. Pray perseveringly!

In many texts the Bible invites us to pray perseveringly and continually. Not because God needs the repetition, but because we are thereby changed. Samuel said to the Israelites: “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.” (1 Samuel 12:23)

5. Pray together with other people!

We just spoke about the importance of united prayer. God is pleased when His children are united in what they ask for. This unity is a blessing to us. Praying together is more than just getting together to pray. It can also simply be sharing certain prayer requests with other church members or to pledge to each other to pray for certain requests every day.

6. Pray for specific things!

Those who only pray in general terms will not experience specific answers to prayer. Let’s bring specific requests to God and have faith that He will answer our prayers according to His will.

7. Keep a prayer list!

When we consciously think about who and what we want to pray for, prayer requests will fill our minds. A prayer list or prayer book helps us not to lose track of all those requests. Write down the things and names of those you want to pray for. Jot the date of when you started praying for this request beside the entry and leave room so that you can come back later and write down the answer that God has given. When you keep a prayer list or prayer book you can arrange the requests according to the frequency in which you will bring them before God (e.g., daily or weekly.) Another good idea is to use small index cards to write your prayer requests on and keep them in a box; they can easily be sorted, added to, interchanged, or updated.

8. Plan time for prayer!

We can pray anywhere: in the car, at work, in a crowd, etc. But let’s not forget to set a time for both personal and group prayer. If we don’t have a set time, then we will quickly notice how our time is filled with other things and at the end of the day we still haven’t had time for prayer. Plan enough time for prayer so that you can really pray about the things that are closest to your heart.

