

## LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



“PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER . . .”

Creator God, let my prayers reflect your yearnings and desires for those in need of your healing, justice and peace.  
Amen

### *This month . . . Reflections on* ✧ *Intercessory Prayer* ✧

“To intercede for another means that in our prayer we stand between - or next to - them and God.” Brian Taylor

Brian Taylor articulates the heart of intercessory prayer. Can you visualize yourself standing between or next to someone before God declaring your concerns for their welfare? When I envision myself doing this my entire understanding of intercessory prayer radically changes and deepens. I am humbled by the image. What a profound privilege and responsibility to stand on behalf of another and pray their needs, longing for God's promises to be fulfilled.

The late Catholic priest and writer Henri Nouwen said, “Prayer is the way both to the heart of God and the heart of the world.” Intercessory prayer allows us to enter the heart of God on behalf of the heart of the world. The word “intercession”, defined as standing between, going before, or to proceed, is a noun of action. Intercessory prayer recognizes God's care for us, inviting us to respond to the needs of others. As we turn our concerns into prayer, we listen in spirit, allowing God to direct us in our prayer for the individual(s) or situations on whose behalf we stand. Intercessory prayer takes us beyond our own limited understanding, stepping into God's presence, asking and listening to what God would have us pray for a person or situation. We turn our purposes into God's purposes.

#### Intercessory Prayer Exercises

Be aware of the moments when others come to mind. Enter into God's presence asking, “What is your prayer for this person, Lord?” Take a moment to listen. Now offer prayer.

Quietly and attentively come into the presence of God. As individuals, places, events come to mind, bring them to Christ. Listen to the thoughts He might have concerning these individuals or situations. Offer prayer, leaving your concerns with Christ. Throughout the day when these concerns present themselves again to you, be reassured, remembering that you have placed them in the presence of Christ.

Often, we are aware of our own inadequacies in understanding the depth and breadth of the needs of individuals and situations we yearn to express to God. At these times begin your prayer with these simple, yet direct words of petition: “Holy Spirit, pray through (in) me.” In offering this petition we open ourselves to God's presence and His desires for a person/situation, allowing our prayer to become His prayer.

Create a prayer list, varying the subject and focus each day. As you offer up your concerns, take a moment to listen for God's guidance as you present your prayers on behalf others.

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Harriet White, Evangelist



### IN THE GARDEN . . .

One meaning for flower symbolism associated with white 'hyacinth' is "I'll pray for you".

#### Exercising Hope

In January of this year the mass shooting in Tucson, Arizona left me feeling extremely troubled. I listened to news reports of the tragedy, accusations of blame and I wondered along with millions of others what went wrong and what I could do make a difference. As our family discussed the incident I made the all too familiar remark, "What can I do?" I was reminded that there were, indeed, things I could do to make positive changes: expressing concerns and convictions through letters to public officials, newspapers, voting in elections to bring about constructive change, etc. These ideas, however, left me wanting and feeling little "hope" for change. That same week my "Weavings" magazine arrived in the mail. An article by Peter J. Storey, "Heroic Intercession" captured my attention with his opening statement: "If I didn't believe that the gospel is about changing the world, I wouldn't waste another day with Jesus." Storey reflected the need to let scripture encourage and lead us into intercession, believing as Walter Wink stated, "History belongs to the intercessors." I was captivated by Wink's claim that, "Intercession is spiritual defiance of what is, in the name of what God has promised." (From The Powers That Be by Walter Wink) I was reminded of the power and promises of prayer and that I, too, believe in a God who changes history in response to faithful intercessors. Intercession begins in compassionate hearts and overflows in visionary action. Intercessory prayer is one way I can support others in need of healing, opening space for them in my heart, and by way of my actions I participate in God's plan to pursue peace and justice while training my spirit in the expectant nature of Christ's hope.

#### Reflection moment . . .

Read Mark 2:1-12 The story of the paralyzed man and his four friends embody the meaning of intercession and a God who changes history in response to intercessors.

#### In perspective . . .

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go."

--Abraham Lincoln

### Not My Problem



A mouse looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. He was aghast to discover that it was a mousetrap! Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning, "There is a mouse trap in the house!" In turn, the chicken, pig, and cow said, "Mr. Mouse, this may be a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to us." So the mouse returned to the house, dejected to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. His wife's sickness continued so that friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well, in fact, she died, and so many people came for her funeral the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.

So the next time you hear that someone is facing a problem and think that it does not concern you, remember that when the least of us is threatened, we are all at risk.

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#### Scripture focus:

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 4:16 NIV

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." Romans 8:26 NIV

"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." Romans 8:27 NIV

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians 4:6 NIV