

# A String of Pearls

## Sourcesheet 4: Intercession

The Bible has a lot to say about prayer; here are just a couple of examples:

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*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.*  
(Romans 12: 9-13)

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*  
(1Timothy 2: 1-4)

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Prayer occurs at a number of places in services. We have already met the prayer of confession and early in the service we have the collect. Later we will look at the Eucharistic prayer – in this session we are going to think particularly about the intercessions and then more generally about prayer itself.

Intercessions in our services usually include the following concerns.

### **The Church of Christ**

**Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority**

**The local community**

**Those who suffer**

These prayers are usually 'led' by an individual and are usually punctuated with responses through which we both give assent to the prayer and ask God to bring it to fulfilment. There is a range of other ways in which we respond to prayers. We may find something in them that spurs us to action or something that we wish to take home to add to our personal prayers. It maybe that, on occasion, we might find what is being prayed for difficult or challenging. This requires us to think carefully about how we understand God's work in the world.

When we pray in church, we should remember that we are often speaking for two audiences, God and the community. The use of 'amen' is intended to indicate our assent to intercessions and other communal prayer. The intercessions often use responsive phrases.

Lord, in your mercy  
**All** hear our prayer.

*And at the end*

Merciful Father,

**All** accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

These responses enable us to participate a little more in the intercessions than by just saying amen alone.

There are other sorts of prayers in the service penitential prayer, personal petitions, praise prayer and thanksgiving prayer.

There is also a very wide range of personal prayer from the recitation of set forms such as Morning Prayer to completely informal, even familiar, language. Some personal prayer focusses more on 'listening' to God rather than speaking to God. Jesus has some very interesting words to say about prayer:

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“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

*(Matthew 6: 5-13)*

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## Talksheet 4 — Intercession

### 1 Timothy 2:1-8

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#### **WELCOME – Breaking the ice (Aim for 10 mins)**

##### Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,

To start the session read Psalm 100 together.

After a moments' stillness read it again and  
think especially of the line—

*'we are his people, and the sheep of his  
pasture.'*

**The pastures are what sustains the sheep**

**Does worship sustain us as 'God's sheep'?**

**What else sustains us?**

#### **WORD – Applying the truth (Aim for 45 mins)**

What was it like to be involved in the early church? Acts tells us what was central to its life: Bible teaching, practical fellowship, the sacraments and prayer. The early believers demonstrated social responsibility, were respected by outsiders and daily saw people come to Christ (Acts 2:42-47). Often our church life falls far short of the biblical ideal. Prayer needs its rightful place in the agenda.

In this passage we find the apostle Paul addressing various issues concerning the church and its worship. Interestingly, Paul addresses the issue of prayer first – as one of primary importance to the early church in Ephesus in which Timothy was involved. The issues Paul discusses also provide us with a framework in which to review what we have learned in the studies so far.

1. **Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8.** What reasons does Paul give in the passage for the importance of prayer?
2. Apart from giving instruction on prayer, Paul also discusses essential Christian doctrines in verse 4-6. What do you think Paul is implying here about the relationship between prayer and doctrine?
3. Paul encourages us to pray for all people, but then highlights a particular example (v.2). Why is prayer for such people important? (You may also want to draw on studies 3-5 in your response.)

4. Paul seems to be saying that good leaders and bad leaders need the same approach - we have to pray for them all. Looking at studies 1-2, what attitudes do intercessors demonstrate toward the people they pray for?

5. How do you think that prayer might lead us to live “peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (v.2)?

6. Paul underlines (vv.3,6) that God longs for all to come to know him through Christ – even though many will reject him. What have studies 1-6 taught you or reinforced for you about praying for non – Christians?

7. Why do you think prayer is “good, and pleases God our Saviour” (v.3)? (Draw on what you have been learning in these studies.)

8. Paul emphasises in verse 8 the godly moral integrity (“holy hands”) and unity of believers. Why is this important if we are to pray as Paul directs?

9. What aspects of character are important in an intercessor?

10. What character quality would you most like to develop?  
What steps do you need to take to do that?

11. How is this spiritual practice of intercession similar to or different from the ways of the world?

12. How can we use the spiritual practice of intercession in our ordinary everyday, Monday to Saturday lives?

## **WITNESS – Reaching out to others**

***(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)***

### **Giving Thanks to God**

Thank God for one aspect of prayer which is important to you.

### **Praying for one another**

Ask everyone to share something they would like prayer for.

Then go round the room and pray for the person to your right,

### **Praying for those who don't yet know God**

How have you been able to have any spiritual conversations as you go about your ordinary everyday life?

When has it been possible to mention the things of God?