

Lake Cities Community Church
Series: Mission Impossible (prayer)
June 20, 2010
Pastor Craig Schill

Intercessory Prayer

One month ago today, on May 20, 2010 I sent an urgent e-mail to our church family. It reads as follow: "I can't share all the details, but the Lord has brought to our church a very hard situation, which needs our prayers and support. A close friend of one of our member families came to them a few days ago on the run from an abusive marriage. She had nowhere else to go, no other family or friends she trusted. By God's providence, through my Pray Rowlett pastor's prayer group I had two weeks prior been given resources and heard a presentation on a Christian women's shelter. I made contact with them, and we were able to get her into this shelter, where she is now receiving counseling, protection and Bible study."

The e-mail went on to call us all to pray for her protection, for her children, safety for all involved and for this dear woman to find comfort and refuge in God by way of a living dynamic faith in Jesus Christ. And you did pray. You prayed for a woman you had never met. A woman's who real name I have not used for safety reasons. You prayed for two small, confused children you did not know.

You have already put into practice our subject this morning, which is intercessory prayer. You stood before the throne of God not for your own needs – but for hers. You stood in the gap in her place. We will end this 10-week series on prayer talking about perhaps the most important thing we can do through prayer – and that is lifting up another soul before God. It is certainly the most selfless thing we can do in prayer. And so we will begin by

examining the biblical background of intercessory prayer, then we will see whom we should be interceding for, and finally we will end with a few points of application.

Background of Intercessory Prayer

Concerning intercessory prayer - in the Old Testament, before Jesus opened access to the Throne of God for everyone, a mediator was needed to make intercession. Normally this was the priest or a prophet, perhaps the king.

For example, do you remember when God sent snakes among the people? [Num. 21:7](#) The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." "You go and talk to God, Moses! For we cannot." Moses interceded – that is he came to God on behalf of not himself – but on behalf of the people.

Once a year the High Priest would go into the Holy and Holies in the tabernacle and later the temple, to stand on behalf of the people before God. And Jesus today (who is the perfect Prophet, Priest and King) continues the ministry on intercessory prayer for you and I. [Rom. 8:34](#) ...Christ Jesus...who also **intercedes** for us. And [Heb. 7:25](#) Jesus is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

I was on a jury trial several years ago, and the young woman who brought the lawsuit never said a word. Her lawyer spoke for her – he pled and made her case to the jury. That is what Moses did for the people of Israel. That is what Jesus does for you and I. We have an advocate on retainer – who argues for our welfare before Almighty God. What a blessing and security that is for us.

And now that Jesus has taken care of our sins – we can come before God – not only to praise Him. Not only to bring our own burdens to him, but like the four friends who brought the paralytic to Christ – we can bear souls to the Lord and pray for them and argue their case before God.

Who do we Intercede For?

Well who do we intercede for? What does the Scripture say about the scope of our prayers of intercessions? What we will see is that we are to pray for those who are close to us, those who are connected to us and those who are distant from us.

Those Close to Us

First we are to pray for those close to us. This is the most natural form of intercessory prayer – of course we want to pray for our children, our spouses, our family members. We pray for our church, our city and our friends. Everything that is within immediate reach. You might remember when Peter was arrested in Acts 12, the church rallied for prayer - [Acts 12:5](#) So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. In response to the church's corporate prayer, Peter was freed by an angel.

Perhaps the most beautiful song written about intercessory prayer for a loved one is from the musical Les Mis. A young man named Marius is wounded in battle and the father of Marius' fiancée intercedes to God on his behalf and prays that God would allow him to live and not die:

“God on high Hear my prayer In my need You have always been there He is young He's afraid Let him rest Heaven blessed. Bring him home. Bring him home. Bring him home.

Dear Lord, on behalf of this one whom I love – work and act! But before we move off of praying for those close to us – remember that who is closer to us than our enemies? They may be at work, in our family or church. Jesus said in Matthew that we are to “pray for those who persecute us.” We are to intercede for those who seek our harm. In a letter to his brother C.S. Lewis mentioned that he prayed every night for the people he was most tempted to hate, with Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini heading the list. This helped him remember that Christ died for them as much as for him, and that other than God’s grace he might have also been a tool of cruelty.

Who are we to intercede for? We are to pray for those close to us – who are within our immediate sphere of influence.

...for those Distant from Us.

Prayer is like a stone dropped into a calm lake. It ripples outward-- we start with those close, but the ripple goes to those further out relationally. The Bible teaches that we are to intercede not only for those close to us – but those distant as well.

And the ripples continue to go outward – we pray not just for our friends, but friends of friends, as we hear about their struggles and needs. We pray not just for family, but for extended family. We intercede before God not just for our city, but our state, nation, and other nations of the world. Not just for our church but for other churches – and the national and global church. We pray not just for our children, but also for their children,

and their children's children – that our prayers have the potential to ripple out 100, 200, 300 years into the future. Such is the power of intercessory prayer.

Jesus gave us the example of this distant rippling prayer in his high priestly prayer in John 17. He began praying for his disciples and then moved his prayer outward praying for all those who would believe in him throughout the generations: [John 17:20](#) “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, [John 17:21](#) that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Are you praying with this kind of scope? Are you praying, though of you with kids, or nieces or nephews for your children's children, and their children. We have prayed for our 3rd year anniversary, and are praying we make it to our 4th year – does anyone dare to pray for our 100th anniversary?

Paul not only prayed for the churches he planted by those planted by others and other places he had never visited. He prayed for individuals by name, but also for entire races of people. Philip Yancey in his excellent book on prayer wrote: “When I bring others before God, I bear in mind that god is present both to me and to the people who whom I am praying. Starting from the center point of God's love, my prayers move outward in widening circles, like ripples in a pond, from those closest to me to those in the distance.” (Yancey, 305).

Application

I hope we are all challenged this morning with the great responsibility and privilege we have to lift up others in prayer – both those close to us and those distant from us. And in

order to do this well, some practical steps will help greatly.

One systematic way to pray for those distant from us, is our 2010 missionary prayer guide. This is what it was designed for! I want to stress again its regular use in your life. If you don't have one, pick one up on the back table on your way out. Put it on the kitchen table by the salt and peppershakers, or in the bathroom. So we can intercede for our missionaries.

Also, just write things down. I have a loose-leaf small notebook that I record prayer requests in. I have a page for each member of my family, each family in our church and missionaries we support. This way I can record requests and answers to prayer over time.

In terms of application for our church, two specific applications come out of this study. First, the elders have decided to start monthly prayer meetings. These were part of our church during the first year or so, and we are refocusing on specific time set-aside for prayer. Second, we are going to continue the blue-prayer cards in the bulletin, and their distribution by God's providence after the service. Everyone who puts in a prayer card receives someone else's request to pray for that week.

Let's now commit these requests and our commitment to pray to the Lord, that this study might have a lasting impact on each one of our church and us.