

Intercession, What Does That Mean?

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Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 0 0] Say one for me Vic. Happens quite a bit really. It's a huge privilege in praying for someone and being asked for prayer for their own situation. What are you praying for earnestly at the moment that isn't about yourself? Praying for others is hugely powerful.

Many years ago I was part of a group of guys from Christchurch who went to a men's worship event in Belfast. Perhaps you're one of those guys that's watching it now. If it hadn't been for my diet I'd have joined in with the pints of Guinness at Bristol airport that were being consumed before we left. It was a great start to an amazing prayer filled weekend with good Christian men over 2,000 of them. Anyway if you were around in the 70s and 80s or know your history you would know that Belfast was a pretty turbulent place. Bombs, shootings, riots, paramilitaries, businesses being disrupted and British soldiers on the street. Some of the front lines in that time were the Crumlin Road, the Shank Hill and the Falls Road. Yet here we were just a few years later a group of men from Christchurch in Clevedon in an open top bus travelling up the Crumlin Road. Stopping at the Crumlin Road jail and then later pausing outside the Sinn Féin headquarters to take pictures. It was sobering but also it was a huge answer to prayer. Because if you'd asked me a few years before in the 80s if I ever thought it would be possible in my lifetime to experience such a transition and freedom to do that I'd probably have doubted your motives. But in amongst that situation had been prayer.

In amongst the politics there had been prayer. In amongst the Good Friday Agreement there had been prayer that brought a new freedom to this place. There was a huge wave of prayer on both sides of the divide and the peace was borne out through the hearts and desires of many and especially the praying women of Northern Ireland. Prayer won through and peace came. Look through history across the world where prayer has changed a nation. You know South Africa with all its horrors and the past of apartheid.

The demolishing of the Berlin Wall and the fall of communism in that place. You know I think it was one communist leader said after that great day you know we planned for everything but we didn't plan for prayer and candles. There is something powerful when we pray and intercede. And with the recent spotlight again being shown into the dark places of our time and our community and culture this morning's reading from Philippians is so powerful. You see we can align ourselves with the character and heart of Jesus who himself was the subject of injustice brutality and murder. He knows these things firsthand and is now with the father interceding for us and with us and if we are in relationship with Jesus then we will know that flow of grace and love humility and power that comes from the father as we intercede.

Now intercession can be quite a churchy word and intercessory prayer is basically asking God for the needs of other people and other situations. It's that simple. It's being like-minded with Jesus, having the same love, being it one in spirit and one in mind, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility, valuing others above ourselves, not looking to our own interests but each of us to the interests of others. It's looking outside of ourselves with humility as we pray for others in their situations, joining in with Jesus and his concerns. You know but I can hear maybe somebody asking well why pray? Surely Jesus knows already about the needs of the world and he does. But I guess it's that relational thing where he says, do you know what, great, I'm really glad Clive that you're praying about this. What should we do about it together? Because often he calls us to be partners and agents of change through prayer and frankly that's awesome and powerful. The hinge is prayer and we are called to intercede. Why? Maybe because we took our eye off the ball. You know maybe we stopped caring about our planet, our country, my neighbourhood, my work colleagues and my friends, my neighbours and in every move of God in this land and especially in revival it has come through people praying for a situation where they brought those desires and needs to him and cried out, Lord heal our land.

[5 : 29] The Welsh revivals at the end of the last century in the beginning of this, do you know what, those stories grip me. Pictures of lights burning in miners cottages at night because people like you and me were awake praying. They were praying for revival, praying for their friends and neighbours and families to come into a living relationship with Jesus and they did in their hundreds. People just spilling out into local chapels, people giving their life to Christ in their hundreds, in open air meetings, in their workplaces. Intercessory prayer is powerful. But how do I do that? Well Pete Gregg in his prayer toolkit has four points and the first point is one get informed. Maybe learn the facts by checking the news or updates about the people or situations that we're praying for. God calls us to be active and informed and certainly not passive. Two, get inspired. What is God saying about this? Invite the Holy Spirit to speak into the situations you're interceding for. There may be a specific area or a significant thing that the

Spirit is saying. Press into that in prayer so it becomes more personal than what can sometimes maybe just feel like a shopping list. Get indignant. You know, this is wrong Lord. There is injustice in this. It doesn't feel good. It's not right. There's a situation at the moment that I'm praying about and I sense a real lack of justice and care. I sense God's not happy and neither am I.

And for you and for us all that maybe could be a world situation like COVID. You know, God knows it's wrong and that can get a bit noisy sometimes in prayer. And why not? As we express our frustration and passion about the situation, we are sharing. Engage your own heart and allow yourself to think and feel honestly as you pray passionately and purposefully. And number four is get in sync.

Engage together. Where two or three are gathered together, it says you might like to engage prayer with others online, on paper, in your family. There may be a specific area on the prayer sheet that Gene distributes where it sort of leaps out at you and together with people in your household or others in your home group that you can be in sync and pray. Maybe that's on a worldwide issue where you pray together. It's good to know that there is a wave of prayer that sweeps and flows across this land.

If people ask where I am on the prayer spectrum, my heart beats with the heart of evangelism. I long to see others and pray for them to come into relationship with Jesus. And that's why intercessory prayer is so important in my life and ministry and for the people that I pray for each day.

[8 : 52] There was a man called Rodney Gypsy Smith. He was a remarkable English evangelist. He was the son of traveller parents and he was radically saved at the age of 16 and in time became a fervent travelling evangelist. His prayer life was marked by one simple activity which became his trademark. And he would start by taking some chalk and he would draw it around himself and pray inside that circle.

When asked what was needed for successful revival, he replied to people, go home, lock yourself in your room, kneel down in the middle of the floor and with a piece of chalk, draw a circle around yourself. There on your knees, pray fervently and brokenly that God would start a revival within that chalk circle. You see, that passion needs to break out in us first.

His evangelistic crusades saw hundreds and thousands of people come to Christ. This week, whether you choose to draw a chalk circle on your hardwood flooring, please ask somebody for permission before you do it, or paint a mental picture of a circle in your mind around yourself whenever you pray. I encourage you this week to intercede.

Get informed, get inspired, get indignant and get in sync with the power and purposes of the Holy Spirit that dwells in you. Let's pray together.

Come Holy Spirit, show us what to pray. Inform us, inspire us and may we stamp on injustice in your name.

[11 : 06] And may our hearts beat as one with yours so that a whole nation, a whole world may be healed. Lord, your kingdom come. Lord, your kingdom come. Amen.