



# Intercessory Prayer Guide

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH SAN ANTONIO

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*Living to Make Jesus Visible*

## INTERCESSORY PRAYER GUIDE

This guide is a condensed version of Prayer Ministry's "Manual for Prayer Intercessors." The guide has been structured for use by every member of the congregation. It offers time-tested guidance and scriptural insights on how to pray more effectively for others in need of prayer.

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We solicit and value your comments on how to improve the guide and make it a more meaningful tool for those seeking to faithfully pray for the welfare of others.

Please send your suggestions to:  
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*"May the God of peace, who through the blood of our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

*Hebrews 13:20-21*

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# INTERCESSORY PRAYER GUIDE

## THE PURPOSE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

**Intercessory prayer is a working partnership with God.** “As such, intercessory prayer is important. Jesus Christ taught it, lived it, and died on the cross for this grace. Intercessory prayer was encouraged in the New Testament as a necessary part of a Christian’s journey of faith. There have been dramatic and supernatural results of intercessions throughout history. Some true and amazing accounts have been authentically documented. The basis of all intercessory prayer is a deep trust in Jesus’ promise that God hears and answers each prayer, and that God’s power is released into human lives through this channel of his grace.” (1)

**Intercessory prayer is not a petition to change God’s mind or to get God to focus on an unknown problem. Nor is it a magical incantation of human needs that require God’s closer attention.** “God already knows what is going on in human lives. He’s always there, waiting for us to recognize his presence and call upon his power to heal within his holy will. While our prayers on behalf of others—offered in humility and trust—are a necessary step, they are not the operative force in healing. Rather, it is God himself and the power of his love in Christ that brings healing. Yet, in the mystery of God’s grace there is a healing power released through the request of one who prays for others. That call for intercession goes to and through God, is multiplied by the love of God in Jesus Christ, and ultimately flows into the life of the person or persons who are the subject of intercession.” (1)

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**Intercessory prayer brings the intercessor into a deeper awareness of God’s presence and healing power.** “Insightful prayers on behalf of others bring the discernment of mind and heart into sharper focus, enabling . . . the intercessor . . . to see more clearly the design of God’s love and to accept the wisdom of God’s holy will.” Offering prayers for others is truly a holy process. Prayer opens up a stream of grace with its resultant “strength, worth, love and peace that flows from the believing intercessor through God and into the life of the person or persons in need.” In essence, when we offer a prayer of intercession, we “pray ourselves into the center of God’s will as revealed to us in Jesus Christ.” (1)

**Intercessory prayer involves a sense of cooperation.** “As Saint Augustine stated: ‘Without God, we cannot; without us, God will not.’ God waits for our cooperation before his will is done in many situations. Sure, God wills wholeness and happiness for everyone; but, we must accept our role in the healing of our own brokenness and that of others. This is often at great personal cost to us, and is done through a faith and a love that is demanding in its discipline. Jesus went to the cross. He did not choose the most convenient way to heal mankind—nor can we, if we are to be like Christ.” (1)

### **THE CALL AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAYER INTERCESSORS**

**The Call of an Intercessor.** “Intercessory prayer is a priestly ministry, and one of the most challenging teachings in the New Testament is the universal priesthood of all Christians. As priests, appointed and anointed by God, we have the honor of going before the Most High on behalf of others. (1)

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This is not optional, it is a sacred obligation—and a precious privilege—of all who take up the yoke of Christ.” (2) “God needs people he can talk to and who will listen to him; in turn they need to discern his will, Word and Spirit, and be sensitive to the material and spiritual needs of the world.” (1)

**Characteristics of an Intercessor.** Intercession is not a take it or leave it proposition. When it is fully understood as a call from God, “intercession asks for surrender to God, persistence and patience, self-discipline, sensitivity to the needs of others, and penetrating self-examination.” Though the call can be challenging and even costly, “the spiritual rewards for the individual and the church are beyond price.” (1)

**“First of all, an intercessor must be willing to surrender self to God—heart, mind, soul and strength.** That is the first great commandment for an intercessor. God cannot use us if we are ‘half-hearted or half-souled.’ And he cannot use us if we are ‘half-sold’ on the truth of the gospel either. We need to believe fervently in the cause for which we are praying, in God’s ability to meet the deepest of needs, and in the necessity of our commitment to the ‘neighbor’ for whom we are praying.” (1)

That’s the second commandment for an intercessor: ‘To love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.’ “None of us lives a perfect life. We all are sinners. However, we should be reaching toward perfection; conscious of God’s calling us toward that goal. As we come before God and stand before our neighbor, let it be as forgiven and forgiving sinners.” (1)

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“With that mindset, an intercessor is tuned to God’s channel of truth and grace, conscious of what God desires, open to and informed by the Holy Spirit in one’s heart and mind, and a student of God’s Word.” (1)

**“Secondly, an intercessor needs great persistence and patience.** A large part of faithfulness is persistence—continuing in prayer ‘in season and out of season.’ Persistence enables us to pray regularly, whether you are ‘up or down, whether you feel like praying or not.’ The truth even for a dedicated intercessor is that there will be stormy periods in life when prayer for others comes hard, and you cannot seem to get into the act of intercession. In these dry times, keep on praying—for God is listening and responding the same as ever.

With persistence comes patience and with patience comes trust in God. Though you may not see an observable answer to your intercessions, keep on praying. This is especially true in prayers for the salvation of a loved one or the healing of relationships. Patience and trust cause us to keep on praying.” (1)

**“Thirdly, an intercessor must be open to the needs of others.** Not only does an intercessor need to be tuned in to God’s will, but the eyes and ears of one’s heart must sense the needs of others—expressed and unexpressed. Some requests for prayers are clearly stated, while others require the leading of the Holy Spirit to help you assess their true need. It is important at all times to allow the Spirit to direct your mind and heart to pertinent prayer, and to stay alert and open to the needs around you. Most of all, view the world with the mind, heart and eyes of Christ.” (1)

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**“Fourthly, being a prayer intercessor requires self-discipline.** Quite simply, the spiritual and personal life of an intercessor depends on discipline. Performing this ministry comes not only out of duty or necessity, but also out of love—in grateful obedience for what God has done for us. The discipline of prayer can be enhanced by these actions:

Meditate on God’s Word and do so with diligence and a willing spirit. Scripture is one of the main sources of God’s messages to us. Not only will we see the relevance of scripture to our intercessory prayer life, but God’s Word also informs our own personal prayers and guides our everyday life.

Relaxation is an important part of the discipline of meditation. Relaxing is an art which needs practice. (Deep-breathing and walking are two useful examples.) Develop your own style of relaxing and perfect it. As you use it consistently, you will experience a greater closeness to God through prayer.

Establish a regular time for intercession and adhere to it, as much as possible. If others are living with you, ask them to help you be faithful to your intercessory call. Carefully pick a time and place that will offer the least chance of interruption, and learn to block out any negative internal and external stimuli. Once a time is established, stick to it. This discipline will help you overcome the many everyday distractions that would otherwise draw you away from prayer.” (1)

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**“Lastly, the hearts and minds of effective intercessors need to be pure and free of bitterness.** God’s Spirit cannot be at home in a heart cluttered with hate or envy, or lives soiled by sins not repented. Self-examination is critically important for intercessors to first get right with God before we come to him in prayer. Scripture reminds us that sin-stained hands lifted in prayer by an unrepentant ‘pray-er’ cannot be tolerated by God.”

When we seek forgiveness for our own brokenness, and when we believe and pray under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit, God has promised to hear our prayers. “As Christians, we believe in a God who, above all things, is a God of love. That love for us is infinitely greater than any earthly parent has ever shown to a child. God’s love never lets us go. It passes all human understanding. And, while our prayers do not always result in the removal of difficulties for others or ourselves, when offered in humility and faith they always bring victory over those difficulties through the all surpassing love, wisdom and power of God.”  
(1)

### **SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES ON PREPARING FOR INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

**The following scriptural truths are representative of the love and promises of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ.** They represent a small portion of the many truths which provide a sustaining resource for prayer intercessors.

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*“You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”*

John 15:16

*“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”*

John 14:11-14

*“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”*

John 15:7-8

*“For nothing is impossible with God.”*

Luke 1:37

*“Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’”*

Luke 18:27

**In preparing to pray for others, it is important for us to prepare ourselves by confessing our sins to the Lord Jesus, asking for forgiveness and forgiving anyone that may have sinned against us. It is also necessary to seek God’s protection from any evil influence, and that he bind any forces of evil from ourselves and those we are praying for. It is always best to prepare through pre-prayer!**

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*“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 'For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Matthew 6:12-15

**Jesus has given the church—the body of Christ—the power to bind evil forces and to pronounce forgiveness in his name.**

*“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Matthew 16:18

*“And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”*

John 20:22-23

*“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

Mark 11:25

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Ephesians 6:10-12

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*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 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 saints.”*

Ephesians 6:13-18

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## SAMPLE INTERCESSORY PRAYER SESSION

**We suggest the following steps for an intercessory prayer session;** however, it is not necessary that each step be carried out in order.

1. If you do not receive the e-mail version of church prayer requests, call the Care and Concern Line (C&CL) at 222-2273 and receive the recorded prayer requests. Take sufficient notes so that you have all the details on each request. If necessary, initiate the repeat function on the C&CL. Often you may be given a prayer request directly from the individual or through another person. In many cases, however, the only information available to you may be the recorded prayer request on the C&CL. Pray then as you understand the request.

2. Find your quiet place of prayer where hopefully you will not be disturbed.

3. Pray for God's anointing by the Holy Spirit for you and those for whom you will be praying.

4. Pray in the powerful name of Jesus that he bind all the forces of evil from you and those for whom you will be praying.

5. Give thanks to God that we as intercessors have the privilege of coming into his presence with our petitions for others.

**NOTE:** Members may also use the C&CL to offer prayer requests for themselves or someone else (with that person's permission). Follow the menu options to leave a request.

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6. Begin going through the individual prayer requests.

a. Try to imagine the person or persons you are praying for even though you may not know them.

b. Review the individual prayer request. Let the Holy Spirit give you a mental picture of the situation so that you are guided in your prayers

c. Have an expectancy that God knows the situation and that he will answer these prayers.

### **EXAMPLES OF PRAYER NEEDS AND WAYS TO PRAY**

(limited and not in priority order):

#### **Prayers for the church:**

If prayers are for the church, thank God for the body of Christ here at First Presbyterian and for our facilities that the saints before us have provided. Pray for our members, our pastors, our staff, the elders, the deacons, the Stephen Ministers, and all our committees, organizations and activities. Pray that all will be guided by God's Holy Spirit. Pray that God's Word will be declared in truth and power. Pray that the congregation will open its heart to the Word and increase in the knowledge of Jesus, God's Son, as Savior and Lord to the glory of God. Pray that the light of Christ will shine out from First Presbyterian into our community with love, joy, peace, compassion and kindness.

Finally, pray that the church will be strong in the Lord and stand firm as it struggles against the devil's schemes, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

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### Prayers for families and personal life:

If prayers are for healing, be as specific as the Holy Spirit shows you. Come against fever, infection, disease, etc. If surgery has been performed, then pray for a complete and accelerated recovery. Give them strength to do the necessary rehabilitation work. Call down the Lord's peace and love to surround the patient and his/her family. Pray for wise, skilled and compassionate healthcare providers.

If prayers involves someone terminally ill, pray that God's peace might be known by the person and his/her family. In such cases, God's healing may not include a miraculous recovery but rather receiving the ultimate gift of victory beyond human death. Pray for peace, comfort and understanding among family members who struggle with accepting God's healing that takes their loved one. Pray for wise, skilled and compassionate healthcare providers.

If prayers are for broken relationships, pray for God to speak to the hearts of those involved. Pray for them to be able to ask for forgiveness and to forgive the wrongs committed. Pray especially for reconciliation if at all possible.

If prayers are for a substance addiction, then pray for the individual that he/she might know that Jesus has broken the bondage to all sin (addictions), and that they can be freed by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Pray for the family and friends that they would not be enablers, but would be strong in the faith of the Lord to redeem.

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If prayers are for a person to come to salvation through Jesus, pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal Jesus to that person in such a way that they would receive him as Lord and Savior.

If the request is for a blessing, then pray that God will bless them in any activity they undertake.

If prayers are for grief situations, pray for God's compassion, love and peace to minister to the family and friends. Pray for support from the church.

### **Prayers for national life and governments:**

If the request is about our national life, confess the sins of our nation. Pray for the President and the administration, the Congress, and the judicial parts of government. Pray for the state, county and city governments. Pray that God will give all government officials wisdom and knowledge from above.

### **Prayers for the military:**

If prayers are requested for our military, then pray for the safety of each one and that God would somehow use them to show love and compassion to those they encounter. Pray for their families. Pray for godly and supportive leaders and chaplains who will minister to each service person.

### **Prayers for thanksgiving:**

If the request is for thanksgiving, then praise God for whatever has been accomplished in answer to previous prayers.

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### **Prayers for the mission field and missionaries:**

If prayers are requested for the mission field, pray that the Holy Spirit will guide each mission worker, open doors of opportunity for them, empower their words and witness, and open the ears and minds of those who hear the gospel. Pray that missionaries will proclaim the gospel clearly and understandably so that unbelievers' minds and hearts will be opened.

Pray also that all missionaries and their families will be constantly encouraged and sustained by the Holy Spirit and fellow Christians. Pray that all their needs will be provided. Pray for their safety and protection; especially pray that they will be delivered from any evil attacks.

### **Prayers for the media:**

If praying for the media, pray that they will be guided by God's will, and that God will send the Holy Spirit to speak to the minds of those reporting the news in any media so that they will be convicted to report only the truth.

Pray especially that Christians who are in the media will be empowered to expose any false or half-truths, and empowered to disseminate truth in all areas that they report. Pray also that non-Christians and anti-Christians in the media will be transformed by God's truth.

Pray for world, national, state and local events as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

### **Other prayers as requested.**

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### Closing your prayers.

When you have completed the list of prayer requests, mention each name again and thank God that he has heard these prayers and is going to answer them according to his will.

You have been faithful to intercede for the prayer request. It is not your job to carry the burden of these requests. Jesus is the one who will carry these burdens; in fact, he has already done it. Release them to Jesus. If they do come back to your mind, thank Jesus that these requests are in his hands.

**As the Spirit leads you, pray a releasing prayer.** An example follows: “Lord Jesus, thank you for sharing your wonderful ministry of intercessory prayer of love, healing, and blessing with me. I release any feelings of sadness, negative thinking, or other burdens I may have received during this time of prayer. Come Holy Spirit, renew me, fill me anew with your power, life and joy. By your Spirit minister to me and protect me from all harm. I praise you now and forever, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

### THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN INTERCESSORY PRAYER

**The Holy Spirit has promised to be in us and to guide us in our prayers.**

*"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."*

John 14:15-17

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*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8

*“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 with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”*

Romans 8:26-27

*“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 saints.”*

Ephesians 6:18

*“. . .for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”*

Matthew 10:20

### **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH TO EFFECTIVE INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

**As intercessors, we must have deep faith and trust in God's ability to answer the prayers we make as we intercede for others. Scripture helps us in this regard:**

*“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”*

Matthew 17:20b

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*“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’”*  
Mark 10:27

**Our faith is in God and in his promise of our resurrection from the dead and eternal life in Jesus the Christ.**

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this!’”*  
John 11:25-26

*“We live by faith, not by sight.”* 2 Corinthians 5:7

**Lastly, as you pray, trust in the Lord with all your heart, and:**

*“May the God of peace, who through the blood of our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

Hebrews 13:20-21

### Footnotes:

1. Intercessory Prayer: A Working Partnership with God. A Manual for Intercessors. Robert E. McPherson. San Antonio, Texas. Third Printing, 1993.
2. Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. Richard Foster. Harper Collins. San Francisco, California. Third Printing, 1998.