

WE ASK

“There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him.”

- William Law

THE LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 1

“Intercession” is the word we use to describe our prayers asking God’s help for others and for our world. While we are always invited to bring our own needs to the Father, we are also instructed to consider the needs of others. The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, wrote, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people”.

We always want to pray in accordance with God’s will. That doesn’t mean we wait to be perfect – or to have a perfect understanding – before we pray (or no one would ever do it!), but it does mean we should work at knowing God and seeking his guidance when we make our intercessions. The Book of Common Prayer includes a section called “Prayers and Thanksgivings” (page 37), which is packed with prayers that can help us when we struggle to find the words to pray. And if we’re feeling unsure about whether we’re praying in accordance with God’s will, we can close our prayer with the words, “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22: 42).

Scripture tells us to be persistent in prayer. Our prayers are not always answered immediately. God sometimes answers our petitions with “wait”. And of course, sometimes God’s answer is “no”. Even Jesus received a “no”, when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane to be spared what was about to come. If we take Jesus as an example, we will struggle through all of these matters in prayer – everything and anything on our hearts – knowing that our loving God will answer, even if it is an answer we find difficult at the time.

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The Apostle Paul wrote many of the letters that can be found in the New Testament, including the letter to the Philippians (which we’ll look at in a moment). He often began his letters with a prayer of thanksgiving or intercession, which gives us a window into how he prayed.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Think about someone that you can pray for each day this week, “holding them in your heart”, as Paul did with the Philippians. Take five minutes each day, firstly to seek God’s guidance in how to pray for this person and then to bring them before him. Feel free to use one of the “Prayers and Thanksgivings” from the BCP (pages 37-61) to help focus your prayer. (You may also find the family prayers helpful, see pages 731-736).

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O Loving Father, we commend to thy gracious keeping all who are near and dear to us. Have mercy upon any who are sick, and comfort those who are in pain, anxiety, or sorrow. Awaken all who are careless about eternal things. Bless those who are young and in health, that they may give the days of their strength unto thee. Comfort the aged and infirm, that thy peace may rest upon them. Hallow the ties of kindred that we may help, and not hinder, one another in all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. (PRAYER FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, BCP PAGE 732)

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PHILIPPIANS 1: **I HOLD YOU IN MY HEART**

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.