

The Importance of Intercession Prayer for the Global Church

These past couple of weeks, our hearts have been broken as we've watched the news and all that's going on in Afghanistan. The terrorist attack by the airport gate resulting in the deaths of U.S. military soldiers and many others trying to flee the country brought deep sorrow to our hearts.

As I have been processing my own heaviness over the situation, I have felt the Holy Spirit reminding me of the importance of intercession, especially for the believers living in Afghanistan. Many of them and their children will be targeted by the Taliban. Their faith in Jesus Christ will cost them dearly. What is our responsibility to these believers? I believe the Lord is calling those of us here in the West who enjoy more freedom to deeper levels of intercession. We are part of the global body of Christ. When one part of the body of Christ is suffering, we all suffer with them and we need to intercede on their behalf.

The apostle Paul instructed the church in Thessalonica to, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We all have so much going on that it's easy to pray without ceasing for our own health needs, financial needs, for our children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors. However, I believe we are to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering for their faith. We don't know their names, but we lift them up to our Savior who knows each of them intimately and calls them by name.

On the night before Jesus died, He prayed passionately for His bride. He interceded to the Father on our behalf, crying out, "I in them and You in Me" (John 17:23). In other words, every

believer is tucked in Christ, and Christ is united with God the Father. This means we are all family. We are from different cultures and tribal backgrounds; we have different skin color, but we are all one body. I believe as one body that we need to be interceding right now for our brothers and sisters in Christ in Afghanistan.

So, What Should We Pray?

Pray for the strength to stand strong. Paul wrote that Epaphras continually wrestled in prayer, interceding that the believers in the Colossian church would “stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Col. 4:12, NIV). I believe we need women and men of God who will rise up in the spirit of Epaphras and intercede passionately for suffering believers around the world.

Pray that their love for each other would increase. Paul prayed for the believers in Thessalonica, that their love would increase and overflow for each other (1 Thess. 3:12). One thing that church history has proven to us is that whenever there is persecution, the love between believers grows. We need to pray this for the church in Afghanistan, that believers will be united in love as they face the suffering that is coming.

Pray that they would be filled with hope, joy and peace. Paul prayed for the believers living in Rome who would also face persecution; that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace as they trusted in Him so they would overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13). It's not humanly possible to have hope, joy and peace in the face of suffering. This is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why I think it is so essential for us as the body of Christ to surround the Afghan believers in prayer.

And, as we are praying for the Afghan believers, let's also pray that Jesus would come in visions and dreams to the

Taliban and draw many to Himself. Steve and I have had the privilege of meeting other terrorists who have come to Christ in this way. So, pray with me that Jesus would draw members high up in the Taliban to Christ.

Friends, I know you have a lot going on in your personal lives, but will you dare to join me in praying and interceding for the believers in the persecuted church?{eoa}

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