

The Transforming Power of Intercession

Every one of us has the opportunity to affect the course of history in his or her lifetime. Every time an intercessor prays effectively for a nation, God's hand is moved. When this happens, the greatest forces of power in the universe are mobilized, and history is made. Intercessors praying regularly and effectively for the nations become some of the greatest history-shapers of all time.

As we pray for the nations of the world, it is important to understand that our main focus needs to be on the body of Christ in those nations. God has shaped history around His people, and He expects us—not governments—to shape the history of the nations (see 2 Chron. 7:14).

As we cooperate with God in shaping history, God reshapes us. We can expect to be purified and changed. Ask Him to utterly control you by His Spirit, receive by faith that He does, and thank Him.

It is only as the Holy Spirit is given access to pray through our cleansed, yielded, Spirit-controlled lives that we will become and remain effective intercessors. Power in prayer is released in purity.

We need to be encouraged that the more we let God work *on* us, the more the power of His Spirit will be released to work *through* us as we pray for others. God is preparing His church that Christ might “present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy” (Eph. 5:27,25-26, NIV).

Purity and power are synonymous with God. We need to check our

lives with each point we pray to make sure we're living what we're praying. If we're not, then repentance will qualify us to become effective. Remember: It's the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person that prevails (see James 5:16).

Prayer Strategies

The following prayer strategies will help you to intercede effectively for the nations:

1. Thank and praise God for who He is and for the privilege of cooperating with Him in this exciting ministry. Then thank Him for what He's already done in the nations to which He has directed us.

2. Pray for an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival power to come upon God's people. Isaiah gives us one of the most powerful prayers for revival that we can pray: "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence! When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, the mountains shook at Your presence" (Is. 64:1-3, NKJV).

True revival is God greatly stirring, shaking, and changing His people from apathy, selfishness and self-promotion to a repentant, humble, fervently praying and praising people—people with a passion for God and His glory, and a far greater burden for the lost. A spiritual awakening among the lost follows, resulting in a great harvest of souls coming into the kingdom of God.

We need to pray for God to stir His people in each nation to see the vision for revival, to be aware of the desperate need for it and to know that it has no substitute. We need to pray that God's people will intercede persistently for revival, be prepared for it and be ready to be used in it. We must believe

God's promises to send worldwide revival as we persist in prayer (see Is. 61:11).

3. Pray for God to unite the body of Christ. According to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:23, unity is the greatest factor to influence the lost to commit their lives to Christ. Pray for God to convict His people of the pride and prejudice that separates them and to give them the realization that without unity they will suffer defeat (see). Pray for God to release a spirit of humility that will convince us of our desperate need for one another.

God is requiring Christian leaders worldwide to take the lead in humbling themselves in acts of identificational repentance, confessing the sins of our forefathers where divisions have originated and asking for forgiveness. The Holy Spirit is breaking down centuries-old barriers that have divided many people groups relationally. Wherever there are divisions in the body of Christ, reconciliation must take place and the biblical standards of unity must be upheld before the glory of God is manifest on God's people as promised (see John 17:22).

Pray that the body of Christ will encourage, support and intercede for one another, be willing to work together, and above all learn from one another.

4. Humble yourself before God and acknowledge that the body of Christ in our nation deserves judgment because of idolatry, apathy, disobedience to revealed truth and the spirit of the world that pervades it. We need to identify with the sins of the people of God as Nehemiah did and substitute the name of our nation for Israel:

"Let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses” (Neh. 1:6-7).

Cry out to God for mercy. In His time, as we persist and prevail in prayer, results are assured (see Hab. 3:2-6).

5. Pray for leaders. First, pray for God to raise up spiritual leaders from the five ministries mentioned in Eph. 4:11, and pray that they will be men and women of integrity who will fear the Lord and operate according to His character and ways. Pray that leaders will be given national and international vision related to the extension of God’s kingdom (see Prov. 29:18).

Then pray for present national leadership, according to 1 Tim. 2:1-2. Accept God’s sovereign purpose in having placed leaders in authority, and pray for them with a loving heart, believing that God is working.

It is important also to pray that God will promote righteous leaders and put them in positions of authority and influence in the church, the government, the judicial system, the educational system, business and commerce, the medical profession, the media, sports, the arts, and entertainment.

6. Pray that the Word of God will be given its rightful place as the basis for the formation of just laws and as the standard for moral values and behavior. Pray that the spiritual heads of homes will take their places of responsibility by teaching their children from the Bible and having family worship together. Pray that the Bible will be translated, published and distributed in the language of every people group and that it will be read daily, understood, believed and obeyed (see Ps. 119:130).

7. Pray that God will stir His people to see that obedience is the key to the Christian life.

Ask Him to motivate us to make His priorities our priorities so that we:

- * Live a life of worship that becomes the basis of everything we do.

- * Spend time alone with God in intercession for others; in getting to know God by studying His character and ways from His Word; and in waiting on God for His directions.

- * Have a burdened heart for the lost that will motivate us to witness, and expect to lead people to the Lord Jesus. If we're not witnessing when the Holy Spirit prompts us, we're not following Jesus (see Matt. 4:19).

- * See the need to fulfill the conditions of being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Ask God to reveal that the above priorities are possible only as God's commands are obeyed and that all our service is powerless and ineffective without His endowment (see Eph. 5:18).

8. Pray for the fear of the Lord to permeate all believers because the fear of the Lord means to hate evil (see Prov. 8:13). Pray that a passion for holiness will grip the hearts of God's people as it did the early church. Purity of life is essential for sustained power, which operates when applied to human need (see 2 Cor. 7:1).

9. Pray for children and youth.

- * That they'll be given a chance to be born, hear the gospel and respond.

- * That God will raise up children and youth ministries in increasing numbers.

- * That the young will be taught about the character and ways of God.

* That God will bring revival among them.

* That deliverance and healing will come to the many abused and neglected children.

* That God will sovereignly reveal Himself to young people and that they'll know He loves them and cares about their pain.

10. Pray for God to thrust forth laborers from every nation into the whitened harvest fields of the world. Prayer is still the greatest recruiting force for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Pray that the realization will come to every believer that the mandate to "go to the nations" has been given without exception. Therefore, everyone should expect to be sent and needs God's grace to stay, should God clearly direct.

11. Ask God to stir spiritual leaders to teach people from the Bible about their need to be involved with the poor and needy. A number of Scriptures command our involvement with hurting people and warn us of God's judgment if we disobey (see Prov. 21:13).

12. Pray for a great spiritual awakening to come upon the unconverted, motivating them to seek God. Ask for unrighteous leaders in positions of authority and influence to be saved. Then pray for the most unlikely people to be converted. Ask God to name any specific person or group in this category, and pray for them as He directs. Pray that radically real converts will be the result, and that powerful national and international ministries will emerge.

13. Ask God to name the major principalities over the nations and cities, and wage spiritual warfare as directed by the Holy Spirit.

14. Finish by praising God, declaring faith in His promise in Psalm 102:15-16. Proclaim the purpose of your intercession: that "...all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the

Lord God, You alone" (2 Kings 19:19).

Finally, be persistent. Continue to intercede; don't ever let up. "If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again" (Is. 21:12, NIV). The nations will be changed, and so will you.

Joy Dawson is recognized internationally as an author, Bible teacher and leader in the areas of the character and ways of God. Her other books include Intimate Friendship With God (Chosen Books) and Some of the Ways of God in Healing (YWAM Publishing). Excerpted from a chapter in Intercession, Thrilling and Fulfilling by Joy Dawson, copyright 1997. Published by YWAM Publishing. Used by permission.