

# UNDERSTANDING PRAYER

## Lesson Four

Introduction: For several lessons we have talked about the necessity of prayer and how we are the Lord's representatives on earth. We carry out His orders as we pray for people and situations. Now, we look at the actual ministry of intercession (praying for others).

Look at Luke 11:5-8. Put yourself into this text in the place of the man, who has an unexpected guest show up at his home after bedtime. He has nothing to offer. What does he do when the visitor refuses to go away?

He intercedes; that is, he goes to someone else, whom he knows can provide the necessary resources. Intercession means to meet with one person for the benefit of another person. We see that in Luke 11:5-8. The host with no resources goes to his neighbor and pleads boldly and persistently until he receives what he needs for the benefit of the unexpected man at his door. He is a go-between.

The go-between speaks to the neighbor, who has much, on behalf of the man who has nothing. And, the man, who has much, responds to the need for the benefit of the man, who has nothing. The result? The hunger of the man (who has nothing to eat) is satisfied.

As we pray for people, and specifically for the spiritual lost people around us, we become intercessors. We are go-betweens for them before our Heavenly Father. They need the Lord, the Bread of Heaven. And, the Great Intercessor, Jesus, authorizes us to speak in His name on their behalf. What an awesome privilege!

Jesus is the Great Intercessor. Read 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 8:34, and Hebrews 7:24-27. The Greek word for intercession here means "to meet with in order to speak up on behalf of another person."

Through His perfect life in our place, and being punished for our disobedience, Jesus created a meeting place between God and people. God's mercy triumphed over His judgment. Jesus has opened the way back to God for us. Now our Lord desires to bring that reconciliation with other people through our prayers. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. The Lord Jesus gave us the Great Commission AFTER He died and rose from death. And, just before giving the Commission, notice what He says in Matthew 28:18. Immediately after those words, He says, "Going, make disciples, baptizing...teaching..." And, then notice carefully how He concludes that Commission in Matt. 28:20.

- What is the promise?

Look at Matthew 9:1-6 and Matthew 10:1-9, and see how Jesus sends out people then and us today. As we go before Him, preparing the way for His entry into the hearts and lives of people, who don't know Him, He gives us the same authority that He did to the 12 and the 70. Notice what the 70 say, and what Jesus says, when they report back to Him in Matthew 10:17-20.

- What's the "A- word that Jesus uses in v.19? And, notice how that "A-word" is exercised in v.17, "Even the demons are subject to us in \_\_\_\_\_." We are operating not on our own, but under His command. We represent Him before the Lord on behalf of people, and before people on behalf of the Lord.

Look at Ephesians 1:15-23 and particularly verses 21 and 23. The lost need the Lord in this life and in eternity. Without Him in this life, they are dealing with life totally on their own. If you have ever seen a chicken right after its head is chopped off, you have an idea what it is like to live without knowing the Lord. They are living out from under and separated from our Lord. He alone knows how to make life work, and is able to deal with the spiritual forces working against every human being on earth.

- According to the Ephesians passage above, for whom is Paul praying?
- If he is praying for them, do the lost need the same intercessory prayer?
- Do they too need the eyes of their understanding opened?

The lost need what only the Lord can give to them. And, the Lord chooses to give His good gifts in response to the intercessory prayers of His people. That's where you and I enter the picture. Think of yourself as the "friend-in-the-middle to the Lord's lost and hurting world.

Let's look at some examples of how intercessory prayer makes a difference in witnessing to non-Christians. A congregation did an experiment to see if prayer really makes a difference. 160 names were chosen from a phone book. 80 names were assigned to congregation members to pray for them daily to be open to the Gospel. The other 80 names were not assigned and no one prayed for them. After 90 days of prayer for the assigned names, they called and asked all 160 names if someone could come to their doorstep (not to come into the person's home, nor to invite them to join the church) and pray with them about any needs. Of those 80, who were prayed for, 69 said YES! Of those, who were not prayed for, 1 (yes, that's right, just one) said YES!

- What's your conclusion from that experiment? Does persistent prayer for the lost make a difference?
- Who in your family, congregation, work place, school, or neighborhood is like the friend, who came at midnight (Luke 11:5-8)
- What kind of help do they need that is beyond your ability?
- Are you willing to pray for them regularly so that they can receive from the Lord what they need?

So, what do we pray for the lost, those who do not believe in Jesus as their Savior and the only way of salvation?

- That the Heavenly Father will draw them to Jesus. John 6:44.
- Pray that those who hear the Gospel will understand it. Matthew 13:18-23. Ephesians 1:15-18. Luke 24:45. Luke 24:27, 32. 2 Corinthians 3:14, 15; 4:3-4. 1 Corinthians 2:11-14. We pray for their understanding to be opened because we know it is the will of the Lord for them to be saved. 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9. And, the Lord makes a promise to us about His will for people: 1 John 5:14-15.
- Pray that the unbeliever's eyes will be opened so that he/she can see the Light (Jesus).  
You are encouraged to: Make a list of at least 5-6 people you know that do not yet know Jesus. Pray for them daily and that God would lead you to those He would and that the Holy Spirit will use you to share Jesus with them. Rejoice, God will answer!

