

The Lost Art of Intercession: **Rediscovering the Power of Praying for Others**

**A BIBLE STUDY AND
REFLECTION GUIDE**



Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

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About Us

At FHLM, we are dedicated to nurturing faith, fostering hope, and spreading love. We provide both spiritual and practical guidance to Christians, students, and Christian leaders. We are not a church, and we do not offer financial support.

We are a small ministry with a simple hope: to put warm, thoughtful, Bible-centred resources into the hands of anyone who wants to grow closer to Jesus — whether you are gathering a group around a kitchen table or sitting quietly with a cup of tea and an open Bible. Everything we make is offered freely, in the hope that it will be a blessing and passed on.

Core Values

Our mission is grounded in the values of unconditional love and unity. We prioritise inclusion and diversity over dogmatism and division, reaching out to people right where they are, and trying our best to follow the example of Jesus.

Contents

This guide is organised into three main sections:

- Leaders Guide
- Bible Study Notes
- Worksheet

Note

This guide is formatted for double-sided printing, to save paper and make for a nicer reading experience.

Stay in Touch

We would love to keep walking alongside you. Explore our growing library of Bible study and reflection guides, and do get in touch to let us know how you are getting on.

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Leader's Guide

The Lost Art of Intercession: Rediscovering the Power of Praying for Others

Introduction for Leaders and Solo Readers

Dear Leaders and Solo Readers,

Welcome to “The Lost Art of Intercession: Rediscovering the Power of Praying for Others,” from all of us at Faith, Hope, and Love Ministries. Whether you are leading a group or reflecting on your own, we are so glad you are here. In a world that so often turns us inward, these ten sessions invite us to look outward again — to rediscover the quiet, powerful practice of praying for others.

Each session explores a different facet of intercession and the love that fuels it, and you should feel free to make this guide your own — rearrange the sessions, linger where one is landing, trim a discussion that isn’t. The material is a starting point, not a script. The suggested prayers, too, are simply there to help you begin; pray them as they stand, or from your own heart.

We have laid out the sessions to fit on a single, double-sided page — Scripture and notes on one side, discussion and reflection questions on the other — so they are easy to photocopy and hand round. You can find out more about us, or say hello, at <https://fhlm.org>, or on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

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A word on Scripture: the verses in this guide are taken from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), used with kind permission. Please read along in whichever translation you love best — we are not endorsing any single one.

Our prayer is that, through this study, intercession would become less a lost art and more a living habit — a joyful way of loving your neighbour on your knees.

In Christ’s service,

Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

Session 1: Introduction

Opening Prayer:

"Dear Lord, as we gather to explore the lost art of intercession, we invite Your Holy Spirit to guide us. Open our hearts and minds to Your wisdom. Amen."

Key Scripture:

James 5:16 (BSB) "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail."

Supplementary Scripture:

- 1 Timothy 2:1 (BSB) "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone."
- Acts 12:5 (BSB) "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was fervently praying to God for him."

Discussion Points:

1. What Intercession Is:

- How would you describe intercessory prayer — praying on behalf of others — in your own words?
- What does 1 Timothy 2:1 suggest about how central praying for others should be?

2. The Power of Praying for Others:

- How does James 5:16 encourage you about the effect of a righteous person's prayer?
- What does Peter's rescue through the church's prayer (Acts 12:5) show us about praying together?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will gain a foundational sense of what intercession is and why it matters — a form of love in action, standing in the gap for others before God.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, as we conclude this introduction, we ask for Your guidance in the discussions that follow. Help us to become better intercessors. Amen."

Session 2: The Shift from 'We' to 'Me'

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, as we consider community versus individualism, grant us discernment to understand Your design for us as one body. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Galatians 6:2 (BSB) "Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Supplementary Scripture:

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (BSB) "The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink. For the body does not consist of one part, but of many."

Discussion Points:

1. A Culture Turned Inward:

- How has the culture around us shifted from a focus on "we" to a focus on "me"?
- What has that shift cost us — in society, and within the church?

2. Carrying One Another:

- What does Galatians 6:2 ask of us, and how might we live it out?
- How does the picture of one body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-14) counter a me-centred faith?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will feel afresh the importance of community in the Christian life — that we are members of one another, called to carry each other's burdens.

Closing Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, may the insights we've gained stir us to be more community-minded in our walk with You. Amen."

Session 3: The Prosperity Gospel

Opening Prayer:

"Dear God, as we consider prosperity and faith, guide us to discern what aligns with Your Word and what does not. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Malachi 3:10 (BSB) "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this, says the LORD of Hosts. See if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you blessing without measure."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Matthew 6:19–21 (BSB) "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Discussion Points:

1. Blessing, Rightly Understood:

- How does the prosperity gospel differ from the Bible's teaching on wealth and blessing?
- How does the Bible itself define "blessing," and where does stewardship fit in?

2. Where Our Treasure Is:

- What are the risks of making material blessing the main point of faith?
- How does Matthew 6:19–21 reorder what we treasure — and why does it matter where our heart rests?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will be able to tell the difference between the Bible's teaching on blessing and the distortions of the prosperity gospel — and to seek God's kingdom first.

Closing Prayer:

"Lord, guide us to seek Your kingdom first, trusting that all else will be added unto us. Amen."

Session 4: The Danger of Self-Centred Faith

Opening Prayer:

"Father God, as we consider self-centred faith, help us to examine our hearts and align our desires with Yours. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Matthew 16:24 (BSB) "Then Jesus told His disciples, 'If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'"

Supplementary Scripture:

- Philippians 2:3-4 (BSB) "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Discussion Points:

1. When Faith Turns Inward:

- What are the dangers of making faith all about "me"?
- How can a self-centred approach quietly hinder our spiritual growth?

2. Denying Self, Serving Others:

- What does Jesus mean by "deny himself and take up his cross" (Matthew 16:24)?
- How does Philippians 2:3-4 reshape the way we hold our own interests and others'?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will recognise the pitfalls of a self-centred faith and the freedom of a life turned outward — towards God and towards others.

Closing Prayer:

"Lord, may we always seek to put You and others before ourselves, living out the true meaning of discipleship. Amen."

Session 5: The Command to Love

Opening Prayer:

"Dear Lord, as we consider the cornerstone of our faith, which is love, fill our hearts with Your love, so that we may love as You have loved us. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Matthew 22:37-39 (BSB) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

Supplementary Scripture:

- 1 John 4:7-8 (BSB) "Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Discussion Points:

1. Love God, Love Neighbour:

- What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- How are love for God and love for neighbour (Matthew 22:37-39) bound together?

2. Love in Practice:

- 1 John 4:7-8 says love comes from God, for God is love. How does that shape the way we love?
- What are some practical, everyday ways to love God and your neighbour more fully?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will see love as the very heart of the Christian faith — not mere sentiment, but a proactive, selfless love that seeks the good of others.

Closing Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, empower us to love unconditionally, just as You have loved us. Amen."

Session 6: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, as we consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan, open our eyes to the needs around us and give us the courage to act compassionately. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Luke 10:36–37 (BSB) "'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' 'The one who showed him mercy,' replied the expert in the law. Then Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

Supplementary Scripture:

- Matthew 25:35–40 (BSB) "For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."

Discussion Points:

1. Who Is My Neighbour?

- How does this parable expand or redefine our understanding of "neighbour"?
- Why do you think the priest and the Levite passed by, and what does that warn us against?

2. Compassion That Costs:

- The Samaritan gave time, money, and comfort. Why is real love so often costly?
- How does "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37) land on your own life this week?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will be moved to compassionate action and a wider circle of care — to be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, may we be like the Good Samaritan, seeing the needs of others and acting with compassion. Amen."

Session 7: The Radical Nature of Christian Love

Opening Prayer:

"Dear God, as we consider the radical nature of Your love, help us to embrace the challenges and joys of loving even our enemies. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Matthew 5:44 (BSB) "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Mark 10:45 (BSB) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."
- Romans 12:14 (BSB) "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse."

Discussion Points:

1. Loving Even Our Enemies:

- How does the command to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44) challenge the world's wisdom?
- What are the difficulties — and the blessings — of praying for those who oppose us?

2. Love That Serves and Sacrifices:

- How does Jesus' own example (Mark 10:45) redefine what love looks like?
- How might you "bless and not curse" (Romans 12:14) a difficult person in your life?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will be encouraged to love in the radical, counter-cultural way Jesus did — inclusive, sacrificial, and reaching even to those hardest to love.

Closing Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, grant us the strength to love as You love, even when it is difficult. Amen."

Session 8: The Role of Intercessory Prayer

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, as we explore the role of intercessory prayer, may we be inspired to stand in the gap for others, lifting them up in prayer. Amen."

Key Scripture:

1 Timothy 2:1 (BSB) "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Ephesians 6:18 (BSB) "Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints."

Discussion Points:

1. A Vital Practice:

- What does the Bible say about the importance of praying for others?
- How does intercession help us fulfil the command to love our neighbour as ourselves?

2. Standing in the Gap:

- How can intercessory prayer be a form of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:18)?
- How does praying for one another strengthen the whole body of Christ?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will understand how vital intercession is — a means of grace for others, a form of spiritual battle, and a bond that unites the church — and feel encouraged to practise it daily.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, equip us to be faithful intercessors, standing in the gap for those in need. Amen."

Session 9: The Barriers to Effective Intercession

Opening Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, as we consider the barriers to effective intercessory prayer, reveal any hindrances in our own lives and guide us in overcoming them. Amen."

Key Scripture:

James 4:3 (BSB) "And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Matthew 6:6 (BSB) "But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Discussion Points:

1. What Gets in the Way:

- What common obstacles — busyness, self-centredness, doubt — hinder our praying for others?
- How does James 4:3 challenge the motives we sometimes bring to prayer?

2. Clearing the Path:

- How does Jesus' counsel to pray in secret to the Father (Matthew 6:6) reshape our praying?
- What is one practical step you could take to become a more faithful intercessor?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will be able to name the barriers that hinder their intercession — and feel equipped, by grace, to overcome them.

Closing Prayer:

"Lord, help us to remove any barriers that hinder our prayers, that we may be effective intercessors. Amen."

Session 10: The Call to Action

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, as we conclude our study, stir in us a call to action. May we be not just hearers of Your Word, but doers, especially in the area of intercessory prayer. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Matthew 5:13-14 (BSB) "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."

Supplementary Scripture:

- James 1:22 (BSB) "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (BSB) "Pray without ceasing."

Discussion Points:

1. Salt and Light on Our Knees:

- What does it mean to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" through prayer?
- How might you live out this calling in a practical, everyday way?

2. Doers, Not Only Hearers:

- How does James 1:22 press us from good intentions into action?
- What would it look like to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) as a way of life?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session — and of the whole study — we hope everyone will feel a glad sense of calling to become an active, persevering intercessor: Christ's hands and feet, standing in the gap for a world that needs prayer.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, may the lessons we've learned not end here. Equip us to be Your hands and feet, especially in the ministry of intercessory prayer. Amen."

The Lost Art of Intercession: Rediscovering the Power of Praying for Others

In a world obsessed with self, rediscover the quiet, world-changing power of praying for others — the lost art of intercession.

Bible Study Notes

The Lost Art of Intercession: Rediscovering the Power of Praying for Others

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Session 1 – Introduction

The modern world is a bustling hub of self-interest. From self-help books to self-care routines, the focus falls, more and more, on the individual. Personal growth matters — but this self-centred culture can quietly crowd out a crucial part of Christian living: intercessory prayer. In a world obsessed with self-improvement, have we forgotten the transforming power of praying for others?

Intercessory prayer is simply praying on behalf of others. It is love in action — standing in the gap for someone else, lifting their needs and struggles up to God. And it is no mere ritual; it is a divine calling. Paul urges, “First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1).

Scripture also assures us that such prayer is powerful. “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail” (James 5:16). When we pray for others, we join in God’s own work in their lives — and that is no small thing.

The early church knew this well. When Peter was imprisoned, “the church was fervently praying to God for him” (Acts 12:5) — and God brought about a miraculous rescue. Collective intercession changes things, and it belongs at the very centre of the Christian community. Over these sessions, we will rediscover this lost art together, and let it revitalise not only our own prayers but our life together.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Introduction: Embracing the Power of Intercessory Prayer

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How would you describe intercessory prayer in your own words?
2. How does our self-centred culture affect our willingness to pray for others?
3. Can you recall a time when someone's prayers made a real difference in your life?
4. What does 1 Timothy 2:1 suggest about the place of praying for others in the Christian life?
5. How does James 5:16 encourage you about the power of a righteous person's prayer?
6. What does Peter's rescue through the church's prayer (Acts 12:5) show us about praying together?
7. Why do you think intercession has become something of a "lost art"?
8. How might a habit of praying for others reshape your own spiritual life?
9. How could intercession strengthen the sense of community among believers?
10. Who is one person or situation you feel prompted to begin praying for?

Session 2 – The Shift from ‘We’ to ‘Me’

In our fast-paced, hyper-connected world, individualism is often celebrated as a virtue. Social media, self-help, and personal branding have created a culture where the focus falls, again and again, on the self. This quiet shift from “we” to “me” carries deep consequences — for society, and for the church.

Think of the “selfie culture”: feeds full of curated images and personal milestones. There is nothing wrong with celebrating an achievement, but the steady message is that your life, your goals, and your happiness matter most — often at the expense of community and the common good.

This mindset has seeped into the way many practise their faith. Yet at its heart Christianity is a faith of relationships — with God, and with one another. Scripture is full of the call to community, from the early church in Acts to Paul’s plain instruction: “Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Paul’s image of the church as one body says it best: “The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts... For the body does not consist of one part, but of many” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). We are members of one another. The shift from “we” to “me” challenges the very foundations of that truth — and calls us, gently but firmly, to recover a faith that treasures community as much as it treasures the individual.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Shift from 'We' to 'Me'

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Where do you see the shift from "we" to "me" in your own life?
2. How has social media contributed to, or detracted from, a real sense of community?
3. What are some consequences of an individualistic mindset for Christian living?
4. How does Galatians 6:2's call to "carry one another's burdens" challenge that mindset?
5. What does the image of one body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12) mean for how we treat one another?
6. How can we celebrate personal growth without losing sight of community?
7. Where might God be inviting you to move from "me" back towards "we"?
8. Whose burden could you help carry this week?
9. How can our churches nurture genuine community rather than mere gathering?
10. What is one step you could take to invest more deeply in the body of Christ?

Session 3 – The Prosperity Gospel

The prosperity gospel has become a widespread teaching, promising believers that faith in God leads to material wealth and physical well-being. It often leans on verses like Malachi 3:10, where God says, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse... Test Me in this, says the LORD of Hosts. See if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you blessing without measure.” God does indeed long to bless His people — but the prosperity gospel lifts this out of context, making material blessing the main point of the Christian life.

This distortion carries real dangers. First, it turns faith from a relationship with God into a transaction — blessings as the “return” on our “investment” of belief. That undermines the very heart of Christianity, which is a loving relationship with God and a life of service to others.

Second, it quietly builds a spiritual hierarchy based on wealth and health, as though the prosperous are more favoured by God. This is not only untrue but harmful, breeding judgment and division. And third, it sets believers up for disillusionment when the promised riches do not come — a particular danger for those young in faith.

Jesus points us elsewhere: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). God surely blesses His children — but the fullest blessings are relational and spiritual. To seek His kingdom first is to find our hearts, and our treasure, in the right place.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Prosperity Gospel

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How does the prosperity gospel differ from the Bible's teaching on wealth and blessing?
2. What are the risks of making material blessing the main point of faith?
3. How does the Bible itself define "blessing"?
4. How might the prosperity gospel breed judgment or division within a church?
5. What can happen to faith when the promised riches do not come?
6. How does Matthew 6:19–21 reorder what we treasure?
7. Where does stewardship fit into a healthy understanding of blessing?
8. How do you guard your own heart against a transactional view of God?
9. How can we hold together God's real desire to bless and His call to sacrifice and service?
10. What would "seeking God's kingdom first" look like in your life this week?

Session 4 – The Danger of Self-Centred Faith

In an age that celebrates the individual, a self-centred faith has quietly gained ground. It puts our own needs, desires, and experiences at the centre, and lets the wider community — and the call to serve — slip to the edges. Personal growth matters greatly; but a faith that is only about the self can be dangerous, in several ways.

First, it can drift into a kind of spiritual self-focus, where our relationship with God becomes a means to our own ends. Prayer shrinks to a wish-list for God to fulfil, rather than a conversation that shapes and changes us.

Second, a self-focused faith undermines the shared life we are called to. Christianity is not a solo endeavour but a community united in Christ; when faith turns inward, we risk isolating ourselves and overlooking the needs of others.

And third, it can quietly distort the Scriptures. Jesus' call — "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24) — loses its edge when we prize personal comfort over sacrifice. Paul points the better way: "in humility consider others more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3-4). Personal growth is good, but never at the cost of community and service — the very heart of following Jesus.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Danger of Self-Centred Faith

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Where have you noticed self-centred faith — in the culture, or in your own heart?
2. How can prayer shrink into a “wish-list” rather than a conversation that changes us?
3. How does a self-focused faith undermine the shared life we are called to?
4. What does Jesus mean by “deny himself and take up his cross” (Matthew 16:24)?
5. How does Philippians 2:3-4 reshape the way you hold your own interests and others'?
6. Where do you find it hardest to put others before yourself?
7. How does a focus on community counteract a self-centred faith?
8. What helps you keep your relationship with God from becoming all about you?
9. How can we support one another in living a more outward-facing faith?
10. What is one way you could turn your faith outward this week?

Session 5 – The Command to Love

One of the most fundamental teachings of Jesus is the command to love. Asked which command is greatest, He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39). This is the cornerstone of Christian ethics — the essence of the whole Gospel.

This love goes far beyond warm feeling. It is a proactive, self-giving love that seeks the good of others, even at real cost. And it is not selective; it reaches to all people, whatever their background, beliefs, or behaviour.

Notice, too, that love for neighbour is bound up with love for God. The two cannot be separated: our love for God is shown, and made real, in the way we love the people around us. To love God wholeheartedly is to be moved outward, towards others.

And this love has its source outside ourselves. “Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God... God is love” (1 John 4:7–8). We do not manufacture such love by effort; we receive it from the God who is love, and pass it on. The command to love is not an optional extra of the faith — it defines our whole relationship with God and with one another, calling us beyond our comfort and our prejudices to love as Christ loved.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Command to Love

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?
2. How are love for God and love for neighbour bound together?
3. How does 1 John 4:7-8 ("God is love") shape the way you understand love?
4. Why is Christian love more than sentiment or feeling?
5. Where do you find it hardest to love, and what helps you there?
6. How can we love people whose background or beliefs differ greatly from ours?
7. What are some practical, everyday ways to love God more fully?
8. What are some practical ways to love a neighbour this week?
9. How does receiving God's love free us to love others?
10. Who is one person God may be calling you to love more intentionally?

Session 6 – The Parable of the Good Samaritan

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is a vivid picture of what it means to love our neighbour. A man is left beaten and half-dead by the roadside. A priest and a Levite — respected religious figures — pass by without helping. It is a Samaritan, an outsider despised by the Jews, who stops and cares for him.

The parable challenges us on several levels. First, it overturns our ideas about who counts as a “neighbour.” In Jesus’ eyes, a neighbour is not simply someone who lives nearby or shares our beliefs; it is anyone in need, whatever their background.

Second, it prizes compassionate action over mere religious respectability. The priest and the Levite may have been devout, but they failed the test of love. The Samaritan showed his love in tangible acts of kindness. And third, the parable reminds us that love is costly — the Samaritan gave his time, his money, and his comfort. Real love usually asks something of us.

So Jesus turns the question round. He asks, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” — and when the answer comes, “The one who showed him mercy,” He says simply, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:36-37). And He identifies Himself with the needy: “whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for Me” (Matthew 25:40). Love, then, is active, inclusive, and sacrificial — and we are called not merely to admire it, but to go and do it.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How does this parable expand or redefine your understanding of “neighbour”?
2. Why do you think the priest and the Levite passed by?
3. What does it say that a despised Samaritan was the one who helped?
4. How does the parable prize compassionate action over mere religious respectability?
5. Why is real love so often costly — in time, money, or comfort?
6. Can you recall a time someone was a “good Samaritan” to you?
7. Where might God be opening your eyes to a need near you?
8. How does “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37) challenge you this week?
9. How does Jesus’ identifying with “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40) shape your compassion?
10. What is one concrete act of neighbour-love you could take up?

Session 7 – The Radical Nature of Christian Love

Christian love is often called radical, because it defies conventional wisdom. It asks us to love not only those who are easy to love, but even our enemies. “But I tell you,” Jesus says, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). It is a revolutionary idea, running clean against our natural pull towards revenge and resentment.

This love also reaches to the margins. Jesus consistently drew near to tax collectors, sinners, and the socially outcast; His love broke down the barriers of race, class, and religion. It was never confined to the respectable or the like-minded — it was for all.

And Christian love is sacrificial to its core. It is shown supremely in Jesus Himself, who “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This is no abstract ideal; it is a call to put the needs of others before our own — even to “bless those who persecute you” (Romans 12:14).

So the radical love of Christ sets itself apart from the world’s tidy definitions. It is inclusive, sacrificial, and gloriously counter-cultural — and it invites us to live in a way that reflects the transforming power of God’s own love. It is, in the end, the love we ourselves have received, now flowing outward to others.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Radical Nature of Christian Love

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

- 1.** What is your honest reaction to Jesus' command to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44)?
- 2.** How does this command challenge the world's ideas about love and justice?
- 3.** Where do you see Jesus loving those on the margins, and how does it inspire you?
- 4.** How does Jesus' example (Mark 10:45) redefine what love looks like?
- 5.** What are the difficulties — and the blessings — of praying for those who oppose us?
- 6.** How might you "bless and not curse" (Romans 12:14) a difficult person in your life?
- 7.** Why is sacrificial love so central to the Christian faith?
- 8.** Where is God inviting you to love in a more radical, counter-cultural way?
- 9.** How does remembering the love you've received help you love the hard-to-love?
- 10.** Who is one "enemy" or difficult person you could commit to praying for?

Session 8 – The Role of Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer holds a central place in the Christian life. It is the act of praying on behalf of others — family, friends, enemies, acquaintances, strangers near and far. It is deeply rooted in Scripture, as Paul makes plain: “First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1).

The importance of such prayer is hard to overstate. It is a means of grace — not only for the one praying, but for those prayed for. And it is a way of obeying the command to love our neighbour, since it requires us to look beyond our own needs to the needs of others.

Intercession is also a form of spiritual battle. “Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition,” Paul writes; “stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Through prayer we stand in the gap for others, calling down God’s protection, guidance, and blessing upon them.

And intercession binds the church together. When we pray for one another, we are reminded that we are members of one body, interconnected and mutually dependent (1 Corinthians 12). Far from an optional discipline, intercessory prayer is a vital practice — one that enriches our faith, strengthens the church, and extends God’s grace into the world.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Role of Intercessory Prayer

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

- 1.** How central is intercessory prayer to your current prayer life?
- 2.** What does 1 Timothy 2:1 teach about the importance of praying for others?
- 3.** How does intercession help us fulfil the command to love our neighbour?
- 4.** In what way is intercessory prayer a means of grace, for us and for those we pray for?
- 5.** How can intercession be a form of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:18)?
- 6.** How does praying for one another strengthen the whole body of Christ?
- 7.** What helps you “stay alert with all perseverance” in prayer for others?
- 8.** Who are the people God has placed on your heart to intercede for?
- 9.** How might your church make more room for intercession together?
- 10.** What is one way you could make intercession a steadier part of your days?

Session 9 – The Barriers to Effective Intercession

Intercessory prayer is vital — yet many of us meet real barriers to it. One of the most common is simple busyness. In our fast-paced lives, finding time to sit and pray for others is hard, and it is made harder by the false idea that intercession requires long, unbroken stretches of quiet.

Another barrier is self-centredness. In a culture fixed on our own needs and wants, it is easy to treat prayer as a way to secure personal blessing rather than to lift up others. James warns us plainly: “when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). Our motives can quietly narrow our prayers.

A lack of faith can hinder us, too. When we doubt that our prayers make any difference, our resolve to pray for others weakens. And sometimes the barrier is simply ignorance — we do not know what those around us are facing, so our prayers lack focus and urgency.

None of these barriers, though, is insurmountable. Jesus gently redirects us: “when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6). As we name our obstacles and bring them honestly to God, we can grow, step by step, into faithful intercessors — co-labourers with Christ.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Barriers to Effective Intercession

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Which barriers to intercession do you meet most often — busyness, self-centredness, doubt, or something else?
2. How does the myth that prayer needs long, unbroken stretches discourage you?
3. How does James 4:3 challenge the motives we sometimes bring to prayer?
4. How does doubting the power of prayer weaken our resolve to intercede?
5. How can staying informed about others' needs sharpen our prayers?
6. How does Jesus' counsel to pray in secret to the Father (Matthew 6:6) reshape your praying?
7. Which barrier would you most like God's help to overcome?
8. What small, realistic rhythm of prayer could you build into your week?
9. How can a prayer partner or group help you keep going?
10. What is one practical step you'll take to grow as an intercessor?

Session 10 – The Call to Action

The journey through the lost art of intercession comes, at last, to a call to action: to become active intercessors in a world that so often promotes the self. This is not a mere suggestion but something at the heart of Jesus' teaching. We are called to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14) — and one of the ways we live that out is through prayer.

To become an intercessor means committing to regular, intentional prayer for others. It involves setting aside time — perhaps even giving up some leisure or sleep — to stand in the gap for those in need. And this is not a task for the "spiritually elite," but the calling of every believer.

It also means being informed and sensitive to the Spirit's leading — staying aware of the needs in our community, our church, and the world, and staying open to His promptings to pray for particular people or situations, even ones we do not know.

And it means perseverance. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), Paul urges — for intercession is not a one-off event but a lifestyle of steady, hopeful prayer. James presses the point home: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). May the lessons of this study not end on the page, but send us out to be Christ's hands and feet, joining Him in His work of love — one prayer at a time.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

The Call to Action

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

- 1.** What does it mean to be “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13-14) through prayer?
- 2.** How does James 1:22 press us from good intentions into action?
- 3.** What would it look like to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) as a way of life?
- 4.** What time or habit could you set aside for regular intercession?
- 5.** How can you stay sensitive to the Spirit's promptings to pray for particular people?
- 6.** Why is perseverance so important in intercession?
- 7.** How can a church community support one another in becoming faithful intercessors?
- 8.** Looking back over the study, what has most challenged or encouraged you?
- 9.** How has your view of prayer changed through these ten sessions?
- 10.** As this study closes, what is one commitment you will make to praying for others?

Worksheet

This worksheet is a companion to the study — a practical aide-memoire to help you become an intercessor in a self-centred world, and to carry the study's themes into everyday life.

In a group

If you are leading a group, do give a copy of this worksheet to each person to take home. Explain that it is for personal reflection and practical application. In your meetings, or in quiet times of reflection, you might invite people to share their insights, their struggles, and their experiences — while making clear that completing the worksheet is never required, only offered as a help.

On your own

If you are reading on your own, use this worksheet as a personal guide to reinforce and apply what the study has stirred in you.

The worksheet sets out ten simple, doable steps to help you grow as an intercessor. As you take them up, our prayer is that praying for others would become less a lost art and more a living, joyful habit.

Ten Steps to Become an Intercessor

As you work through these steps, you will grow, little by little, into the skills and the heart needed to pray faithfully for others.

1. Set Aside Time for Prayer:

Give specific slots in your daily or weekly schedule to intercession. Consistency is key; make it a non-negotiable part of your routine.

2. Create a Prayer List:

Keep a list of people, situations, and causes that need prayer. Update it regularly, and use it to guide your prayer times.

3. Be Informed:

Stay aware of current events, community needs, and church prayer requests. The more you know, the more specific your prayers can be.

4. Partner with Others:

Find a prayer partner or join a prayer group. There is power in praying together, and accountability helps you keep going.

5. Listen to the Holy Spirit:

Be sensitive to the Spirit's promptings. Sometimes you will feel led to pray for someone unexpectedly — follow that leading.

6. Use Scripture as a Guide:

Weave relevant Bible verses into your prayers. It enriches your praying and aligns your intercessions with God's Word.

7. Keep a Prayer Journal:

Note down your prayers and any answers you see. It becomes a record of God's faithfulness and an encouragement in hard times.

8. Be Persistent, and Trust God:

Don't be discouraged by silence or delay. Intercession often calls for steady, ongoing prayer; trust that God is at work for good.

9. Practise Empathy:

Put yourself in the shoes of those you pray for. It helps you pray with genuine compassion and understanding.

10. Celebrate the Victories:

When prayers are answered, take time to give thanks. It glorifies God and encourages you to keep on interceding.

May God richly bless you as you place the needs of others before your own in prayer. May the Holy Spirit give you wisdom and discernment as you grow in this sacred, life-giving practice.

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Thank you for spending this time with us. We'd love to keep walking alongside you — so do stay in touch, and let us know how the study went.

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