

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to believe:

1. that intercession is a part of spiritual warfare
2. that they must persevere in interceding for others

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to pray for others.

Theme: Wrestle in prayer together with Christ

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

John 17:11,15,17

¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Romans 8:34

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Hebrews 7:25; 9:24

²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

1 John 2:1

¹ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Revelation 8:3-5

³ Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer,

with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. ⁴ The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

- The perfect prayers of Jesus Christ for us Christians (the incense) is mixed with our incomplete and imperfect prayers and intercessions and then the smoke of the incense rises up as complete and perfect prayers and intercessions before God's throne!
- God's response to our prayers mixed with the prayers of Jesus Christ is to throw fire onto the earth, that is, to act either to save or to judge.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God as the One with whom you may take shelter and feel completely save.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Intercessory prayer

Read or explain in your own words.

Praying or interceding for other people takes time, dedication and struggle.

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: Wrestle in intercessory prayer

- Day 1^{BS} Luke 11:1-13
"Lord, teach us to pray"
- Day 2 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
Pray for the rapid spreading of God's kingdom
- Day 3 Colossians 1:9-12
Pray for the growth of other Christians
- Day 4 Matthew 9:35-38
Pray for the workers in God's kingdom
- Day 5 Colossians 4:2-4
Pray for open doors to proclaim God's Word
- Day 6 Ephesians 6:19-20
Pray that the workers may declare God's Word fearlessly

- Day 7 1 Timothy 2:1-6
Pray for rulers and leaders
- Day 8 James 5:14-18
Pray for the sick
- Day 9 Luke 6:27-33
Pray for the enemies of Christians
- Day 10 Ephesians 3:14-21
Pray for the strengthening of Christians

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: Wrestling in intercessory prayer

- For whom should Christians pray?
- What can we pray for them?
- How can we make use of a prayer list?
- How can we pray practically and effectively?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- “How important do you think is intercession?”
- “What would you like to change with regard to praying for others?”

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other’s previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

INTERCESSION Colossians 4:12b

He is always wrestling in prayer for you,
that you may stand firm in all the will of God,
mature and fully assured.

Colossians 4:12b (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The parable of the unwilling friend

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Luke 11:1-13

¹ One Day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

² He said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.

³ Give us each Day our daily bread.

⁴ Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us (Greek: *everyone who is indebted to us*).

And lead us not into temptation.”

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

2. Emphasis

Persevere in prayer for others.

3. Explanation for the group leader

11:1-4.

Prayer is something you must learn. That is why the followers of Jesus Christ ask him to teach them how they must pray. The words of the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:2-4 differ a little from the words of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, because Jesus taught this prayer on several different occasions.

What Jesus regarded as important is not so much the exact words and the outward form of the prayer, but the contents of the prayer and the attitude of the heart! This is very refreshing!

Which 6 prayers did Jesus include in this prayer in Matthew 6:9-13?

- “Hallowed be your name”
- “Your kingdom come”
- “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”
- “Give us today our daily bread”
- “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”
- “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”

11:5-8.

Luke 11:5-8 is a *parable*. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly message. It is a true-to-life story that can happen on earth in order to teach a spiritual truth or principle.

The story of this parable speaks about three friends: the friend in need, the friend at midnight that helped him, and the rich and able friend who was initially unwilling to help.

- *The friend in need represents the person for whom you are praying (interceding).*
- *The friend at midnight represents you who are praying.*
- *The rich and able friend represents God to whom you go to ask for help.*

It is late at night. Unexpectedly a poor or needy friend knocks on your door for help. He is tired after a long journey and hungry. He expects hospitality, food and a place to sleep.

But you did not expect someone to come to you at that time of the night. So you had no food to give to him. In your embarrassment you go out into the dark and cold night to find food to give to him. You have a very rich friend who is very able to give you what you need. You ask him to lend you three ‘loaves of bread’ (rather: three flat bread, chapattis), just enough for a meal for one person.

But quite unexpectedly the rich and able friend gave a negative answer. However this did not deter the friend at midnight and so he kept knocking on the door and persisted asking his friend to help him out.

4. The practical lessons of this parable.¹

In this parable Jesus Christ teaches Christians to pray for other people with perseverance and persistence! He teaches what to expect when they wrestle in prayer for other people. He motivates every Christian to become an intercessor!

(1) *The intercessor must see the urgent need.*

Intercession originates in seeing the needs of other people. The friend in need was tired and hungry, maybe even poor and destitute. He could not find a place to sleep or food at that hour of the night. If we want to learn how to pray for other people we must open our eyes and learn to see the needs of people around us.

Spiritually, there are millions of people around us who live in the darkness of ignorance (about the message about Jesus Christ), sin and indifference. Recklessly they are on their way to eternal perdition, because they do not know ‘the Bread of Life’ (Jesus Christ) (John 6:27,35).

Materially, there are millions of Christians that are neglected and underfed, oppressed and persecuted, living sick and meaningless lives as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). Such people (students, family members, friends, strangers) live in our towns and neighbourhoods. Only prayer to God to do something (and to make us willing to be sent and to get involved) can help!

(2) *The intercessor must love the friend in need unselfishly.*

The friend at midnight welcomed his friend in need into his home and also into his heart! He made no excuses like: “I have nothing to give to you!” On the contrary, he went out to seek help (even when all shops were closed and everyone had already gone to bed). He gave us his own sleep and comfort of a warm house.

The Bible says, “Love is not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love forgets personal interests and comfort for the sake of someone else. Love takes the needs of others seriously. Love finds joy in living and even dying for someone else (as Jesus did). It is the lack of love that is the cause of our lack of prayer for others! True love prays!

(3) *The intercessor must realise his own impotence*

(inability) to help. The friend at midnight (= you) was willing to help his friend in need by giving him what he needed, but he had nothing to give to him! This situation brought him also in a position of need. Also he was poor! It is precisely the realisation that he had nothing to give that drove him into action (to go out, seek help and find food). He acknowledged to his rich and able friend that someone had come to him for help and that he had NOTHING to give to him! It is this realisation of lack and inability that made him an intercessor!

¹ Thoughts from Andrew Murray

Only the realisation that the superhuman power of God is indispensable for the salvation of people can spur us on to intercede! The certain knowledge that only God can give eternal life, spiritual growth and everlasting significance, will cause us to intercede with God for them. Intercession was the only way to turn his love into action! He went out to God to ask for the needed help.

This parable is also a warning for Christian workers who think that they can do a ministry for God in their own power, wisdom and dedication. And this parable is an encouragement for all Christian workers who feel weak and inadequate! The weakest and plainest Christian can pray to the almighty God for others!

(4) *The intercessor must believe that his rich and able friend can and will help!* What the friend at midnight (= you) did not have, his rich and able friend (=God) had! What he could not give, his rich and able friend could give!

Because he believed, he acted. His rich and able friend lived very near, could help and was willing to help. He only had to ask and it would be given to him! That is also why he could go at midnight (the time when it suited him least).

Our rich and very able friend is no one less than the almighty God! He is very near to every Christians The Bible is full of promises that God listens to prayer and that he is both willing and able to answer. He is able to give what we need and even able to do immeasurably more than we ask or can imagine (Ephesians 3:20)! Also the testimonies of many Christians stimulate us to believe that God can and will do in answer to prayer what we ourselves cannot do.

(5) *The intercessor must pray with boldness, perseverance and persistence.* The friend at midnight directed his prayer at his rich and able friend, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread." However, his prayer request encountered an unexpected difficulty: his rich and able friend said, "Don't bother me! The door is already locked and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything."

Jesus includes in his story the fact that prayer often seems to go unanswered. Jesus does not intend to say that God does not want to answer our prayers, but rather that God has a very good reason why he waits with answering our prayer!

The loving heart of the friend at midnight (= you) did not expect this disappointment! Nevertheless, he decided not to give up! So he pressed on, "I have a needy friend. You (= God) have plenty. If I am your friend, please help

me!" The friend at midnight refused to accept 'no' as an answer! On the contrary, he became bolder and insisted with perseverance and persistence. He did not give up knocking on his rich friend's door and he did not stop asking! His love for his needy friend had to conquer (the difficulty)!

The most important message of this parable is verse 8, "I tell you, though he (= God) will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's *boldness*, he will get up and give him as much as he needs." The word 'boldness' is best translated by 'shameless persistence' or 'shameless perseverance'.

When we Christians pray (intercede), we too will experience difficulties and even opposition, so that we have to patiently wait. It is as if God is saying, "I cannot give you anything." When that happens, we tend to lose heart and even to lose trust in God. Then our faith is tested and then we should use the opportunity to learn perseverance (persistence).

Just like Abraham, we must not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God. We must remain fully persuaded that God has power to do what he promised (Romans 4:19-20). We must do intercession fully convinced of this truth.

God regards our trust in him so highly that he will do everything in order to strengthen that faith! Blessed is the Christian who does not give up praying when God delays answering his prayers or even when God remains silent and it seems as if God does not want to help. Blessed are you when you believe that God will do what he promised. God promised to answer prayers. Therefore faith in that promise will pray with shameless boldness (perseverance, persistence). Such a faith cannot fail to receive "as much as he needs" (verse 8)!

(6) *The intercessor must be sure that his rich and able friend will help.* Jesus said, "I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

If we really believe in God's faithfulness to his promises, prayer (intercession) would be the first we would do when we sought help for other people. And then prayer (intercession) would be the last thing for which we would have no time! Intercession is hard work. But it is work full of hope, because we know and expect all the time that God will answer in his own right time! And it is also work that brings lots of joy, because of the prayers God answers! Disappointment is impossible, because Jesus said that he would receive as much as he needs. *The time you spend in prayer (intercession) produces much more than the time you give to merely ministry!*

Intercession makes your ministry worth the while and successful. Prayer is the way in which God works in us and also through us!

God uses prayer to teach us faith, hope and love. He uses prayer to train us in shameless boldness, perseverance and persistence. Prayer is God's method to exercise us in the awareness of his reality, nearness and presence. Only prayer gives us experience in the fact that God hears our prayers (James 4:2).

The secret of bearing fruit as a Christian is first to receive from God and then to give to others what we have received! Prayer is also the link between our impotence and God's sovereign power!

(7) *The characteristics of an intercessor.*

- Knowledge, understanding and insight with respect to the needs of other people.
- Self-sacrificial love to help meet those needs.
- Realisation of your own inability to meet those needs.
- Faith in the power of prayer.
- Courage to persevere in spite of difficulties.
- Boldness to persist in spite of set-backs.
- Assurance that God will answer in his own time.

11:9-13.

These verses are a further application of the previous parable that teaches to persevere in prayer.

➤ Pray or ask

To pray or ask implies that you do not have it yourself. You need to receive before you can give.

➤ Seek

To seek implies that you need to act besides your prayer. In faith you set out to seek an answer. For example: studying what the Bible teaches about prayer, or seeking practical ways in which God can use you in his answer to your prayer.

➤ Knock

To knock implies that you persevere. You keep on knocking until God answers! You persevere (persist) in praying and seeking until God answers! Jesus Christ promised that you will not be disappointed: you will receive, you will find and the door will be opened for you!

If an ordinary father, who is by nature a sinner and imperfect, knows how to give the right things to his child, how much more will God the Father, who is absolutely perfect, give you the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) and therefore whatever is good and needed (Matthew 7:11) when you ask him? Matthew does not contradict Luke, because the Holy Spirit is the Source of every good thing that God gives us (cf. John 16:14-15; James 1:18)!

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.