

Views of Intercessory Prayer (Marjorie J. Thompson's *Soul Feast*, page 41)

1. By our petitions, reasoning, or arguing, we are changing God's attitude and intended action in the world. (See Gen. 18:22-26ff.; Exod. 32:11-14.)
2. By engaging in the struggle of prayer, we find *ourselves* changed, marked by our encounter with the living God. (See Gen. 32:24-30.)
3. In prayer we voice our desires, hopes, needs, and frustrations, but cannot assume that these influence God. We are completely dependent on God's sovereign will and action in response. (See Job 7:11-20; 13:3; 19:7; 42:1-6.)
4. In prayer we share our positive life-energies with another person who is mystically connected with us and all other living things, and who can therefore be directly influenced. (No direct corollary in scripture, but a common belief in our time.)
5. In prayer we join our hearts in love with the love of Christ, the great Intercessory, through the unity of the Spirit given in Baptism and sustained by the Eucharist. We give our will to the will of Christ and leave the results to him. (See John 15:1-11, 17; Rom. 8:26-27; Heb. 4:14-16.)
6. In prayer we become aware of God's presence with us and of the Holy Spirit already praying in us, so we do not bring specific prayers, but try to attune and entrust ourselves to that presence and inward prayer. (See Psalm 139; Rom. 8:26-27.)
7. When we pray, we simply trust completely that God will respond with a good and appropriate gift in God's own time and way. (See Matt. 7:7, 9-11).
8. When we pray, we are cooperating with God in willing life and goodness for others, yet we remain vulnerable with God to the limits imposed by evil—limits accepted in the freedom that love creates. (See Mark 14:32-36 and parallels.)

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A Process for Intercessory Prayer (Marjorie J. Thompson's *Soul Feast*, page 43-44)

Begin with gratitude and praise, offering your whole heart to God.

If your prayer seems good for all involved, ask boldly with as much faith as you have in you. Faith cannot be forced but can be prayed for: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Wait with trust and attention for a response.

If you receive no indication that you are *not* meant to receive what you ask for (no "stop" in the mind, no closed doors), keep asking. This is not anxious repetition but trusting perseverance.

If you receive a clear answer to your prayer, let your praise and thanksgiving be sincere and whole-hearted. You may perceive that a gracious response is being given in a way you did not expect; be thankful for new insight into God's mysterious providence.

If you see no indications of grace, ask to be shown if there is something in you that could be blocking it: lack of humility or gratitude, lack of trust, a hidden sin, or the need to forgive someone.

If over time (perhaps several weeks or months, depending on the nature of the situation you pray for) there is no positive response, ask God to reveal to you whether another prayer more in accord with divine intent. If the substance of your prayer is not transformed and there is still no sign of the grace asked for, God's answer may be no.

Accept that no may be the answer to your prayer. Recognize and affirm that God's no always has a larger and better purpose than we can see.

Seek to discover where God's grace is manifesting itself in the midst of this situation, even if not in the manner being asked for. Commit yourself to cooperate as fully as you can with God's work as you discern it.

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