



LifeSpot ... Priesthood of prayer

The highest service

Some say God loves people so much that our prayers for them can't actually make a difference. "God will do what God is going to do, with or without our praying." This sounds logical. But logical and biblical are not always the same. Jesus said, "I have prayed for you." He's our Priest, and interceding is his job. But he calls us priests, so it's our job too. "He has made us priests." Revelation 1:6 (NIV). Priests lift up people by name before God in prayer—and it makes a difference. "The one great need ... is intercessors," wrote E M Bounds. "Intercessory prayer represents the highest form of Christian service." Ready now? Let's get on our knees for the highest service.

One critical work

Here's a strange one. "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." Colossians 1:24 (NIV). Something lacking in Christ's anguish? Yes, in the sense that Jesus finished his solitary battle—but the cosmic battle goes on through us. As his body, the church, we're called to fight for the people of our planet. Oswald Chambers suggests the struggle is driven by one dynamic—*intercession*. Will we stop our frenzied activity? Will we quit our fascination with the things that can be tabulated and applauded? Will we enter Christ's anguish by engaging in the quiet, critical work of pleading with God for the souls who come across our path every day?

Prayer for the lost

We love to pray. For our health, for our loved ones, for our finances. For God's guidance, and for intimacy with him. Excellent! All good things to pray for. But something is missing, and that something is prayer for the lost. One survey indicates that only about 3 per cent of people who pray, pray for strangers. When Jesus prayed, he prayed for the lost of Jerusalem and for the lost of the world. The apostle Paul said: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers and intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. . . . This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved." 1 Timothy 2:1–4 (NIV). Will you begin now to intercede for strangers around you?

The prayer department

"You prayer people can pray if you want to, but I'll be out there doing some actual work." "Prayer ministry? Oh, that's not our department." I've heard these things said! Such views are against God's Word, placing God's people exactly where the enemy wants them. God's Word speaks of only one thing that should be done by all believers everywhere, all the time—and that is to pray. True prayer is not an alternative to work. *It is the work*. The only Christian work that is truly effective is work saturated in prayer and powered by prayer. Jesus said evil is overcome only by the discipline of prayer (Mark 9:29). When intercessory prayer becomes everyone's department—that's when the work will at last be done.