



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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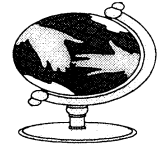
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INTERCEDING FOR OUR LEADERS



A continual prayer request that you will hear in the church is "We need to pray for the leaders of our nation." This pleases God and is one of our responsibilities as God's people. The church must offer continual intercession for those who govern. Praying for the leaders of a nation must be a continual and vital concern in the believer's prayer life. It is the acknowledgment that the leaders need God to guide and protect them. It is the profession that Christians can make a difference in their leaders and their nation.

But what about you? Is praying for the leaders of the nation a vital concern of your prayer life? There are some that ignore the need to pray for those who govern the nation. Their prayer life is self-centered and focuses only on themselves, their circumstances, and those that they love. Others see the need but seemingly never get around to it. They know that they should pray for their leaders, but it is not a high priority for them. And, there are some that love to complain about the leaders while at the same time never offering any intercession for these men and women. Where do you stand in the area of intercession for those who govern the nation?

I want to encourage you to commit yourself to pray for the men and women who lead the nation. You can make a positive and powerful impact on these leaders and the nation. You may believe that your praying in this situation is insignificant and powerless. Do not be deceived into thinking that your praying for leaders is useless. God will honor

it and bless it beyond your wildest imagination.

Your prayer life is to be based on the principle of faith and not sight. As a Christian, you are called to walk by faith and not by sight (**2 Corinthians 5:7**).

At the same time, you are called to pray by faith and not by sight. You are to pray in faith, trusting that God is working in powerful ways.

In order to lead you to make this commitment, I want you to see what the Word of God says about this vital issue. The Word of God teaches that believers are to pray for the leaders of the nation in which they live. Praying for those who govern the nations should be a vital prayer concern for every believer because the Word of God requires it.

Why Should I Pray For My Leaders?

There are several Biblical reasons why you should pray regularly for those who lead the nation. *First, God commands you to do this.* In **1 Timothy 3:15**, Paul states his reason for writing this book, "But if I am delayed, I write to you so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Paul wrote this letter to teach believers concerning the purposes and the priorities of the church. He instructs believers

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on how the church is to carry out its mission in this world.

His first instruction to the church is to pray for the leaders of the nation where they are located. He writes, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all who are in authority" (**1 Timothy 2:1-2**). Paul's command is explicit. The church's first priority and purpose is to pray—especially for those in leadership positions. The "first" in this text means first in rank, first in priority. The church is to be a house of prayer. It is to stand in the gap for men and women. It exists in order to offer intercession for all men, which includes political leaders.

This is God's desire for His church. If you profess faith in Jesus Christ, you are to offer intercession for those who are in authority. God longs for you to stand in the gap for these men and women. It is your responsibility before God to pray for them.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 is connected to the third verse. Paul declares in **1 Timothy 2:3**, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." What is good and acceptable to God? It is that you plead for those in authority. It is to give thanks for these leaders and offer fervent and faithful intercession for them.

To neglect this responsibility is to displease God and to sin against His desire. It is forsaking the clear teaching of Scripture. Yet, when you offer this intercession, it pleases God. God will use your praying for your leaders. If it is His desire for you to pray for those in authority and you do this, you can have the confidence and expectancy that He will use your praying! This should give you certainty concerning the effectiveness of your praying for those who govern the nation.

Second, your praying for leaders can ensure a peaceful society in which the church can carry out the will of God. In **1 Timothy 2:2**, Paul writes, "For kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." The believer is to pray for his or her leaders because what they do affects them on a daily basis. If the leaders are being faithful and true to their task, then the society will be under control

and there will be order. This is one of God's purposes for government. It is to maintain peace and order in society. When this takes place, the church can carry out God's will and work. It provides an atmosphere where the church can work powerfully and effectively. When the government is hostile to the church, the church must struggle to carry out God's will. The church will have to divide its time and energy between doing the will of God and dealing with a hostile government.

It must be emphasized that a hostile government cannot stop the church of Jesus Christ. This cannot be used as an excuse for failing to be faithful to Jesus Christ. The church can thrive and do the will of God even when the authorities are hostile to the church and the gospel. This is being proved constantly throughout the world.

However, the church is not to seek persecution simply for the sake of persecution. Persecution is the result, and not the goal, of standing for Jesus Christ. The church is to pray for the leaders of the nation so that there will be peace and order in society. This will allow the church to do the will of God without the threat of resistance on the part of the leaders. This will provide an atmosphere where the church can expend its time and energy solely on doing the will of God in the midst of its society.

You should pray for those in authority so that they will maintain order and peace in society. It is your responsibility to plead for them so that they will not be a hindrance to the gospel. It is an obligation to intercede for them so that they will be a help to the gospel and the work of the church in their midst.

Praying for your leaders is part of being a good citizen before God. In **Romans 13**, the apostle Paul teaches that Christians are to act as good citizens where He has placed them. God has ordained government. Submitting to these leaders is described in Scripture as a duty that is to be done before God. **Romans 13:6** designates political leaders as "God's ministers." Because of this, Paul states that believers are to "render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (**Romans 13:7**). God desires that believers

render what is due to their leaders. A necessary part of this is praying for them. They are accountable for their “ministry” to you; you are accountable for your submission to and prayers for them.

God has placed you where you are (**Acts 17:26**). Therefore your responsibility before Him is to be a good citizen of where you live. Praying for your leaders is essential to this. When you pray for your leaders, you are striving to be a good steward of the place and the time that God has ordained for you in this world.

Praying for your leaders does make a difference! My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will burn this truth in your heart. At times, it does seem that authorities on every level are going to do what they choose to without any regard for God and His Word. And, corruption is a reality in government. This corruption blinds and motivates the decisions of many leaders.

However, your prayers can make a difference. The Word of God declares, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes” (**Proverbs 21:1**). In Solomon’s day, the king was absolute. Whatever he said was law. Whatever He desired was done. There was no greater power on earth.

Yet, Solomon declares that the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord. The “rivers” or “channels” that he speaks of refer to irrigation ditches. Farmers would dig these ditches to wherever they needed water. They would simply dig the ditch in the direction that they wanted the water to go. Solomon is teaching that God can guide the king to do what He desires. The king is not the absolute authority! God is the supreme and absolute ruler. Just as the farmer could guide the water in the direction that he desired, God can guide the “king” or leaders in the direction that He desires. He can change and guide the heart of any ruler. God has chosen to do this through your praying. He can change the hearts of your leaders as you pray. Through your prayers, He can guide your leaders whether or not they know Him. Your prayers can and will make a difference because you are praying to the supreme, all-powerful God.

Praying for your leaders enables you to be salt and light for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ desires

that you have a righteous impact in this world for Him, “You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (**Matthew 5:13-14**). One of the most powerful ways that you can do this is by praying for those who govern. You can be salt and light by interceding for those who are in powerful positions at every level of government. No matter who you are or where you are, you can impact your society by praying for those who lead. You can influence your leaders toward godly decisions by fervent prayer.

Praying for your leaders is a safeguard against the growth of evil. The Word of God declares, “The wicked prowl on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men” (**Psalms 12:8**). When corrupt men are exalted, it opens the door for more evil. When leaders are corrupt, wicked people feel the freedom to be open and bold with their wickedness. This removes the restraints against evil. Praying for your leaders to live godly lives and make godly laws can curb the boldness and expansion of evil in a society. Strong leaders and stringent laws can exercise power in holding back the evil’s expansion in a society. Pleading for them is a way to contain ungodly people and their wickedness.

God is calling you to pray for your leaders. It is His desire for you to cover them with intercession. It will bring His blessings on your nation. It will enable you to exercise a righteous influence on society. If you will seek Him in this matter, it will touch not only the leaders, but also those people that they govern.

A Prayer Plan For Your Leaders

Seeing the need to pray for your leaders is not enough. This provides you with a foundation for your intercession. Yet, you must move from seeing the need to covering them in prayer. In order to do this, you should develop a plan of prayer for them. The following are some practical suggestions for developing a plan. These suggestions are offered to help you devise a plan that fits your prayer life and prayer style.

◆ *Set aside a specific day of the week when you will intercede for your leaders.* You might consider designating one day of your week in which you will focus on the authorities. During your prayer time on this day, you will spend your time interceding for these individuals.

◆ *Pray daily for the different levels of leadership.* In my own personal intercession, I pray for those who govern on a daily basis. I divide up the various levels of government according to the days of the week. This allows me the opportunity to cover numerous leaders without being burdened. It can give you the flexibility you need to pray for various leaders and their needs. You can use this plan or develop your own from it. You may have to adapt it to the form of government in your area and nation. The plan looks like this:

Monday-The President and Vice-President

Tuesday-The Cabinet

Wednesday-The Congress

Thursday-Governor and Lt. Governor

Friday-State Officials

Saturday-Local Leaders

Sunday-World Leaders

◆ *Watch the news with a pen and pad in hand.* This affords you the opportunity to stay informed about your leaders and the decisions that they are facing. You can record their name and the issues that they are confronting. This will enable you to pray specifically and powerfully for them.

◆ *Ask God, "Which leader do you want me to pray for today?"* There are times when I will ask God to place on my heart the leader or leaders that He wants me to pray for that day or perhaps that week. Instead of going through my daily prayer plan, I plead with Him to burden me concerning who is the most on His heart at that time. This can help you stay balanced and

prevent your prayer time for your leaders from becoming a dead, dry routine.

◆ *Pray for God to raise up righteous leaders.* Ask God to develop and bring righteous leaders to the forefront in all areas of life. Plead that godly men and women will step forward and exercise a righteous influence in these areas:

Church	Government
Home	Judiciary
Education	Law Enforcement
Industry	Commerce
Agriculture	Arts
Medicine	Armed Forces
Media	Sports
Technology	Voluntarism

◆ *Pray for specific issues that are confronting your leaders.* You might consider interceding about the crucial issues of your area and nation. Ask God to help you make a list of those things that you need to intercede. Pray for God to give your leaders godly wisdom in dealing with and settling these issues. Ask that the will of God will be done in each of these things.

A Beginning Point

My fervent prayer and hope is that you will make a commitment to pray for your leaders. God will bless and honor your intercession in this matter. If you were already praying for your leaders, I would challenge you to continue. Yet, if you have never been consistent or fervent in this matter, I ask you to plead with the Holy Spirit to help you in this matter. In order to help you get started, the following is a list of the primary leaders of the United States. Develop a prayer plan that fits your prayer life and schedule. Plead with God for these men and women. Cover them with prayer as much as possible. For those of you outside the United States, I would encourage you to compile a list of your leaders and then pray over them as the Holy Spirit leads.

President: George W. Bush

Vice-President: Richard Cheney

Secretary of State: Colin L. Powell

Secretary of Treasury: Paul O'Neill

Secretary of Defense: Donald Rumsfeld

Attorney General: John Ashcroft

Secretary of the Interior: Gale Norton

Secretary of Agriculture: Ann Veneman

Secretary of Commerce: Donald L. Evans

Secretary of Labor: Elaine Chao

Secretary of Health and Human Services:
Tommy Thompson

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development:
Mel Martinez

Secretary of Transportation: Norman Mineta

Secretary of Energy: Bill Richardson

Secretary of Education: Rod Paige

Secretary of Veteran Affairs: Anthony Principi

Supreme Court Justices:

William H. Rehnquist (Chief Justice)

David Souter

Sandra Day-O'Connor

Clarence Thomas

Anthony Kennedy

Antonin Scalia

Steven Breyer

John P. Stevens

Ruth Bader Ginsberg

Scripture Prayers For Your Leaders

The following are prayers that you can use to intercede for your leaders. They are based on the Scripture and you can plead with confidence and expectancy. You can use these or develop your own from them. Balance your praying for your leaders between praying the Scripture for your leaders and interceding concerning the issues that they face. Plead with God to lead you to the Scriptures that you need to pray in those situations.

Father, I plead that You will meet _____'s spiritual need. If _____ is not a Christian, I ask that

You will draw him/her to Jesus Christ. Raise up witnesses who can powerfully share the gospel with him/her. Save _____ by Your grace and mercy (**John 3:16-18**).

Father, I ask You to strengthen and encourage _____'s faith in You. Empower _____ to be salt and light in his/her position. Create within _____ a hunger, a longing, for You and Your will (**Matthew 5:13-16; Psalm 42:1-2**).

Father, I ask that _____ would fear You and know that he/she is accountable to you for the decisions and actions of his/her life (**Proverbs 9:10**).

Father, I pray that _____ will be surrounded by godly counsel and God-fearing advisors (**Proverbs 24:6**).

Lord, I plead that _____ will recognize his/her own inadequacy and will pray and seek the will of God for his/her decisions (**Proverbs 3:5-8; Luke 11:9-13**).

I pray that _____ would be honest in financial, tax, and ethical matters (**1 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:6-10**).

Father, I ask that _____ will have the courage to resist manipulation, bribery, pressure, and the fear of man (**Proverbs 29:25; 2 Timothy 1:7**).

Father, create within _____ a concern for the needs of people. Grant him/her a compassionate heart for the poor and needy (**Psalm 112:9; Luke 10:33-37**).

I plead that _____ will desire and pursue integrity and loyalty (**Psalm 26; Proverbs 11:3**).

I pray that _____ will be prepared to give an account to You, the Judge of all the earth and Almighty God (**Hebrews 9:27**). I plead that