

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

STUDY GUIDE

HOW GOD CAN USE YOUR PRAYERS
TO MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH

DUTCH SHEETS



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Introduction

“Intercessory prayer”—you may have heard this term before, but perhaps you’re somewhat unsure of what it means to be an intercessor, even though prayer is an integral part of your life. Dutch Sheets’s book *Intercessory Prayer* has shed much light on the Church’s understanding of the vitally important and spiritually significant role of prayer in the life of every believer. And now, the *Intercessory Prayer Study Guide*, which can be used for both personal and group study, will allow you to delve deeply into the topic of intercessory prayer and will provide opportunities to put what you learn into practice. (If you are facilitating a group study, the Discussion Leader’s Guide located at the end of the study guide will be helpful for you, providing discussion questions and suggestions for facilitating the group.)

If you have already read *Intercessory Prayer*, you will want to take out your copy as a reference as you work through the study guide. If you haven’t yet read *Intercessory Prayer*, please pick up a copy at your local Christian bookstore. You will need to read the pages referenced in the study guide at the beginning of each section before answering the questions in the study guide.

You will also want to have a Bible available. You will be immersed in God’s Word as you go through the study guide. Some of the Bible passages referred to are already quoted in *Intercessory Prayer*. Some passages you will need to look up for yourself. Dutch Sheets quotes from the *New American Standard Bible* most frequently, though he also refers to several other translations. You should be able to use another translation without a problem, but just realize that he is quoting from the *New American Standard Bible* unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

As you begin this study, ask God to give you a teachable heart. As you continue to pray this prayer while working your way through the book, you will find that your prayer life has been ignited and empowered by the very God who created you and who longs to accomplish His will through your prayers. Each time you open this book, ask God to open your eyes to the truths He wants to communicate to you; and then begin to practice them. Remember that God has a great adventure planned for you as you partner with Him to see His wonderful will accomplished on Earth. He has promised to guide and empower you, if you will only set out on this great adventure. Ready? Set? Go!

1

The Question Is . . .

Prayer—bring up the subject and you’re likely to get a wide expanse of opinion about this simple yet pervasive part of our spiritual life. Intercessory prayer—bring up this subject and the panorama extends beyond the horizon! Coming to a conclusive, biblical answer regarding the nature and purpose of prayer is as much a quest to ask the right questions as it is to get the right answers.

Confronted With the Unexpected

(page 20)*

Sometimes what we expect to happen in response to prayer is not what we actually experience. Dutch shares a personal story of praying for a comatose woman named Diane. He expected that God would immediately answer his prayers for her healing in a quick and dramatic way; however, it didn’t work out that way. Instead, he invested hours every week for a full year, slogging through intimidation, humiliation, questioning and soul-searching.

1. When you pray, what do you expect to happen?

*All page numbers refer to the 2016 edition of *Intercessory Prayer*.

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2. Describe a time when you prayed and God answered your prayers exactly as you thought He should. What did you learn from this experience?

3. Describe a time when you prayed and God did not answer your prayers as you thought He should. What did you learn from this experience?

4. What is the difference between strong hope and great faith? How does each of these play a part in God's answering prayer?

The Power of Persistence

(pages 21–23)

Sometimes our negative qualities are just positive ones that are being misused—channel them in the right direction and they become a strength. Dutch speaks of himself as being stubborn, yet this stubbornness helped him persevere in prayer for Diane in spite of seemingly impossible circumstances.

5. Write out the following Scriptures:

Luke 18:1

Galatians 6:9

What do these verses say about persistence?

How does this relate to prayer?

Oftentimes, our greatest spiritual growth occurs during difficult seasons of waiting. This is partly because God is as particular about the *how* of our journey as He is about the *when*. Dutch makes the statement, “We don’t wait well. We’re into microwaving; God, on the other hand, is usually into marinating” (p. 22). We love to see the hand of God move swiftly and powerfully, but many times God uses periods of uncertainty and waiting to stretch our ideas of who He is and who He wants us to be.

6. How do persistence and waiting relate to your own prayer experiences?

7. When is it okay to stop praying for something?

Hanging in there when praying seems fruitless or when you feel like giving up can make the difference between answered and unanswered prayer. In Dutch's case, it was persistent prayer that resulted in Diane's awakening from that coma and enjoying an incredible—and medically inexplicable—miracle. The result of Dutch's waiting that year, continuing to cry out for God's intervention and healing, was not only restoration for Diane but also new understanding, increased faith and deeper fortitude for Dutch. That period of God-decreed waiting allowed a greater work to be done than an immediate healing would have.

Sometimes it seems that our prayers go unanswered. But this doesn't necessarily mean that something is wrong or that we are not in God's will. As we continue to persevere in prayer, God will continue to work and to align whatever it is we are praying for with His perfect plan. The waiting, in many cases, is just as important as the answer. We must pray with sensitivity to what God is saying, not just according to what we are desiring. We must trust that He is at work no matter what we see or do not see.

8. Can you recall a time when God used a period of waiting for answered prayer to strengthen your faith? What was the result?

So Many Questions

(pages 23–25)

We began this study by saying that asking the right questions is vital to getting the right answers. Dutch poses a series of important questions about prayer. Consider each one included below and jot down a quick response based on your understanding of Scripture.

9. Is God's will for a Christian automatically guaranteed or is it linked to prayer and other factors?

10. Why does it take so long to get an answer to prayer?

11. Why do we have to pray for the lost to be saved if that's God's desire anyway?

12. If Satan is defeated and Christ has all authority, shouldn't we just forget about the devil?

13. What exactly is intercessory prayer?

14. Is everything that happens to me or my family allowed by God?

15. How do we "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2)?

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16. Is there a right time for answered prayer, or does the timing depend on me?

God is never offended by honesty. These questions and others like them do not rock His boat. In fact, He welcomes seeking hearts, and He promises to satisfy them.

Read Luke 11:1–13. We can stand before Jesus just as the disciples did and ask, “Lord, teach us to pray” (v. 1). He is not only an awesome and magnificent King but also a tender and caring Father. He is willing to reveal Himself and His ways to those who sincerely want to know. When we ask, He will give. When we seek, we will find.

17. Write out the following Scriptures:

Matthew 7:7–8

James 1:5

18. After reflecting on the ideas presented in this portion of the study, write out a prayer asking God to draw you into closer communion with Him through prayer. Lay out your concerns and questions before Him and

The Question Is . . .

allow His Spirit to begin to open the eyes of your heart to see Him more clearly.
