

Partner with Me
Romans 15:30-32
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One important way we can help each other grow in this church family is by interceding for each other in prayer. We often neglect prayer. We forget to pray for others, and pray for ourselves only when we are desperate. It's not just about the number of times we pray, but rather about being faithful in the way we pray for each other. In today's passage Paul reveals three aspects of this intercessory prayer, through which we can lovingly partner with each other.

First, Paul talks about the foundation of our intercession. In v. 30 he urges the Romans to pray for him by Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit. These two are the foundation of our prayer. At this point in Romans, Paul just finished explaining all that Jesus has accomplished for us through His death and resurrection, so it's no surprise that He is the foundation of our prayer. When we pray to the Father, we do so in Jesus' name because it's only through Jesus that we have access to the Father. Through Jesus we are reconciled with the Father and adopted as His children. And in Jesus we are united as the body of Christ. Therefore we should pray for the fellow members of His body in His name. In addition, the love of the Spirit should motivate our prayer. This love is the fruit that the Spirit produces in all those in whom He dwells. And it is out of this love that we should pray for one another, seeking their good. Not only does this love lead to prayer, but prayer leads to love as well. If you are feeling resentment towards a brother or sister, try praying for them. You'll find that it's almost impossible to still be angry with them when you pray for them. You'll realize that we are all just broken people in desperate need of God's grace and forgiveness. So we must not harbor resentment toward each other, but rather pray for one another in love.

The second aspect of prayer is that it is hard work. In v. 30 Paul describes intercessory prayer as joining in his struggle, which can be translated as fighting alongside. To pray for someone is to struggle with them, to help them fight their battles by calling upon God, who is the only One who can give us victory. Therefore, pray faithfully, earnestly, and fervently for others, as one who is struggling with them. We often have a low view of prayer. We say that we will pray for someone because it's the Christian thing to say, and sometimes we even forget to pray for them. And when we do pray, we often pray faithlessly. When we struggle with trials and temptations and ask God to deliver us, we can become discouraged when He doesn't grant our

request, especially if it's for something that's not necessarily wrong. However, we must realize that God's wisdom is far beyond ours. He does listen to our prayers, but ultimately He will do what is best for us, even if it isn't what we asked for or when we asked for it. We must trust that He is in control, that He is wiser than we are, and that He wants what is best for us. This doesn't mean, however, that prayer has no effect. God involves our prayers in His work. In Acts 12 we see that after Peter was imprisoned the church earnestly prayed for him, and God rescued him. Through our prayer we are calling upon God to work in our lives and in our ministry. If we stop praying, then there's no power in our ministry. We must constantly rely on God and ask Him to do His will through us. We cannot overcome the world or our own sinful nature on our own. Rather than trying to fix everything by ourselves, we call on the One who can fix anything. Therefore prayer is the best thing we can do to help those who are struggling. And we must be indiscriminate in prayer because everyone needs God's help. Even Paul needed prayer, so all of us in the church leadership also desperately need your prayer. And it doesn't matter whether or not you feel you have a strong relationship with those for whom you are praying. If you know there is a need, bring it to God in prayer, and He will listen.

Finally, the goal of intercession is for ministry (vv. 31-32). All of us are involved with ministry, for God performs good works through those who have faith in Jesus so that they may represent Jesus to the world. Parents minister to their children by living lives that reflect Jesus' love and by teaching them to follow Him. We all minister to our non-Christian friends and colleagues through our actions and evangelism. We cannot change their hearts, but we can pray to God, who can change them. All your interactions and acts of service within church are also ministry, even if they seem unspiritual, like setting up chairs. As long as we seek to glorify God in what we do, it is ministry. And all ministry needs prayer. So let us care about what is best for each other and about our ministries, and fight alongside each other through prayer.