

Shapes for Living

Stones prayer exercise

You will need:

- A bowl of water
- A supply of smallish stones - preferably of different shapes and sizes.

People are invited to take a stone(s) and let them represent something they want to pray for - people, situations, needs.

The water can express a number of things in this prayer exercise:

What is immersed in it is being immersed in God's love.

What is immersed goes out of sight – into the depths and mystery of God's love and care. Beyond our understanding. It is an action of trust.

Water is refreshing, cleaning and cleansing.

These associations may help guide what is being prayed for by this action.

As the person puts a stone in the water they may say a name or situation or keep silence.

Bible study on prayer

Romans 8.26-27: The Spirit as intercessor within us.

“... the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

This is so encouraging. God knows and accepts our weakness and lack of understanding.

In a way the Holy Spirit stands in for us – offering what we cannot do by ourselves.

In his book on Prayer, Richard Foster* offers this guidance:

‘Here is my own approach. After prayer for my immediate family, I wait patiently until individuals or situations spontaneously arise to my awareness. I then offer these to God, listening to see if any special discernment comes to guide the content of the prayer. Next I speak forth what seems most appropriate in full confidence that God hears and answers.

After spoken intercession I may remain for a while, inviting the Spirit to pray through me 'with sighs to deep for words'. I will stay with any given individual or situation until I feel released from the prayer concern.

Throughout the time I may jot down brief notes in a small prayer journal as I sense the Spirit giving instruction. These notes are often extremely helpful, for over a period of time a pattern sometimes emerges that holds the key to the person's need. This then informs the direction of future intercessions.'

(*From Richard Foster, 'Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home'. Hodder 1992)

Text study 'When you pray' ...

Trusting God's goodness

There is a really deep well inside me.
And in it dwells God.
Sometimes I am there too.
But more often stress and grit block the well.
God is buried underneath.

Ettie Hillesaum

John Pritchard on intercession*:

Intercession is one of the best ways we have of loving someone. We can't do more for anyone than put them in the hands of God who cares for them even more than we do.

Intercession is not a matter of persuading God to do the right thing or act. It is taking hold of his willingness, not overcoming his reluctance.

God is always there before us. We don't give them any new ideas or tell him things he does not already know. God doesn't need persuading to love anyone!

Our prayer helps to open a situation more fully to God's love – a love that is already there and inexhaustible and endlessly imaginative.

'Answers' to prayer are not simply 'yes' or 'no'. Praying is a conversation in a relationship – something deeper than just 'yes' or 'no' is going on.

All prayer is answered on the sense that all prayer is used by God in the best possible way. Our expression of desire in prayer may be misconceived but the loving intention is what really matters, and God will be able to take and use that for his good purposes.

(*From John Pritchard, 'The Second Intercessions Handbook'. SPCK, 2004)
