

Creative prayer ideas

Interceding for Jesus shaped leadership in government

This resource has been created by compiling into a one-stop-shop, all the worship and intercession elements used in our [daily prayer rhythm's](#) series of five specials for UK Parliament Week in November 2018. Many of our pray-ers found the focus, and approaches it contained, particularly helpful. And although – with Brexit negotiations at a crucial stage – the ideas here were particularly timely when they were first used, and continue to be so at the time of publishing this resource, many of them are also timeless.

These reflection or discussion, worship and prayer ideas work particularly well for individuals and small groups, but can be easily adapted for use with your whole church too. You could use just one of the pairings of worship and intercession, mix and match a number of different ones for a more in depth focus, or complete the full series of five over several different sessions.



Introduction to share with all participating

We know we must **'pray for rulers and for all who have authority'** (1 Timothy 2:2, NCV). Both the Bible, and our headlines, make this need abundantly clear.

But it's sometimes more challenging to do this in a way which is loving, honouring, rooted in a vision of how Jesus modelled leadership, and respectful of every individual as a unique and invaluable bearer of God's image... especially if we disagree with our leaders' outlook or actions. But it is possible – and important – for us to grow in *this* kind of prayer for our leaders, whatever nation we're praying from, and for.

Jesus' earthly life and ministry is our ideal model for human leadership. So, as ever, interceding for others to grow in this, begins with reflecting on, and responding in worship to, his compelling example, and letting this inspire and shape our prayers.

Idea 1 – What kind of leader was Jesus? And how might this shape how we pray for our MPs or equivalents?

Input and worship:

- Take a few minutes – individually or corporately – to think about how Jesus led during his earthly ministry, and make a note of any qualities or approaches that come to mind...
- If you're feeling a bit unsure where to start with this, think specifically about how he interacted with his disciples; how he delivered, and what he said in, his teaching; how he demonstrated a different way to live by example; and how he interacted with other leaders and/or those who opposed him.
- It's likely that 'servant-hearted' or some variation of this quality, is already on your list... read this wonderful scripture about Jesus and consider what further insights it brings into how people should lead or not lead: ***'Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross.'*** (Philippians 2:6-8)
- Pause to praise our Humble King and to pray for more humility, not just in how you live, but in your attitude to those who lead your nation. The song *Humble King*, by Brenton Brown, might help. (You can find it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV_3l6Ng5IA)

Intercession:



- Each of our MPs (or equivalents) are not nameless or faceless... neither should they be reduced to their role alone. So before you start praying for yours:
 - google or display a picture of them to look at
 - see if you can find out a little bit about them, their story, or their inspiration to go into public service...
- (Reflect... can you find a trace of some of the characteristics of Jesus' leadership attitudes or actions you identified in today's worship, in your MP or equivalent, already?)
- **Try to pray for your representative:**
 - by their first name
 - with gratitude for their public service (remembering most could have chosen to earn significantly more for far less stress and scrutiny)
 - with gratitude for them as a person – a beloved child of God – however you feel about their policies, party or anything else to do with them
 - by celebrating any ways in which they already exemplify positive leadership traits and good character
 - by blessing them to seek and know God, and to respond to his pursuit of them
 - by interceding for them to grow in specific traits of Jesus-shaped leadership
 - by asking God most especially for them to have a heart that loves, and seeks to serve, those they represent.
- When you've finished praying for them, ask God to bring to mind whether there's anything you could do to help you remember to continue in prayer for – or actively encourage – this individual; whether individually or corporately. Put in motion anything you feel led to do in response as soon as you can, so you don't forget.

Idea 2 – Exploring Jesus the relational leader ... and how his example might inspire us to pray for our Parliaments' gathered houses and parties

Input and worship:

- Reflect on the following input:
 - The traits and qualities of Jesus' leadership on earth represented God's best vision for all leaders, as well as all followers, to aspire to. They were all, of course, rooted in love and value for others.
 - Again and again we see examples of Jesus' relational leadership at work... he doesn't 'go it alone' but calls twelve, diverse disciples to befriend as well as to teach. He involves them in the work, and trains them up to lead after him; and he urges them to collaborate – rather than compete – with each other. He listens to the heart, as well as the words, of each person he meets so he can respond individually, just as they need. He is seeking to understand, to bless, to know, to relate, to involve...
- Take a moment to pause and praise Jesus for the way he leads with, and by, relationship still today... what in particular do you want to thank him for regarding:
 - how he disciplines you in a way that responds to who he created you to be?
 - how he has involved you in his work?
 - who he has placed alongside you to collaborate with?
- Jesus calls us all to follow this approach as we too seek to influence or lead.
 - Read **Matthew 20:25-28**:
'Whoever wants to become great among you must serve the rest of you like a servant. Whoever wants to become first among you must serve the rest of you like a slave. In the same way, the Son of Man did not come to be served. He came to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many people.'
 - Reflect: what does this scripture suggest about God's best plan for the attitude members of each of our governments are to have towards each other – and for the atmosphere this should then create?

Intercession:

- Make two lists of behaviours and approaches:
 - one of what it looks like to serve by honouring, collaborating and challenging in love, for the good of all
 - one of what it looks to try to be first by dismissing, competing and/or criticising.
- Use these lists as inspiration to pray for the atmosphere, conversation and debate in and between your Houses of Parliament or parallel government structure. (Commons and Lords if you are in the UK, or whatever is your equivalent if you're elsewhere). Pray also for the atmosphere, conversation and debate in and between parties and public platforms (like the media).
- Pray for more evidence of the honouring, collaborative and helpfully challenging approaches you identified, wherever members of government are gathered together, or with others. Perhaps even dare to bless the individuals involved, and their gatherings, to be full of genuine peace and partnership – even in disagreement.



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Idea 3 – Exploring Jesus the courageous leader (perfectly balancing gentleness and strength) and praying for your PM or equivalent

Input and worship:

- Reflect on the following input:
 - The word 'courage' has to do with having a strong heart. And this is fitting because a strong heart has the mettle to respond authentically, and appropriately, in any given situation.
 - Jesus lived more truly from the heart than anyone - and taught clearly that internal heart attitudes, and outward actions needed to match. It's remarkable looking at how he led others by example and teaching in a way which rose to every occasion differently...
 - Think about the difference in how he beckoned the little children to come to him, and how he shouted at the Pharisees... how he had compassion to forgive and heal so many with such grace and gentleness and then angrily turned the tables over in the temple. How sometimes he spoke such encouragement and empowerment to Peter... but then didn't mince his words to correct him either! How he was willing to do whatever it took... even to go to the cross.
 - Jesus was not always gentle. And he was not always forceful. But he was *always* courageous. So often he stood for the opposite of what those in power wanted, or the status quo of the day, or what was expected of him... because he only wanted to do and say what his Father was doing and saying.
- Spend time worshipping today by pouring out your heart to Jesus in response to one or more of the following questions:
 - How have you experienced him using different approaches with you to lead you forward in different seasons? What are you thankful for about this?
 - What do you want to thank him for today in terms of his example to follow?
 - How does he inspire you to be courageous?
 - What does his approach suggest to you about who leaders should be forceful with, and who they should take care to be gentle with?

Intercession:

- Before you start praying for your Prime Minister or equivalent:
 - google or display some pictures of them to look at
 - try to find out a little bit more about the real person behind the public profile
 - resolve to try and pray for your leader by their first name, and to try and see them more as God does - a unique, beloved child of his... rather than just for their role or policies.
- Now pray for them to be able to lead courageously; to know when, and with who, to be gentle... and when, and with who to be strong - responding in all this not to who and what the world would define as important.
- When you've finished praying for them, ask God to bring to mind whether there's anything you could do to help you remember to continue in prayer for – or actively encourage – this individual today, or over the coming weeks and months; whether individually or corporately. Put in motion anything you feel led to do in response as quickly as you can, so you don't forget.

Idea 4 – Exploring Jesus the responsive leader and praying for our civil servants or equivalent

Input and worship:

- Reflect on the following input:
 - One of the things that is so wonderful about the gospel accounts of Jesus is how grounded he was – and how responsive to the different situations, as well as the different people, he encountered.
 - Yes, he had come to be the bread of life himself, but he knew hungry crowds gathered on hillsides needed to be fed. He was creative with his solutions, and he was just as comfortable arranging a system for his disciples to administer fish and loaves in huge quantities as he was speaking inspirational truth and wisdom.
 - He knew when he needed to draw aside from the crowds because he needed to rest.
 - He was happy briefing disciples to fetch him a donkey as well as sending them out to heal the sick.
- Spend some time today worshipping Jesus for his 'grounded-ness'.
- Perhaps you could draw a simple outline picture of two feet, firmly planted on the ground, surrounded by some of the things you want to thank Jesus for - in the gospel accounts, and in your life's experience of following him – where he has demonstrated to you his eye for the practical, detailed elements of life. And given a further holy worth to them through this, as well as through his creation of a material world!

Intercession:

- Reflect on the following;
 - Sometimes we forget to rightly credit, honour or seek the gift of administration when we think about leadership in the church. And it's no different in the world is it?
 - So often when we turn to pray for 'government', it's the public faces and figures we think of... but actually, much of the business of leading and running a nation is dependent on those behind the scenes, working hard on everything from research to policy to implementation to budgeting to IT!
 - One of the challenges facing these kind of workers in democracies is of course the change-over of elected officials, and the changes in vision, policy and programme that accompany them.
- Spend some time blessing your nation's civil servants, or equivalent, to be graciously *responsive* to whatever they're faced with...
- To help with this, imagine you are in a particular government department and try to think about what some of the needs and challenges would be like there generally, or specifically in relation to current key issues... what would you ask your friends to pray for you about if you were in this kind of role? What qualities of Jesus' perfect leadership would you need to grow into it and inhabit it well?



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Idea 5 – Exploring Jesus, the leader with a heart for everyone, and praying for our government’s international relationships

Input and worship:

- Reflect on the following input:
 - What are some of your favourite stories from the gospels about Jesus reaching out beyond the usual, comfortable crowd? And leading others to do the same through his example and teaching? Consciously remember them and use them as fuel to speak out your praise and worship to him today... and add your own testimony - where has Jesus rewritten your history from outsider to insider?
 - How many different types of people, with different obstacles and challenges did Jesus embrace into his teaching or healing? Romans, Samaritans, Gentiles, lepers and others considered physically 'unclean', prostitutes, tax collectors...
 - And how much further beyond the nation he walked in, and the specific historic time he walked in, did his heart range?
 - He was not only concerned with the local, the national, or the present... but with the whole of the human race. He is the Light of the World... he was never content to promote the interests of some at the marginalisation of others. What an inspiration... and what a challenge!
- Spend some time in grateful praise and worship for how Jesus so loved the world, and everyone in it.

Intercession:

- Just like Jesus', pray that your government's perspective would look beyond the here and now and always seek to have compassion on all the peoples of the world, and responsibility towards future generations... It can be incredibly difficult to balance national and international interests, and we don't want to oversimplify, or explain away, some of the challenges. BUT it's crucial that our leaders have hearts that recognise the equal worth before God of those beyond each of our own nations' borders and times...
- Pray for genuine compassion and valuing to inform all the relationships, negotiations, interaction and work of your government with:
 - other 'sovereign' nations
 - international bodies such as the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation
 - key international summits.
- If you are in the UK, Brexit remains the dominant issue. And it would seem strange to focus so much on praying for the government without addressing this, given how much they need prayer. So however you voted in the EU referendum, and whatever you think about the Brexit process as it is involved, here is a simple prayer everyone should hopefully be able to pray together:

Lord Jesus,

**flood all our conversations and prayers
around Brexit with your light and love.**

**Give us kindness for those who disagree with us
and gentleness towards all those who are leading us,
whatever we think about how they are doing this.**

We dare to keep asking you together

**for your wisdom, courage and humility to lead
the UK, Ireland and the EU forward from here.
And we declare, to our hearts, and the world, again,
it is you and you alone Lord Jesus
- not any other solution, government or institution -
in who we place all our hope for our future,
Amen.**



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