

Iverna On Intercession

Why should I pray – Why Petition the Lord?

1. Posing the Question

Let us, in our Christian, spiritual maturity, admit that there are many times when we question the “why” of prayer – of intercessory prayer. So, admittedly, we are not questioning our whole communication with God. We know we are to “enter into His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise” (Ps.100). And our heart’s greatest desire is to worship Him and exalt His holy name. We do that in prayer. Here, we are wondering about bringing our petitions before God. Faced by the discouragement of apparently ineffective praying, or of seemingly unanswered prayer, let us be honest – why pray? Too often, we come away from our prayer times lacking the confidence that we have been heard, or that God will respond.

We can quote all of the pertinent verses. The following is a sampling:

1 John 5:14, 15 – “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; And if we know that he heareth us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

Matt. 7:7, 8 – “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you; For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

John 14:13, 14 – “And whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

John 16:23, 24 – “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

James 1:6 – “But let him ask in faith nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

Mark 11:24 – “Therefore, I say unto you, Whatever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

We believe, and have our faith-in-God intact. We *know* we can stand on the promises of God. We are expectant and not presumptuous. To the best of our understanding, we have been seeking God in an appropriate manner. But, if we are candid, we must admit to living day by day with unanswered prayers, in spite of all the scriptures that guarantee answers when we ask. So, we inquire, “What’s the point of praying?”

Then, there is this other aspect. Doesn’t the Bible say that God knows what we need before we ask? Yes, it does in Matthew 6:8. And that it is His delight to give us what is in our hearts? So, why pray if He already knows our needs and/or desires?

Perhaps *this* is His way: when I already know what the scripture says, He bends down His ear to see if I believe Him enough to ask!

Listen to the word of hope and the thrill of the psalmist in Psalm 116. “I love the Lord because He hears and answers my prayers. Because He bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I have breath” (NLT 116:1,2). What an incredible Truth!

Oh, Beloved. We serve a great and awesome God! He does not toy with us. It is never His intent to dangle His promises before us only to dash our hopes. His Word is sure and true. (Ps.19:7,9;119:160). He delights when His children come to Him, and it is His good pleasure to respond to us and answer our petitions (Ps.147:11; Lk.12:32; Ps.91:15; Is.65:24; Jer.33:3; Ezek.14:4; Ps.99:6).

So, why do we *ever* come away from a season of prayer feeling empty, or even *wondering* if we have actually touched the Throne of God? With all of these precious promises, what is going wrong?

May I suggest that our greatest failure in this area of praying is not in the “how” – not in our *methods* of prayer; and not so much in the “what” – not the content of or motivations behind our petitions. The problem is in our *focus*. Prayer in the Bible is very simple. It is focused – like all the particles of a laser beam. When the elements come together, concentrated and focused on a single spot – oh, the power in that! And so, when our focus is pointed in the right direction, there is great power in our asking of God.

In this series, “On Intercession,” together we will consider five things *not* to focus on in prayer (Part Two) for it is often of great benefit to look at and evaluate the negatives as well as the positives. In Part Three, we will turn our attention to three things to keep in focus as we come boldly to the Throne of Grace (Heb.4:16). Then, we will conclude our discussion “On Intercession” by offering some ideas on Intercession itself and three different kinds of Intercession we can make (Part Four).

2. What NOT to focus on in prayer

It has been suggested that unanswered prayer often discourages us, *partly* because our FOCUS in prayer is misdirected. It will serve us well to consider five things NOT to focus on as we pray. Any one of these things will dilute, or prevent altogether, one’s praying. In Part Three of this series, we will suggest where our focus should be concentrated as we come to God with our petitions.

Things **NOT** to focus on:

1) Do not focus on the *method of prayer*.

There are many speakers today who have been called and inspired by God to teach the Body of Christ how to pray. Each one suggests a way, a *different way*, or *method*, to gain “successful prayer.” Successful prayer is then defined or described as answered prayer – with *supernatural* answers to our prayers.

So, we read the books and listen to the teachings and go home to apply all the learned principles or to follow the prescribed steps – and we do that. Earnestly and fervently (Jas.5:16) we present our petitions before God, and sometimes He responds as we expect Him to (or as we have specifically requested), but too many times we have depended upon the prescribed words or methods or formulas and seem to come up empty – again. Our tendency is to conclude that prayer just doesn’t work or perhaps is unnecessary. The enemy of our souls, and of our King, is determined to thwart, short-circuit, and eventually destroy our relationship with God, and he will use any means to accomplish his goal.

Methods are not the answer. Formulas or outlines for prayer were never intended to be the *focus* of our intercessory prayer times.

Each of us prays differently according to who we are in God. My sister-in-law, Eleanor, would ask me to agree with her in prayer about some truly catastrophic situation. She prays simple sentence prayers. When I get into prayer, I PRAY! – with fervency and authority and a loud voice at times, and often with much crying and tears. She quietly, with a soft childlike voice would say something like, “Dear Jesus, we just believe You now to take care of this thing.” And – He did!!

It is not with our many words or the *right* words, or whether we kneel, sit, stand, or pace the floor that we touch and move God. It is with our *faith* that we touch Him. I don't always pray the same way, but I *always* pray.

2) Do not focus on the *magnitude of the need*.

We know we are to come to God in faith, believing in *His* faithfulness. Recall that Jesus said to one (or more), "It is your faith that has made you whole" or, "...moved mountains." (Mt.9:22; Lk.6:48;17:19; Mk.11:22,23)

Let me illustrate this point with a true story. Years ago, in the height of the Charismatic Movement, my brother, Judson Cornwall, was invited to accompany a healing evangelist on a mammoth missions trip to South America. After preaching to the gathered thousands, the evangelist gave an altar call for healing. He ministered and Judson ministered and there were countless miraculous healings taking place. After a time, a badly crippled and deformed child was brought forward. The evangelist asked the mother and child to be seated on the sidelines to be ministered to later, which they did.

Afterward, Judson privately inquired as to why the evangelist handled them in this manner. The response was insightful and well-worth remembering. He had asked them to wait for prayer because the *extremity of the situation would neutralize the faith* of the people. It would change within from faith to sympathy. What a lesson for *us*.

When we are asked to pray for a headache, we can have great faith and pray with authority and confidence in the healing. But – pray for cancer? That's another thing. "I don't have *cancer-faith*" is too often our deepest thought. The truth is – faith is faith. And the enemy is quick to undermine yours, introducing doubt into your mind and spirit. He says, "You don't have enough faith for this."

Of course you have the faith! "Faith cometh by hearing, hearing the Word of God." (Rom.10:17) We dare not *focus* on the nature or immensity of the need.

3) Do not focus on the *measure of your feelings*.

We love to feel things! I do. And when we *feel*, we are infused with great faith! We gain confidence that God has answered our petitions when we *feel* His presence or some sort of physical anointing. We KNOW He has already accomplished the thing requested, and can simply move on. *I love that!* But I don't *live* in it! I would *love* to live in it. That would be wonderful! But, you see, the majority of the time, my faith is simple and quiet – "God, You said."

And, when we give voice to that, the accusation comes quickly, "But that's 'name it-claim it.'" I can claim it if He really said it! I don't have to *feel* it all the time. And most of the time, I don't. But "I know in whom I have believed...that *He* is able..." (2Tim.1:12)

4) Do not focus on *how much time* is needed or spent in prayer.

There was a time, years ago, when I was pastoring with my brother that I regularly, literally, spent *hours* in prayer every day. One day, I missed my intercessory prayer time because my counseling session went longer than planned and I was booked for the rest of the day. That evening I was to speak. And, because I had failed to spend my accustomed length of time in "deep intercession," I lost any sense of anointing. "I can't speak, I haven't prayed. I haven't spent hours in prayer. I haven't *earned* it."

Have you ever felt that way? Hear it. “I haven’t fasted enough” or “prayed enough” or “sought enough” or “cared enough.” And as I was walking toward the platform with those thoughts, the Holy Spirit said, “Jesus has.”

Oh, Hallelujah!! Jesus has fasted enough! Jesus has prayed enough! Jesus *paid* it all!!

Why is it that we beat ourselves so badly? And what would make us think that we could ever *earn* His anointing.... OR... His answers to our prayers?

5) Do not focus on the *many failures* YOU have had in past prayers.

Never would you be revealed to you, as quickly as when you go to prayer. Truth is, that is a *gift*. It is God’s gift to you. When He reveals me to me when I am in prayer, I can handle it because I can confess and forsake as I am already in His presence. I have enough of His grace there in His presence to forgive everyone I don’t want to forgive when I’m not in His presence. And, I have the grace to forgive myself.

Oh, the Blood of Jesus cleanses. You see, in His presence, grace oozes. And that is why He reveals you to you. It’s not to condemn. That is why the Word in Matthew says, “when ye come,” if you bring a gift to Him and you realize, “Oh, I’ve got a problem with that person...” “Leave the gift, I’m not listening till you get it right with her.” (Mt.5:23,24 paraphrased)

Learn to expect revelation while you are involved in intercessory prayer — of you, to you, by God. I come to pray for you and He talks about me! “I don’t want to talk about me. I want to talk about her. Oh, Lord, I know there are a few little things, but I’ll talk to You later.” He says, “I’m not listening.” Is that scriptural? Yes. Our sins separate us from the Lord and cause Him to hide His face from us (Is.59:2; Mic.3:4).

Sometimes it is as important to know what NOT to focus on as to know what we should focus on. The things that claim our attention often set us in a certain pattern or attitude that is counter-productive to our main goals. It is vital for us to check on what is capturing most of our concentrated thoughts so we can better understand why we think or “feel” in certain ways. We must then submit *our* ways to the authority of God’s Word, and adjust as He directs.

In the next part of this series “On Intercession,” we will turn our attention to the areas that perhaps we have missed, or that may have taken a secondary position in our minds as we enter into intercessory prayer. These three areas are so simple and obvious that we tend to forget, or assume, or otherwise miss the importance of keeping them in the forefront of our minds and spirits.

3. Things TO focus on in prayer

Having admitted one is either strongly tempted to, or actually does, question the necessity of intercessory prayer, we must come to realize that prayer is invited, commanded, and expected by God. Each of us may have our own specific reasons for doubting the efficacy of intercessory prayer, but we have all experienced the circumstance of having laid our petitions before God only to wonder if He heard us. The truth is, He did hear.

Previously in this series “On Intercession,” we suggested that one of the reasons we experience a measure of disappointment due to seemingly unanswered prayer is that we have misdirected our focus in praying. We suggested five things upon which we should *not* focus as we bring our requests to the Lord.

Let us now turn our attention to what we *should* focus on in prayer.

- 1) First of all, and with great humility and seriousness, let us bring back our main concentration onto **God, Himself**, on the ***mighty person of God***. May we frequently be reminded of and focus on exactly Who He is and all that He says He wants to be for us. Let us come to a point of truly believing that He is who He says He is.

When we focus on our problems and failures and the condition of our society and how much we have lost and where we are going as a nation, we become so weary and heavy and discouraged. I know there is a place and time for addressing these things, but my *faith* is not stirred with that – it seems so negative. I need a fresh, new look at God. I must come to embrace this FACT: Christ for me! Christ in me! (Eph. 1). I want a new look at Whom I serve and Whose I am!

2 Corinthians 6:18 – “I will be a Father to you and you’ll be my sons and daughters, *saith the Lord Almighty*.” (Also Jn.14:23;17:23) When you begin to really look at that kind of God, *you’ll* pray with faith.

How about looking anew at **Jesus**? High Priest (Heb.4:14). Attorney (1Jn.2:1). Healer (Mt.4:23,24;12:15;14:14). Friend (Jn.15:14,15). Intercessor (Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25; Jn.17:9). Jesus. “Now unto Him Who is *able*” (Eph.3:20; Jude 24).

Many times my most powerful prayer is simply and quietly, “Jesus.” And the room becomes filled with His presence. “Jesus.” You see, I didn’t always pray so simply, because I used to know how to “pray good.” Recall an old hymn with me that says so much, “Jesus, how I trust You!” I have been failed by everyone but Him! “How I’ve proved Him” – over and over.

You see, His answer to this prayer, “Jesus,” is, “I hear that prayer!” In Jeremiah 33:3 He says, “Call upon Me and I will answer and show you great peace and mighty things you don’t know.”

Some of us spend so much time figuring out what we want Him to do, and then tell Him specifically how to do it, and subsequently discover it isn’t in His plan – not as we laid out the details. He isn’t going to do it, no matter how much you pray in tongues. You may not realize it, but the Holy Spirit is vetoing your prayer, because He prays according to the will of God (Rom.8:27b).

Oh, you see, we have that so wonderfully, in Romans 8:26 and 27, the promise of the **Holy Spirit**. He makes intercession for us, which is in us and through us. Sometimes I’m aware I’m praying for myself. Are you? Not when I plan to, but when the Holy Spirit just takes over – and I’m aware of it and think, “Oh! Something is about to happen.”

And sometimes I start praying for another in English, what I think would be really good for that person, and He takes over. I know the Holy Spirit makes the intercession because He said so in Romans 8. And I have asked Him to pray through me. If you haven’t learned this yet, you need to. There are times when you are totally overwhelmed, perplexed – you need to say, “Holy Spirit, pray what needs to be prayed.” I don’t know what He prays and He doesn’t reveal that to me because I probably would not understand. And it isn’t important that I formulate the thoughts and words. It is important that the concern is brought to the Father in the way He desires.

We have to come back to putting our focus on God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit – the Great Three-in-One. Listen – you are children of the Most High God (Rom.8:17;9:8). There is nothing that is too difficult for Him. Nothing! I’m sorry to admit to you, but I forget that from time to time. And, then I say, “God, if it be possible...” And I almost hear, “DUH!”

- 2) Focus on the ***mighty promises of God***.

We need the Word of God now more than we've ever needed It – ever in our lives. Ever. You cannot substitute the reading of the Word, the hearing of the Word, with even – prayer. Listen. You cannot substitute praise for the Word. We've got to get back to seriously being in God's Word – to personal study of the Bible. Why? Because I won't know what's mine if I don't read it.

Can you look back in your lives – to the situations in churches over time – and see the constant teeter-totter of these two things? Word – Word – Word – No prayer – No praise – No worship versus Praise – Prayer – Worship – No Word. It has almost been cyclical in church history.

That's like having only one oar in a boat. You just go around in circles – one way or the other. I watch people – and probably have been guilty myself – going one way for awhile in their lives, then switching to go another way, and they think its spiritual growth. But until we get both of those oars out there and in the water, we will continue to be full of *religious activity* with little forward (or upward) movement.

I need to understand how I can pray with the authority of the Word of God, “God, You said it. I'm holding to Your Word with the power of the Spirit,” and yet, every day of our lives, rejoice and be exceeding glad, joyful givers of all that we are and have, regardless of how our specific circumstances appear on any given day. Balance. We need to find the balance in His Word.

God gets to me with a message in every area of my life, if I am willing to listen for His voice. I need to be so established in the Word of God that no circumstance of any kind moves me. So that when I feel – oh, please hear this accurately – when I feel the weakest, I can rise to the greatest strength for someone who is weaker. I can rise above my own circumstances because of Who it is that is resident in me, enabling me to minister to others in spite of my own circumstances. Tough, isn't it?

Tough to do because, when I'm feeling very weak – weak as in mad and I didn't get my own way, or physically drained, or anything draining – when I *feel* very weak, I almost resent having to rise to someone else's need. It doesn't matter how you feel, you *can* rise for another's benefit through the grace of God operating in you. But, you can still resent it, even though you know it is His will and His enabling ability.

As soon as you go to prayer, God is going to reveal the resentment. You see, I want somebody to see my weakness and say, “Bless your heart. Here, let me lift you.” Instead, I have to rise above my own state so I can help them up because they're just a little lower.

Why do you think He let you see them? He is teaching you something important. Why does God bring the most needy people to you when you are so low? Hear this: *it's impossible to lift someone up without standing upright too.* I have never ministered to someone else out of weakness that I wasn't made stronger in my own situation.

The **promises of God** regarding prayer – if you ask and if you seek and if you knock – you shall receive, find, and find openings. The question must be, “Are you knocking?” Go to the *right door*. Quit talking to all the people who can't help you. Talk to Him. “Lord, I'm asking that *You* give me the desires of my heart. You promised.”

Now what that means is that sometimes He may change your desires – from what you want to something HE wants. That's good. As long as you don't want it, you don't care! I said to Him long ago, “I don't ever again want to want what You don't want to give me. If You don't want me to have it, then I don't want to want it!” Does that make sense to you? That's what we ought to pray, “Take away the desire if You're not going to give it to me.”

3) Focus on the *supernatural miracles of God*.

I'm not talking about following some minister/ministry everywhere they go. Thank God for them and the legitimate gift and calling of God for the miraculous. But what about the miracle *you* need, or I need? I need a miracle just to operate. Seriously. I live in the miraculous. If you don't believe it, just follow my footsteps at more than 70 years of age. I do live in the miraculous. I truly do. The strength that He gives me is just amazing! The grace that He pours out is just amazing! The provision He makes available is just amazing! We need to expect that! *Expect the miraculous!*

People saying, "This is a hard thing," surrounded Jesus. He said in Matthew 19:26, "With God, all things are possible." We sing the chorus, "Nothing is too difficult for Thee!" I know that – for others. I know it. I've watched what God has done with my friend's ministry. "Oh, God! I remember when... Oh, thank You, God, for the doors You opened – the favor You gave. Ah, – nothing is..." But, when it comes to the mirror – I have a tendency before I ask to tell Him how difficult it is. "Lord, I've asked you this time and time again." The inference being, "I'm giving You one more shot at it!"

We've got to come back to focus on the miraculous.

I have children that I constantly have to put back in the hand of God – expecting a miracle. I *expect* a miracle! I do. I have grandchildren. I expect God to do for and with them – but sometimes, I expect more than at other times. Sometimes I just think, "Why don't You just kill 'em?" But other times, I read the Word and I say, "The Word says... and I have a covenant relationship with You, and I shall be saved and my household will serve You" (Ac.16:31). Oh, they've got their fire insurance, and will spend their eternities in heaven, but I'm asking for a miracle! I want them to give their whole being to Him! That's going to take a miracle!

But I *can* take the Word, as my faith in my *God* and say, "I don't know how You could possibly accomplish this – You haven't revealed to me how it's going to happen or when – but I *know* that I *know* that Your Word promises it, and it SHALL come to pass." That isn't just something I want, and I do with all my heart, but it's something HE wants. He has revealed it in the Word. Romans 8:25 – "But if we have hope for that which we see not, then we'll be able to go on waiting for it..."

"And in the same way, the Spirit is a help to our feeble hearts, for we are not able to make prayer to God in the right way, but the Spirit puts our desires into words which are not in our power to even say. And He who is the searcher of hearts has knowledge of the mind of the Spirit because He is making prayers of the saints" ::LISTEN TO THIS:: "in agreement with the mind of God. And we are conscious that all things are working together for good to those who have love for God and have been marked out..." (Rom.8:26-28; British Bible)

You have been marked out for His purpose. "Oh, well, that's for ministers." Oh, Friend, – it's YOU! *You* have been marked – you have a divine tattoo! He has, the Bible says, *sealed* you.

It comes down to having the right focus in prayer. We need to remember Who it is we are praying to: the Almighty God, Creator of all things, and loving Father to those who accept and receive His life. We need to remember that His love for us is immeasurable. In His great lovingkindness toward us, He has given us all we need to know to succeed in this life (2Pet.1:3). He wrote out His heart for us and we call it the Bible. As we return to focusing on the things *He* says are important, and not on the temporal things that interrupt our daily lives, we will begin to find ourselves walking in the miraculous. Our faith will grow as we refresh and renew our spirits through the reading of His Word, finding His promises, and experiencing the miraculous. Let Him permeate your spirit with a fresh revelation of Himself. It all comes down to *focus*.

4. About “Intercession”

Thus far in this series “On Intercession,” we have discussed **FOCUS**: things not to focus on and things we should focus on in prayer. We are talking about “intercession” – that time of prayer when we bring our petitions before God.

Let me tell you what the word *intercession* means. “To light upon a person or thing; to fall in with; to hit upon a person or thing; to go out to meet a person; to entreat; to make intercession.” It is not a light thing! It’s not simply a “God bless you.” Real intercession is, “I’m going to light upon your life. I’m not letting go until I see the answer to what the Spirit is crying in me for you!”

And, don’t ask me to pray for your “ministry,” because I won’t. I used to do that, but I have come to realize that when He has all of us, those of us who are called to minister will minister fervently and powerfully according to the personage. However much God changes *me* by His power, it will change my *ministry* powerfully.

I used to pray the other way, “God, open doors for them.” “God, let the word be rich...” But I don’t pray that way anymore. Now, I pray for the *person*. “God, I pray for Carol.” And I let the Holy Spirit do the interceding. “God, I pray for... I pray for... I pray for...” And then, having prayed in the Spirit, whatever happens, I know He did it. He opens doors. He closes doors. Does the Bible not say that? Why do we fight Him so when He closes a door? If we had gone through it anyway, it probably would have been destructive. That’s why He closes the door. Or, He closes the door from time to time to see just where our trust is. Is it in your *ministry* and the many opportunities you have *to minister*? Or, is it truly placed in and on God Almighty who orchestrates the details of your life (if you will allow Him)? Am I too tough on you?

Note this: **Intercession is not convincing God to act apart from His will and purpose.**

We would do well to always remember that *man makes the prayer, but God does the answering*. And, often the way God answers our petitions is not exactly what we may have had in mind. Note the following:

Deut. 33 – Moses asked permission to cross the Jordan River to enter the Land of Promise and God answered, “You may look at it.”

Ps. 106:14,15 – The Israelites lusted for the fleshpots of Egypt. God’s answer was to give them *flesh* (meat to eat) and accompanied it with leanness of soul – something they never would have prayed for.

Jn. 11 – Martha and Mary asked Jesus to come and heal their brother Lazarus. Jesus delayed in the coming, but raised Lazarus from the dead.

2 Cor. 12:8,9 – Paul asked (3 times) that the thorn of his flesh be removed. God’s answer was a promise that his grace would be sufficient for Paul to endure it.

Don’t you hate it – when He does that? And yet, we sing, “Have Thine own way, Lord...”

There are several different kinds of intercession that can be made. We will look at 3 major ones.

1) The first is, “Man with man for man”

This is not prayer, per se, as it is not addressed to God, Himself.

Gen. 37:21 – Reuben with his brothers for Joseph;

Gen. 37:26,27 – Judah with the brothers for Joseph;

Gen. 41:9, 13; 40:14 – Pharaoh’s chief baker for Joseph

1 Sam. 19:1-7 – Jonathan with Saul for David

1 Sam. 25:23-25 – Abigail with David for Nabal

2 Sam. 14:1-24 – Joab with the King for Absalom
1 Kgs. 1:15-31 – Bathsheba with David for Solomon, and about Adonijah
2 Kgs. 4:13 – Elisha offers to see the king for the Shunamite woman
2 Kgs. 5:6-8 – the king of Syria with the king of Israel by letter for Naaman
Jer. 38:7-13 – Ebedmelech with the king for Jeremiah
Philemon – Paul with Philemon by letter for Onesimus

There *are* times when you cannot just pray to God about a situation. Those are times when He expects you to intercede as a person with a person for a person. For example: If someone comes to me and says, “Pray for a brother. He has a problem with sister so-and-so,” I have just been appointed an intercessor. But Christians fail in this all too often. We don’t like confrontation. By and large, we don’t like getting involved in the *personal* lives of others. We explain, “It’s not my problem.”

What if I said, however, “Brother, come with me and let’s go to her now and get the thing turned around?” Isn’t that what occurred in all of the above illustrations – in every one of them? One person went and did something on behalf of another. The apostle Paul wrote in Philemon, “If you won’t forgive him, you can put the whole thing on my account and I’ll pay it, and then you won’t have anything to forgive.” *That* was intercession. Paul was willing “to light upon” the life of another, “to fall in with” him and become involved. We dare not take this word too lightly. It’s a very big word – intercession.

2) Another type of intercession is “**man with God for himself.**”

Ex. 3 – Moses, crying to God for help in delivering Israel.

A person who overheard me praying once said, “You are so *honest* with God.” I said, “Duh! I’m going to lie to Him?” He knows what’s in our hearts. He knows every circumstance in our lives. He knows what we need. But it is in God’s economy that we come to Him to present our needs and desires to Him, in person, in prayer.

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1 Chron. 4:10 – Jabez.

This is one of the most glorious scriptures on praying for oneself. Jabez cried out to the God of Israel – “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory. Let Your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” NIV And God answered his request.

The enemy says to you, “You shouldn’t pray for yourself, because that’s *selfish*.” Oh, yes I should pray for myself! I pray about my own attitudes. I pray about my thoughts and my motives and my intentions. I can even pray about my desires. No one knows better than I do what’s buried within my heart that needs to be surrendered.

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Matt. 8:2 – and all throughout the New Testament.

A man with leprosy (or the lame, the blind, the sick) came and knelt before Jesus and said, “Lord, if You will, you could make me clean.” Do you think the man would have been cleansed if he had not asked?

Interesting thought. “You have not because you ask not” (Jas. 4:2b).

“Ask and ye shall receive” (Matt. 7:7).

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Mark 10:46-52 – Bartimaeus.

Jesus was passing by him, and the man was *screaming* out, “Hey!” The disciples tried to quiet him, “Shhhh. Don’t you know who this is? This is the King of Glory!” Jesus said, “Who was that?” “Oh, some blind beggar.” “Oh, well, then. He needs Me.”

All through the New Testament, we see people crying out to Jesus for themselves. Pray for yourself! It’s scriptural to pray for yourself.

- 3) The third kind of intercession we will look at is “**man with God for others.**” This is the one we usually identify with when we use the term, *intercession*.

Gen. 18 – Abraham on behalf of Sodom.

Now, *that* is intercession, isn’t it? “Oh, God. Please spare the city. If there be...”

Abraham bargained with God. Finally, the deal is contracted, and you know the story.

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Ex. 15 – Moses at the waters of Marah.

Moses cried to the Lord. He didn’t know what to do. Oh! Every preacher understands this feeling. The situation is there: the people are thirsty and the water is there, but the water is bitter.

Use your imagination. Reach beyond the usual, literal understanding of, “Well, that was then.” I have been in a lot of *bitter* places that were supposed to be *drinking* places. The *water* was bitter. I didn’t know what to do and Moses didn’t know what to do, but he cried unto the Lord and the Lord showed him the answer. We can go through all of the symbolism of the cross (the tree that heals), and it certainly fits. The Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. I don’t want to discuss the symbolism here. I simply want to say, ***God will show you what to do.*** And, I’ll tell you this: once He does, it may not work the second time, even in the same place.

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Num. 12 – Moses on behalf of Miriam’s leprosy.

You want to see compassion in your intercession? She received the leprosy because she was being critical of Moses’ choice of a wife. *God* caused her to become leprous because of her attitude. Now, Moses is interceding – for her!

That’s hard for us to do – when our critics finally get their dues! We think it’s “spiritual” if we don’t enjoy their predicaments! Rarely would we consider praying them out of their troubles. But this was God’s way.

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Num. 16:20, 21 – God, angry with Israel, was going to kill them;

Deut. 33 – Moses blesses the children of Israel before he died;

Psa. 106 – Israel’s history reviewed.

Moses praying for Israel – praying for Israel – praying for Israel. What a mess these people were! And every time they got into trouble, they pointed their fingers at whom? Moses. Everything was his “fault.” And repeatedly, he would go to God on their behalf, and finally God had enough and said, “Fine! Moses, Aaron, step aside so I can consume them! Let’s just wipe them out and start over.” Why did God say that? Because He knew Moses would intercede.

Why do you get burdened for something no one else cares about in the least? God knows He can trust you with the burden. He knows you will pray. That’s pretty amazing.

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All through the New Testament, you see parents who came to Jesus on behalf of their children.

“My daughter, previously vexed with a demon...” “My son...” “My...”

People came for others. Oh! The church needs to get back to this. What has happened to the caring heart – one for another? We rarely even look around to see who is missing from the pew. I have a saying and it still proves true, year after year: “*It takes so little.*”

It doesn’t take much time or effort. You don’t need to spend days and days with a person. A simple smile might turn a life around. A thoughtful pat on the back – “I’m glad to see you.” Or, even this: “How are you feeling?” – and mean it.

We can see things if we’re not asleep, or, if we’re not so self-possessed. “Well, I sure hope I get fed today!” Well, you might as well go home – prepare (your own) vittles. You see, every time you go to church, every time you contact someone, you need to be “on ready.” Church is not meant to be your own filling station – or, your only filling station. Church is where we all come together to worship the Almighty God, with one voice. It is the place we gather, each one bringing his or her spiritual gifts for the edifying of the whole Body of Christ (1 Cor.14:12,26; Col.3:16).

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Acts 12 – Peter in prison, and – “all of a sudden!”

Say, “All of a sudden.” Every answer to prayer is – all of a sudden. No matter how long you have prayed, once the answer comes, it’s “all of a sudden!” All of a sudden, angels showed up in Peter’s prison cell and set him free. They led him out of the prison, and the Bible says it finally dawned on him it was not a vision, but he was actually outside the prison gates.

How many people keep going down to the altar for deliverance, not knowing they’ve already been...? That’s another lesson. There Peter is, free, having been imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Verse 5 says that the church prayed for Peter. Now we assume they were praying for his deliverance, but the Bible does not say that specifically. They might have been praying, “Help him, Lord. Comfort him there. Just keep him safe. Protect him from his captors. Don’t let there be any more beatings. Provide for him, Lord. Let someone bring him bread.” I probably would have prayed some of those prayers. It doesn’t matter what the words were.

LISTEN: This will help you. When I pray, even if my words are not what God intends to do, the occasion of my prayer *unlocks opportunity* for God’s answer to come forth. “You have not because...” you don’t open the door. Prayer opens the door. “When they prayed...” I don’t know *what* they prayed. It just says they prayed for Peter. But God intended to set Peter free. So, the prayer opened the opportunity. They’re asking on his behalf. The Holy Spirit filtered the whole thing and directed it all to a place where God’s will, God’s purpose for that person, Peter, was accomplished.

People are praying for you. They don’t always know what they are praying. I pray for you. I don’t know if I’m praying right for you or not. But, I do know that because I pray for you, I open heaven whereby he can do what He purposes on your behalf.

Now, listen to these: Acts 12:12. “When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. He knocked on the outer entrance and a servant girl named Rhoda (which means “arose”) came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed, she ran back without opening it ...” – don’t we? We can get so in the habit of asking for something that when it shows up, we don’t recognize it nor properly embrace it.

“She told the others and they said, ‘You’re out of your mind.’ And when she kept insisting it was so, they said, ‘Well, it must be his angel.’” Is that faith? I suggest that it

is. How many of you have faith to see an angel? They didn't have the revelation of the answer, but they did believe for a supernatural intervention.

“Peter kept on knocking and finally they opened the door and when they saw him,” – just like us when our prayers are answered – “they were astonished! Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet, and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison, and then said, ‘Tell James and the brothers about this.’”

Now, what is happening here? Peter has been ministered to because the people had prayed for him, and now he, in turn, is ministering to them, demonstrating that exceeding and abundantly above all they should ask or even think, has occurred, and he stands there as a witness and testimony, “Look what the Lord has done!” That’s what we ought to be!

We are to be living testimonies – “By the grace of God I am what I am!” Paul says, “By the grace of God... by the grace of God... by the grace of God...” Our testimony is, “We know there’s *grace* and we’re *proud* of God.”

Peter says, “Be quiet. There’re soldiers out here.” We don’t want to repeat the lesson, thank you. “But do tell the other brothers.”

Why did he say that? He believes the others were praying too. People have a right to know when God answers prayer. “I want you to know what God has done. God really did provide! He answered our prayers.” You see, that blesses you for making the testimony, and it blesses us by increasing our faith and bringing encouragement to continue in prayer and intercession.

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It is important for us to understand the power of praying, of interceding. Prayer *is* a part of God’s provision for us. He says, “*When* you pray...” (Mt.6:5,6,7). So let us come boldly to Him with the things that are on our hearts, believing He wants to *hear* our petitions, opening opportunities for Him to respond. Intercession is definitely an important part of our walk with God!