

# Principles of Intercession

## Introduction

Much has been said and written about the “ministry of intercession”; however, much of it falls short of biblical standards about intercession. The words for “intercedes” or “intercession” only occur four times in the New Testament. These are the verses:

### Romans 8:26-27 NASB

- (26) In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;
- (27) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

### Romans 8:34 NASB

- (34) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

### Hebrews 7:25 NASB

- (25) Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

In two of these verses, it is the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. In the other two verses it is the Lord Jesus who intercedes for us. It would seem then that intercession is a function of what the Lord and the Holy Spirit do and not what we would do on our own.

Intercession means “the act of pleading in prayer on behalf of others”. In order for us to do this we must come into partnership with the Holy Spirit for we must intercede according to His will and not our own. We do not and should not pray for others according to our will or desire for them. We should only pray God's will or desire. This cannot be done without an intimate relationship with the Lord and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

If we truly want a ministry of intercession we need to receive the promise from Zechariah: “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, . . .” [*Zechariah 12:10*]. Supplication means earnest prayer or, as we would say, intercession. Without the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us in this manner, we are not intercessors.

## Character Produces Intercession

The five principles of intercession are taken from Philippians 1:3-8. Paul describes how he prays for them. His description is based more on what has been worked into him as character than anything that relates to need in the Philippians.

### Principle One—Thankfulness

Paul consistently thanked God for those for whom he prayed.

(Philippians 1:3 NASB) I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

(Romans 1:8 NASB) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, . . .

(1 Corinthians 1:4 NASB) I thank my God always concerning you . . .

(1 Thessalonians 1:2 NASB) We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

(2 Thessalonians 1:3 NASB) We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, . . .

### Principle Two—Importunity, Shameless Supplication

Importunate and importunity are words that we don't hear very often but this is their dictionary meaning:

1. to harass with persistent requests; demand of (someone) insistently
2. to beg for persistently; request with insistence

This is Paul's meaning when he said this to the Philippians:

Philippians 1:4 NKJV

(4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

The word for prayer and request in this verse is the same word in the original language. It means supplication with urgent need and utter necessity. It is the type of prayer that doesn't allow any reason why the prayer shouldn't be answered. This type of prayer is illustrated for us by the Lord in Luke 11:1-8.

This type of prayer is stubborn solicitation without regard to time, place, or person. It is prayer based solely on necessity and the knowledge that there is an answer available through God. It forgets legality, propriety, worthiness, or even spiritual standing.

### Principle Three—Confidence for Whom One Prays

Philippians 1:6 NASB

(6) *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it

until the day of Christ Jesus.

The Lord works into the character of those who receive the spirit of intercession the confidence of His power to salvage others for His Kingdom and to empower them for service. This is a type of faith born of the Holy Spirit.

Paul had a confidence that the work that had begun in them would come to completion or perfection so that they would be prepared for day of the Lord when they would enter into the fullness of the Kingdom. Paul knew that the grace of God would not be frustrated in them but would be fruitful.

## Principle Four—Held in the Heart

Philippians 1:7 NASB

- (7) For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

Our hearts have to be enlarged enough by the Lord that we move out of our sphere of needs and into the sphere of the needs of others. As we said in an earlier lesson, we must mature beyond the sphere of me and mine and into the sphere where our concern is the Lord's will for others. This moves us into the area of intercession. Our own problems grow smaller as we see God taking concern for us while we are taking concern for others.

Paul wrote this letter while he was in jail yet he was able to say “it is only right” for him to bear the burdens of others. He didn't ask them to pray for his needs but instead was praying for their love to abound, that they would be approved, and that they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Having lost all natural privileges of comfort and freedom, he could pray for others and consider it the right thing because he had found his own spiritual comfort and freedom in relationship with the Lord.

Paul had a mindset regarding them that they would come to their completion in Christ. He regarded them in no other way but as perfected in Him.

## Principle Five—Affection of Christ Jesus

Philippians 1:8 NASB

- (8) For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

As we have matured, we have learned to care for others with the same tender affection as the Lord Jesus. Those with a spirit of intercession will spend enough time with the Lord that they will begin to feel what He wants for the souls for whom they pray.

In Leviticus 1:9 we have the instructions for the entrails of a sacrificial animal to be offered on the altar as a burnt offering made by fire. This is a picture of the affections and desires of the human heart being consumed on the altar of surrender to the Lord, and replaced by the affections and desires of the Holy Spirit.

# Ministry of Intercession

The ministry of intercession is more than getting together with someone to pray.

1. Effective intercession requires enough maturity that our perspective moves beyond our own needs and into the needs of others.
2. Effective intercession requires enough character development that our desires have begun to conform to those of Christ Jesus.
3. Effective intercession requires that we operate along the lines of the five principles listed above.
4. Effective intercession requires that we be able to pray the Lord's will and purpose be done and not any of our own thoughts or desires for the ones for whom we are praying.