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Part 2

**Mentoring by
Intercession:
Knowing How
to Pray.**

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**Series: Possessing the Land:
The Process of Mentoring**

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Part 2

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

You can, by revisiting that passage of Scripture in Exodus, chapter 17, be reminded of the sanctity of the moment. Moses, God's man of the hour, was in a face-to-face confrontation with the enemy. In this case, the enemy was the Amalekites, a band of gypsy warriors whose reputation was so vicious and so coarse, that their very name had come to be synonymous with greed and dishonor.

Moses could have gone into the battle and led the attack. He could have, because the battle was not his, but God's. Better still, he could have stayed home and sent someone else out to fight, as he was too valuable to the nation to risk being slain. Or so would read conventional wisdom.

Our man, Mo, however, had a more important task at hand than winning this battle, for as we have surmised, *God had already guaranteed victory*. His task was part of a greater job: that of mentoring a man who would one day be his replacement. That man's name was Joshua, and Josh needed a crash course in "Warfare 101". So Moses sent Joshua out onto the battlefield to face this seemingly unbeatable opponent, knowing in advance that the real battle was not the one on the grimy sands of Sinai. The real battle was in heaven, and it was between Satan and God.

So Moses sent Joshua out to face Amalek's wrecking crew, taking with him a band of Jewish warriors, and Moses then took Aaron and Hur and went up to the top of the hill for a battle of his own. The top of that hill, incidentally, was where the *real* battle was taking place. It was there that the spiritual conflict between Satan and God was going to be effected, and it was from there that the release of God's power would flow down to the battlefield and determine the outcome of Joshua's great encounter with Amalek's fighting forces.

Atop that hill, you see, Moses was beseeching his God to defeat the enemy. Symbolically, he would lift up his arms to heaven, *and as he did, God would move on the battlefield, and Amalek and*

his gang of gangsters would flee in horror. After a while, however, Moses' weariness set in, and his arms came down. Once again, symbolically, God allowed Amalek to gain ground, recuperate, and take the offensive.

So Aaron and Hur, who had come into the battle for such a time as this, came to the rescue. They set Moses on a rock (another great symbolic gesture), and they, one on each side, propped up his arms towards heaven again, and the enemy put it in reverse.

God was painting a portrait of how intercession works, and it was a preview of what one day would happen when the Holy Spirit came into the heart of man to live and would "make intercession for us, for we know not how to pray as we ought". It also graphically portrayed what would one day take place in the heavenlies when Jesus, our Savior, became the one "who ever lives to make intercession for us".

Joshua was on the battlefield. Moses was in the trenches. God was on His throne, and it was the task of Moses to intercede for Joshua, freeing God to be glorified as He overcame the enemy. Now, ask yourself: *"How intensely and how consistently and how faithfully do we pray for those we are training or mentoring or parenting?"* Do we realize the importance of our role as mentors or parents? Is the price higher than we want to pay? Why does it seem easier to "train" them or "teach" them than it is to *intercede* for them? Why is it easier to counsel them concerning the *battlefield* they are on rather than pray for them because of the *battle* they are in?

In our last study, we began by looking at this incident in Scripture in the light of the mentoring environment, and we concluded by asking ourselves how this kind of intercession differs from the regular, more relaxed kind of praying we so often do for one another. We concluded that often our prayer times are times of joyful worship or times of expressing gratitude or times of quietly seeking God's will or times of simply resting in God. In each of our lives, however, there are those "Gethsemane" times when those we love have so much at stake that, like Jesus in that Garden, tears flow, agony prevails, and we become willing, if need be, to give our lives for others if it will allow them to be freed from the bondage they are in.

It is those times that most of us do not understand, nor do

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

we seem to want to experience them if the cost is as high as it was for Moses or as it was for Jesus. Yet it is out of those times of fierce spiritual labor that the Spirit produces the newborn cries of life which can only issue out of the death of self and the abandonment of one's own desires.

The great dividing line seems to be one of focus. There seem to be three factors:

First, often our prayer lives focus on our relationship with God, our needs, our feelings, and even, in our better moments, our ministries to others. Our "Gethsemanes", however, are more likely to be times when we are interceding for our children, our loved ones, or those we have poured our lives into, who are now on the battlefield of life and seem to be becoming overpowered by life's Amaleks.

The second factor is one of intensity. Whether it is others we are praying for or our own needs, there seems to be a point at which prayer turns into desperation, and desperation into intercession. We may not pray until great sweat drops of blood pour from our brow, but there is, nonetheless, an intensity that separates these prayer times from the rest of our fellowship with God. We are willing, if need be, to pray with more focus, to pray longer, to search our hearts for things that keep God from hearing us. Prayer turns from seeking or asking to one of a life-and-death struggle where God is the only answer.

The third factor, I believe, is one of realization. By that I mean the realization that the issues are not the issues, God is. As stated earlier, we've been focusing on the battlefield, not the battle. The battlefield may be children, money, job, relationships, acceptance, ministry, but they are only the place God chose to encounter Satan for greater control of your life. You may have lost your job, and that may have been used by God to get your attention. You can pray for another job, and that's okay, but *the real issues center around the spiritual battles in your life and what God is trying to teach you.* If you learn those lessons, and grow more into His likeness, finding another job becomes God's job with a little participation from you. If, however, your focus stays on the job or on God's punishing those mean people who fired you, it is possible that God will "give you your request, but send leanness into your soul". (Psalm 106:15)

Finding a new job or getting the old one back are not a problem

to God. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He is the One who spoke the worlds into being. The heart of the king is in His hand. He can turn it whatever way He chooses. God, however, is trying to answer your prayers or someone else's prayers. Someone prayed for you or for that person you are interceding for that they would more perfectly be conformed to the image of Christ. To accomplish that, God had to get that person's attention. He will often pick the point in their life (or yours) where interrupting what you can do apart from Him will create the most desperation. *That will be the battlefield.* The battle, however, is not over the job: that is a sub-plot to God. The battle being fought over the job is one of spiritual significance. God may be wanting to create dependence, deal with presumption, build up a spirit of contentment, or chip away at an arrogant, prideful spirit.

That is the real battle. It takes place in the heart, and it is possibly a once in a lifetime opportunity for you to stand in the trenches and pray for that person as you never have before, not for the outward circumstances, though you may well bring those to God. Your deeper prayer requests will center around God's using those circumstances to change that person's life. That's an *eternal* matter, and spiritually, it may well be a matter of life and death, for God may have their attention at this moment in a way He will never have it again.

That, Beloved, is intercession in its real form: one person standing before God on behalf of another, pleading with God to bring about His will on earth as it is in heaven. How, then, do you pray for them? Let's look at some illustrations of real intercession in Scripture and see what kinds of patterns emerge. I searched the Scriptures looking at and listening to some of the Biblical illustrations and explanations of intercessory prayer. There are some common denominators. There seem to be three cries in particular.

1- "God, I come to you with your very own word."

2- "God, please bring about your will at whatever the cost. Bring about the salvation and transformation of your people through this battle."

3- "But, God, please temper your chastening with mercy, your judgment with love."

“I come to you with your very own word.”

Throughout the Old Testament in particular, God’s saints interceded by reminding Jehovah of His precious promises, and of the importance of His character and His reputation. The power in their interceding came from the fact that they were wielding the word of God as their source of authority, not their own desires. Moses, in particular, seemed to always come to the Father bringing His own words back to Him, thus setting an example for us to follow. Look at Exodus 32. There you see that both God’s reputation and God’s word form the foundation of Moses’ authority as he stood before God and boldly, yet meekly, stood between the wrath of God and the people of God.

And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, *it is* a stiffnecked people:

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:9-14)

God was angry. God’s people were on the brink of extermination. God was testing Moses by offering to start all over with a new congregation, one not stiffnecked and rebellious. He was offering to let Moses stay on as pastor and just replace the congregation. I know some pastors who would be tempted to take God up on such an offer. Not Moses. He rose above the weariness he was experiencing and the continual backsliding of his people and cried out to God to temper His justice with mercy by remembering what He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. God's word had gone forth. It was eternal and immutable.

God was going to raise up a great nation from this band of hoodlums and seemingly hopeless rejects. He was going to do it for His great name's sake. Moses reminded God of that fact, and He reminded God that it was Jehovah's reputation that was at stake. The nations roundabout would laugh and scorn the name of God were He to wipe off the face of the earth the very people He had lifted out of Egypt with a mighty hand. So Moses stood between God and His people, holding up God's word and pleading with God to protect His own name. Now God is omniscient. He didn't need reminding. He was testing His man, Moses, by offering to do something that would violate His own word. He wanted Moses to stand in the gap and intercede, so He said, in essence, "Moses, this is a test." And Moses passed with flying colors.

God, incidentally, didn't "repent" in verse 14 the way we think of repentance. He didn't change His holy word. He "turned away His wrath" by choice, a choice He had made in eternity past, knowing Moses would be faithful to claim the Scriptures when tested. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall and heard what Joshua thought. I think he learned from Moses how to take God's word and God's reputation and use it to plead with God. Look at Joshua, chapter 7. The men of Ai had just chased the Israelites back to their own five-yard line and it was fourth and 95 to go.

And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear *of it*, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?
(Joshua 7:6-9)

"God, your name is at stake. Your word is at stake. What's happening?" asked Joshua. God answered, "There's sin in the camp, that's what's happening." Joshua knew how to intercede and find the mind of God. I think he learned it from his mentor,

and I think he learned it well. In Numbers, chapter 14, we hear Moses' intercession once again:

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:
(Numbers 14:11-20)

This passage adds Moses' assessment, not only of what God had said, but of *who God is*. He is a God of infinite power, infinite patience, infinite mercy, and perfect righteousness. Based on *who God is*, and based on *what God had promised*, Moses simply, quietly asked God to invoke His character on this situation, and pardon the sins of the people. That is the prayer God was waiting for. He answered, "*I have pardoned according to thy word.*" In other words, God was waiting for His man to claim His word

based on God's own nature and actually *ask God to forgive these wicked people*. That, Beloved, is intercession. And God, whose heart desired to forgive, was freed to forgive when His man stood in the gap and asked Him to.

Moses prayed meekly. He was the meekest man in all the earth. He did not demand of God. He had no right to. Neither do we. But he knew who God was and he knew what God had said, and *based on that*, he knew how to quietly, humbly, yet boldly ask God to do what no one else could do for these rebellious people. He asked Him to cover His righteousness with His mercy and forgive them.

Learn to pray God's word back to Him as you intercede. Do not use it as a "club" to beat the Holy One into submission. God forbid. Use it, rather, as a key to unlock the door to His loving heart. He longs to forgive. He longs to redeem. He longs to transform. Ask Him to do what He longs to do. Lovingly, humbly share His own heart from His own word and quietly ask for His will to be done as Jesus did in Gethsemane. You do not know *how His nature should be applied to this situation*. You do, however, know that He has called on us to "ask that we may receive" and our failure to ask or to seek or to knock is a travesty in the light of His desire to answer.

"Thy will be done, at whatever the cost."

While we are claiming God's word based on God's nature, however, we simply must honor God's purpose. His purpose, remember, is that "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, we do not know exactly what God is doing in that person's life or in our own. And should we demand of Him that He shorten His wrath by invoking His mercy and in so doing, lengthen the process or interfere with the process of spiritual transformation in that life, we are not praying aright. We are told that "*if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*" It is His will that the person we are praying for be conformed to His image which often means entering into the fellowship of His suffering. We must pray boldly, but meekly, because only God knows the temperature the thermostat must be set at to accomplish His great purposes. Jesus understood that. Moses understood that. We must grow to that point in our prayer life. Praying for God's mercy and intervention, even as Jesus did in Gethsemane, "If it be possible, Father," is crucial. But without the rest of His prayer, "Nevertheless, thy

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

will be done” the prayer becomes presumptuous rather than powerful; the one we pray for misses God’s intervention and we miss God’s blessing.

That is why we must, progressively, come to pray for character rather than circumstances. Praying for character implies that we know that *until the nature of God is transferred more perfectly into the life of the one we are praying for, anything else accomplished is secondary.*

Real intercession, then, is not only asking God to invoke His mercy, but to transfer His very nature in the process. Listen to some of Paul’s prayers. His heart’s desire (and God’s) was that the very character of God be infused and revealed in the lives of those for whom he interceded.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;
(Colossians 1:9-11)

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
(Ephesians 1:15-19)

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:14-19)

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

(II Thessalonians 2:16,17)

I trust that you get the picture. Paul was teaching the Colossians and the Ephesians and the Thessalonians how to intercede, and he did it by sharing from his heart *how he had learned to pray*. He was mentoring by mail. How many times we could quietly, lovingly encourage and impart spiritual help to others by simply responding to e-mails, or writing letters or giving a quick phone call that says, "I understand your struggles, here is how I am praying for you."

Paul is praying that the Colossians come to understand what God's will is all about, so *they, too can learn to pray according to His will, and so they can honestly pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* He wanted them to be "*filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*" That means He was praying that *whatever it took*, he wanted them to have the Mind of God. The reason was so they could honestly "*walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God*".

What an incredible way to intercede at the King's throne on behalf of someone you love. You ask God to temper His judgment with love, His wrath with mercy, *but you do so, wrapping your prayer in the mantle of spiritual transformation.*

"Be gracious, Lord, but transfer an understanding of that grace to this one for whom I pray."

"Be merciful, Lord, but may an understanding of your mercy change his or her life in the process."

"Lord, only you know what they need. Only you know what

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

it will take for them to be filled with the knowledge of your will. Please, Lord, exercising your mercy and your love in the process, *do what it takes.*”

“Lord, temper your wrath with mercy.”

That last phrase seemed crucial to Moses. He was invoking God’s grace and mercy as He pleaded for God’s will to be done. Such seems the task of the intercessor. Asking God to do whatever it takes often takes us into the realm of judging those for whom we pray; all the while overlooking God’s specific instructions that we “judge not, lest we be judged”. Listen again to Moses:

And now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression...
(Numbers 14:17,18)

God was about to release His wrath. They deserved it. Boy, did they deserve it. But Moses was standing in between them and God, and as He pleaded for God to exercise His perfect will, he begged God to bathe that exercise in mercy and grace. The weakness of man cries out for the mercy of God, but the sinfulness of man cries out for the chastening of God. That God balance the two in His infinite wisdom seems to be the cry of intercession throughout Scripture.

A search of God’s word gives us a list of the kinds of people we are to intercede for:

Those for whom we are responsible (Exodus 32:9)

Our children (I Chronicles 29:19)

Those undergoing warfare (I Kings 8:44,45)

Those caught in apostasy (Psalm 12:1)

The nation of Israel (Psalm 122:6, Psalm 25:22)

Those in authority over us (I Timothy 2:1)

Those who are making bad choices (Exodus 32:31-32)

Those who give to us or encourage us (I Corinthians 9:9-15)

Those who use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44)

That, of course, is only a partial list. God is calling for our intercession as the world hurls itself into a sea of rebellion and rejection, for the missionaries who have placed themselves on the front lines of the battle, for the prayer warriors who are praying for us.

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

The key is that God is calling each of us and all of us to a ministry many of us have ignored. It is a ministry none of us can refuse based on the lack of talents, or the lack of resources, or the lack of time. It is a ministry none of us can refuse because it is of lesser value, since probably nothing we will ever do is of greater value. God is calling us into the intercessor's room and He is calling us to lift our hearts to heaven even as Moses lifted his arms to heaven on behalf of others who are in the thick of the battle, and may not have the energy or the discernment or even the realization of the need to pray for themselves. He is also calling some of us alongside to pray for those who are praying, a ministry few seem to talk about and even fewer seem to think important. He needs some Aarons and some Hurs to stand alongside those who, like Moses, are giving their lives in the prayer closet, so some of the rest of us can stay on the battlefield and experience God's power.

As we intercede, we know from Scripture that we have both the right and the responsibility to:

- 1- Pray for God to do whatever it takes to change that person's life.
- 2- Claim God's word and God's character as we do.
- 3- Ask God to bathe His judgment in mercy; to temper His wrath with love.

As we stand on the hill of God as Moses did, praying like that, I believe we can see the enemy retreat, see our Joshuas advance in the spirit realm, and experience for ourselves a deeper understanding of how to mentor others by interceding for them day and night, if need be, until the battle is over.

So many who want to mentor want to do so by teaching and training. That is so crucial, so necessary. But it is not enough. For eventually, God will place them in the crucible of testing on the battlefield of life to see if that teaching will make a difference when the bullets are flying and the bombs are falling. Only then, will it be revealed *how much they have learned*.

And only then will it be revealed how much we care.

Mentoring by Intercession: Knowing How to Pray.

A Challenge to Further Study and Application

1- Joshua and the Israelites were face to face with the Amalekites. If you were to describe Moses' role in the battle in modern terms, what would it be?

2- Reread Exodus 32:9-14. Answer the following questions:

In verse 10, God said, "Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot".

What did He mean?

What was Moses using to appeal to God in verse 12?

What principle was he invoking in verse 13?

What does "the Lord repented" mean?

3- What dimension of intercession did Moses add in Numbers 14:17-19?

4- What do you think Numbers 14:20 means when it says, "I have pardoned according to thy word"?

5- What was the key element of Paul's intercession in Colossians 1, Ephesians 1, Ephesians 3, and II Thessalonians 2? How can this transform the way we pray?

6- Look at the list on page 13 of your transcript of the people we are to intercede for. Add to this list as God leads you. Check it regularly as you go to prayer.

7- Memorize Numbers 14:17-20.

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