

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG41 Teach Me To Intercede

As Christian believers, we know that it is very important that we have a prayer life, but do we really understand that we must have a life also of intercession? Do we understand what intercession is and how it works? In this podcast, I really want to speak with us about intercession and emphasize its importance to us as believers in our walk with the Lord.

Yeshua had a prayer life. He would go out all night by Himself and pray. We know that He prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail him when Peter was getting ready to be tested. The prayer life of Yeshua is far different than laying down His life for humanity on the cross. Prayer is defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as "an address (as a petition) to God or a god in words or thoughts." It is "a set order of words used in prayer"; "an earnest request or wish"; an "act or practice of praying to God or a god"; "a religious service consisting chiefly of prayers." So we know that prayer is one thing. We know that when Christ prayed for Peter, it was one thing. But we also recognize that when He went to the cross and laid His life down, that wasn't a prayer. He wasn't praying for our sins to be removed from us. He interceded on our behalf that sin would be removed from us.

Let's look at the definition, then, of intercede from the same dictionary. We must understand that it is "to intervene between parties with a view of reconciling differences." It is a mediation. It's an interposing of yourself into the situation to separate the parties so that they have an ability to reconcile those differences. And this, we know, is what Christ did for us, that He reconciled us. In 2 Corinthians 5, it says, starting at verses 18-21, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

When we look at this idea of prayer, it really can be as simple as voicing something to God that is a petition or a request: "God, please do this"; "Bless this person"; "Please give me this, or impart that." But when we come to intercession, it's something really different in its foundation. It is a way in which we must insert ourselves. The one who is an intercessor inserts themselves into the place between God and the one being interceded for. This is what Christ did. Christ came and put Himself between us and God. He reconciled us to God by placing Himself between us and working through that interposing of Himself to mediate between us and God, until there was a reconciliation that transpired. This is really the truth and the feeling, the sense behind intercession; and it is this type of ministry that I believe, at this point in time, we as the body of Christ must move into. I believe it's something that God wants us to move into.

We recognize that Christ interceded for us. He reconciled us through that intercession to the Father, and He gave us that ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation can only be accomplished through intercession.

This is why we are not to judge. You cannot judge someone and intercede for them at the same time. We are to see mercy triumph over judgment, and that happens through intercession. In James 2:13, it says, "For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." It's breaking into this place of seeing God bring mercy to people; and that transpires not because we judge people, but because we intercede and we literally put ourselves in that place.

I think to really understand what intercession is and to get the sense of it and how it works, we need to have a clear picture or an example of intercession in action. And I think one of the clearest examples to me of intercession is found in Moses. So I want to go through some of the story of Moses before God in the wilderness interceding for Israel, and see if we can paint that picture, see if we can impart the feeling of and the understanding of how intercession works.

I'll start in Exodus 32, starting at verses 5-14. This is the story of them building the golden calf and worshipping the golden calf. So it says, "Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it", speaking of the golden calf, "and Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.'" And it's interesting, in the Hebrew that word *Lord* that Aaron is using is the holy name of God, *Yod Hey Vav Hey*. So he's literally standing before this golden calf, setting up an altar, saying, "We're going to have a feast to the Lord, to God." And yet it was sheer idolatry.

Verse six goes on to say, "So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"' The Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.' Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, 'O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought up?'" Now, we begin to see the interplay here between God and Moses. Moses is bold to stand before God, between God and all of Israel, and to make these claims.

God begins to say to Moses, "Hey, I've seen this people that you brought up. These are your people that you brought up out of Egypt." And Moses turns and says, "No Lord, wait. Why is Your anger burning against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."

Tremendous. This is the first volley between Moses and God that we're going to get into. There are a couple more verses of Scripture that we'll read, but I want to review this first. I want us to see that God really says to Moses, "Hey, I am going to kill these people. Not just walk away from them, I am going to destroy them, and I will make of you a great nation." That's verse 10, if you want to go back and review it. But what an amazing challenge this was to Moses himself. I just think of how we have faced this. I think that we have faced this in Christianity, and we have faced it about the Jewish people, that God –

you know, you could put this conversation with Moses into terms we could relate to – that He said, "I'll destroy them and I'll make of you a great nation." And Moses could say, "Yeah, we will call it Christianity. I'll let You destroy the Jewish people, and You can make a new nation called Christianity; and You can bless them, and they will come from my seed."

The only problem with that is, when you go down the line, there is no Jesus. There is no Yeshua, because He came from the line of Israel. So there are repercussions when things like this transpire. But Moses stood before God and said, "No, I refuse that. I refuse for You to destroy them, not because of something about me; because of Your promise. You made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." There are times in intercession where we remind God of His Word, where we remind Him of His promise and what He said to other people, other than us, and what promises there are in commitments that have been made. And we refuse for Him even in trying to take us; and this is a real temptation.

This, to me, was a temptation on Moses. If he were a normal human being, he would have thought, "Great! I love this idea. You can make out of me this great people, and we'll go possess the land." He refused that; and he refuses it again as we go through this later. I want us to see how this relates to the reality that we, as a people, need more than a prayer life. Moses didn't pray for Israel; he interceded. He steps in between God and Israel and he refuses to allow God to do something that is contrary to God's Word and God's nature. And God changes His mind from the harm that He was planning on doing, and moves on.

We are going to go down to Exodus 32, starting at verse 30, and read through 33:5. "On the next day Moses said to the people, 'You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.' Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, 'Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin — and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written.'" Now get this. Moses is laying his eternity on the line. He's saying, "I'm asking You, I'm interceding for You to forgive this sin; but it's not just a prayer. I'm saying, if You will not forgive their sin, then please blot me out of Your book of life also. What You have written of the names of those that will be in eternity, take my name out of it." That's putting your life on the line for others. That is intercession. This is the most beautiful example and illustration of intercession and action that we can find, next to Jesus Himself, Yeshua.

Verse 33, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin.' Then the Lord smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your descendants, I will give it.'"

So He says, "Okay, I'm not going to destroy them. I'm not going to make a new people out of you. I'm going to forgive those that didn't sin against Me, and I'm going to hold accountable those that did. So I'm not going to have this mass destruction and annihilation of the people. I'm going to remember My covenant, which I swore, and I'm going to take those people and I'm going to give them Canaan just like I said I was going to give them Canaan." But now God interposes with another problem. He says in verse two, "I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go in your midst."

God is saying, "Yes, now you can go up to the land. I'm not going to destroy them, but I'm not going to go with them. I'm not going to go with you. I'm afraid if I go with you, I'm going to get mad at them again, and I'm going to destroy them." So we go through these iterations of God. And I think it's really, like I said, to me, a temptation of Moses himself to see who Moses is in his love for God and his love for God's Word and his love for the people. And so Moses again is going to intercede. We jump down to Exodus 33 verses 12-13, "Then Moses said to the Lord, 'See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.'"

So Moses is praying for something here. He is praying that he would find favor. He is praying that he would know the ways of the Lord. But again, we see the difference between asking for something and putting yourself, interposing yourself, between God and these people, so that a different outcome is a reality for them. Verse 15, "Then he said to Him, 'If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.'" So God says, "Yes, My presence shall go with you."

Finally, He's saying, "All right, I'm going to go with you. I'm not just going to send an angel." And Moses reemphasizes this and says, "Listen, if You're not going with us, then don't lead us from this place. Don't take us up. I don't want to lead. I'm not going to lead. I'm not going to go any further than right here unless You commit that Your presence is going to go with us." And God does commit and says, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

So Moses is this tremendous example of how God speaks a Word and how God gives direction, and Moses doesn't let Him go back on that Word, doesn't let Him stop, doesn't let Him make something out of himself. He makes Him follow through with the promise to His people. This is an illustration that we begin to see the difference between prayer and intercession. This is what Christ did for us. But we also see this same attitude in Paul. Paul understood intercession; and he was ready before God to lay down his life, and even his eternal salvation, in order to see Israel saved, just as Moses did.

In Romans, the ninth chapter, starting at verses 1-5, it says, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption of sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever."

So Paul is expressing, as he looks at Israel and what they were going through at that moment. And again, it wasn't all of Israel. I know that in church doctrine it is sort of conveyed that all Israel rejected Christ, and they crucified Him, and they refused Him; but that's not true. Remember, the Church was Jewish, all Jewish, for probably the first fifteen years of the history of the Church. It was the Jews who were the mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross, the women who followed; it was them that were, on the day of Pentecost, receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So it's a terminology here – it's not all of the Jews, it isn't all of Judaism; but yet Paul was grieved over those of his countrymen who had missed the revelation about Christ. And he literally says that, "I could wish myself to be accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren." He was willing to lay down his salvation that they might have salvation. This is different than praying for somebody. This is interceding. This is putting yourself

between God and that individual, looking for a different outcome; and this is what Paul does. And I know that God is going to honor Moses. I know He is going to honor Paul himself. He is going to honor Yeshua, Jesus, in His intercession for His people. And so we will see the salvation of the Jewish people in a miraculous way as we move into the things of God.

We see it in Moses. We see it in Paul; this intercession that literally interposes itself to see God move in fulfillment of His Word, to bring about what He has spoken. We see it again in Yeshua, in Jesus. He gave His life to intercede between us and the Father. He was willing to be made accursed that mankind might be reconciled. He didn't just go to the cross and die. The cross was about taking on our sin – and that process, like Paul said, "I would wish myself accursed" – this is literally what Christ was doing. He was putting Himself in a place of being cursed by God, going into losing His eternity, being separated from God, the Father, forever. That is what He experienced on the cross. Remember He says, "Why have You forsaken Me?" He felt that separation from God, and He put Himself in a place of being cursed through eternity in order to win our salvation. It was intercession, not prayer, not just going to the cross and dying. It was this place of putting Himself where He could lose everything.

Galatians 3:13-14 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." So it's in order that Christ gives us this great promise that was given to Abraham through His willingness to become a curse for us, and that is what He did on the cross.

Luke 23 tells the story starting at verses 33-34. It says, "When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among them." And I think a lot of times, because of the way this is written, it's as though Jesus is praying, Yeshua is praying, to forgive those who are crucifying Him and to forgive those who are around. He is praying for humanity. He is exercising this intercession that He is in the midst of, saying, "Forgive them all, Lord, forgive all of humanity. I am here being a curse, being separated from You, divided from You. I am putting My eternal life and My eternal relationship with You on the line right here for them; and I am believing that You take that willingness of My intercession to be a curse in order to bring to them salvation and to reconcile them to Yourself." This is what He did.

Not only did He do that on the cross, but Yeshua continues, at the right hand of the Father, to intercede for us day and night. Hebrews 7:24-25 says, "But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 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." He didn't stop with the cross. He always lives to make intercession for us.

Romans 8:26-27 says, "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; 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." The cross wasn't just a momentary thing. It was something that was, as far as the life of Christ, done once for all; but He continues in that way of intercession every day. And by the Spirit, He is interceding Himself at the right hand of the Father.

We've got to grasp this. And you say, this is beyond what I've recognized before. And I think it's true for many that they don't recognize this ongoing intercession on our behalf. I would say it's true, and it's true that we need it. We need this daily intercession where God is on the throne, but at His right-hand is a

Son saying, "Father, forgive them. Father, forgive them," constantly exercising that work of the cross on our behalf to see that we are forgiven on a daily basis; because we know that we fail and we know that, as humans, we fall short and we sin time after time. And so He is there for us. The Spirit is there for us, interceding for us. We need that; but we also know that we need to become that same spirit of intercession before God.

God is looking for sons who are filled with His love for His creation and will give our lives by faith in intercession. Only in this way will all creation be set free from its slavery into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God, as Romans 8:21 talks about. It is supposed to happen through us. Creation, including humanity, is delivered through the intercession of sons; and that is the part that we play now. As Paul played it for the sons of Israel, we play it also. John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." Beautiful.

We are to love one another, and by this, all the world will know that we're His true disciples. First John 3:14-19 says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This statement is crystal clear. Christ laid down His life for us; but He is also looking for us to lay down our lives, one for another. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with words or with tongue, but in deed and in truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and we will assure our hearts before Him."

John 15 says in verses 12-14, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you." Christ is looking for us to follow His commandments, and one of the greatest commandments is that we love one another. We love God with all of our heart and we love our neighbor as ourself; but that love is the love of God. It's the love of Christ, and it was that love that laid His life down. This is intercession, and intercession is powered by our love.

I want us to remember some key points of this podcast today. You may have a prayer life, but are you an intercessor? Ask yourself that question. I think the first great test or temptation that Christian believers face, and I think Christianity has faced, is, will you intercede for the reconciliation between God and His chosen people? This means, as Paul said, "I wish myself accursed for their salvation." This, I believe, is a real issue for us today, as we see the continued growth of anti-Semitism coming much, not just in the world, but from the Church.

Another point is, if we won't give ourselves to intercede for the seed of Abraham, how will we walk in the ministry of reconciliation for the rest of the world? The disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray. I believe it's time we cry out to Yeshua, to Jesus, and say, "Teach us to intercede." Yeshua, You gave the Church, Your body, the great commission to make disciples of all the nations. The only way we can accomplish this is through intercession that brings reconciliation. Give us the love that You have, the love that You had as You went to the cross, so that by faith we can lay down our lives to see mercy triumph over judgment. Amen.